PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 73

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1984-85

COMPRISING PERIOD
11 FEBRUARY—22 FEBRUARY 1985

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
£40·95 net

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY RIGHT HON. MARGARET THATCHER, MP, SEPTEMBER 1984)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, CH
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, QC, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Rees, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—John Gummer, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Malcolm Rifkind, Esq, MP
Richard Luce, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw, Esq, MP
The Lord Elton, TD
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—John Moore, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY—Barney Hayhoe, Esq, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—The Rt. Hon. Adam Butler, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—John Stradling Thomas, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister for Local Government—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
Minister for Housing and Construction—Ian Gow, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
Minister of State—Norman Lamont, Esq, MP
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT—The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
John MacGregor, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
John MacGregor, Esq. MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Mrs. Peggy Fenner, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Rt. Hon. Adam Butler, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Lord Trefgarne
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—John Lee, Esq, MP

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
Robert Dunn, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
Peter Bottomley, Esq, MP

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alastair Goodlad, Esq, MP
David Hunt, Esq, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Local Government—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
Minister for Housing and Construction—Ian Gow, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Neil Macfarlane, Esq, MP
Sir George Young, Bt, MP
The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
The Earl of Avon, OBE, TD

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Malcolm Rifkind, Esq, MP
Richard Luce, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Timothy Renton, Esq, MP

Health and Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Patten, Esq, MP
Ray Whitney, Esq, MP
The Lord Glenarthur

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw Esq, MP
The Lord Elton, TD
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—David Mellor, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

Lord Chancellor—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of Saint Marylebone, CH

Management and Personnel Office—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Nicholas Scott, Esq, MBE, MP
Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
The Lord Lyell

Paymaster General—John Gummer, Esq, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
John MacKay, Esq, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
Minister of State—Norman Lamont, Esq, MP
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Butcher, Esq, MP
Alexander Fletcher, Esq, MP
David Trippier, Esq, MP
Lord Lucas of Chilworth

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Mitchell, Esq, MP
Michael Spicer, Esq, MP

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Rees, QC, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—John Moore, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Barney Hayhoe, Esq, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS
Donald Thompson, Esq, MP
Ian Lang, Esq, MP
Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
John Major, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Michael Neubert, Esq, MP
The Hon. Timothy Sainsbury, MP
Tony Durant, Esq, MP
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—John Stradling Thomas, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Wyn Roberts, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Rt. Hon. The Duke of Northumberland, KG, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—John Cope, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—Carol Mather, Esq, MC, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—The Hon. Robert Boscawen, MC, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Swinton
LORDS IN WAITING— The Viscount Long, The Lord Skelmersdale, The Earl of Caithness, The Lord Brabazon of Tara
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Baroness Trumpington

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Sir William van Straubenzee, MBE, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP
CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP
FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Ernest Armstrong, MP
SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—
Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Ian Campbell, Esq, MP, Donald Coleman, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, David Crouch, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Miss Janet Fookes, MP, John Forrester, Esq, MP, Harry Gourlay, Esq, MP, Sir Philip Holland, MP, John Hunt, Esq, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Hugh McCartney, Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, John Spence, Esq, MP, Sir John Wells, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—
Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP, Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Sir Paul Bryan, DSO, MC, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION—R. B. Sands

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—W. A. Beaumont, OBE, AE
SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—T. R. F. Skemp, CB, QC, G. E. Gammie, CB
SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon T. Beeson
STAFF INSPECTOR—H. W. Bunkell
SPEAKER'S ASSISTANT SECRETARY (ADMINISTRATION)—R. J. Canter, MBE
SPEAKER'S ASSISTANT SECRETARY (PARLIAMENTARY)—D. J. Lord
SPEAKER'S COUNSEL OFFICE—HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—T. D. Salmon
SPEAKER'S TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—D. W. Robson

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—K. A. Bradshaw, CB
CLERK ASSISTANT—C. J. Boulton
CLERK OF COMMITTEES—D. A. M. Pring, CB, MC
PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
J. H. Willcox (Public Bills)
R. S. Lankester (Select Committees)
D. W. Limon (Table Office)
H. M. Barclay (Private Bills)
M. T. Ryle (Journal Office)
J. F. Sweetman, TD (Overseas Office)
A. A. Barrett (Standing Committees)
C. B. Winnifrith (Select Committees)
W. R. McKay (Financial Committees)
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—J. R. Rose, A. J. Hastings, R. J. Willoughby, S. A. L. Panton, R. B. Sands, G. Cubie, M. R. Jack, PhD, D. G. Millar, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig
SENIOR CLERKS—R. J. Rogers, A. Sandall, MLitt, M. H. Cooper, PhD, D. L. Natzler, D. J. Cairncross, E. P. Silk, Mrs. S. A. de Ste. Croix, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, A. R. Gren, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, C. P. R. Bennett, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, P. D. Brittain (acting), F. W. Clark (acting), C. A. Larsen (acting), J. C. McDowell (acting), J. Hallowell (acting)
ASSISTANT CLERKS—R. G. James, Miss E. J. Baker, C. M. H. Wookey, Miss P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—E. F. Riddles
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, K. J. Brown, G. E. Clayton, L. L. Kaye, I. C. Bryan, Miss R. J. Challis, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox
SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—Miss A. S. G. Hornsby, G. S. Halliday, I. S. Orton, Miss H. C. Beaumont
EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright DEPUTY—B. Tidball ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, K. B. Wood
EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—H. M. Barclay, J. M. Davies
REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. S. Lankester
TAXING OFFICER—H. M. Barclay
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—R. A. Broomfield, P. G. Moon, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, Mrs. J. Pickett, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major G. V. S. Le Fanu
DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major P. N. W. Jennings
ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright
CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss M. Frampton, MBE
ASSISTANT CLERK IN CHARGE—D. W. Snell
ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—R. Watkins, MBE, E. D. Palfrey, A. Chipperfield, BEM
PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—L. Blood
SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—G. H. Sargeant
THIRD PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—S. E. R. Skinner
HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—W. H. Hazard SECOND OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant
NURSING SISTER—Miss E. Needham

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil.
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield
LIBRARY—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—H. J. Palmer, G. F. Lock
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—M. A. Griffith-Jones, J. B. Poole, PhD, Miss J. B. Tanfield, S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. Wainwright, MI InfSc
SENIOR LIBRARY CLERKS—Miss E. K. Andrews, DPhil, Mrs. B. L. Miller, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. C. Pond, PhD, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Miss C. E. Nield, R. C. Clements, Mrs. R. Grogan, R. Ware, DPhil, Ms. D. Gore, PhD, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, Mrs. J. Lee, T. N. Edmonds
ASSISTANT LIBRARY CLERKS— R. J. Cracknell, L. Bonham, Miss O. Gay
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Miss M. R. O'Reilly, MBE, Miss R. Wheatman, ALA, Mrs. S. Withers, ALA
SENIOR INFORMATION CLERKS—Miss E. Osborn, Mrs. D. Clark, ALA, Mrs. E. Stones (Education Officer)
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. H. V. Holden, ALA, J. Prince, MLS, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, ALA, M. Southgate, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss M. Fletcher, ALA, Miss J. Seaton, ALA, Miss G. C. Howarth, ALA, K. Parry, ALA, Miss A. Siswell, Mrs. E. Houghton, ALA, Ms. V. R. Cattell, Mrs. S. M. Hingley, ALA, Ms. A. Muir
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Mrs. I. Stockton, ALA, Miss E. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Ms. H. Armstrong, ALA, Mrs. P. Cook, ALA
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. Hutson
CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—T. Haclin, D. Plowright
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss M. A. Stewart, J. Youle, P. Davis, J. Came, S. Wise, Mrs. P. Bozdan

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster
ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—C. J. Montgomery, C. D. Lister

SALE OFFICE—CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—C. C. Clarke, MBE

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—H. McE. Allen, CB
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—G. P. Brown (Temp.)
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—F. W. Brewer, A. R. Marskell, M. J. Barram, A. C. Langford, MBE (Temp.) Miss M. M. McColl (Temp.)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—K. E. Johnson, R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, W. T. Woolgar, ISO, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. J. Yexley (Temp.), R. S. Young (Temp.) Mrs. N. Norman (Temp.)
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Johnson, Mrs. J. M. H. Williams, Miss T. D. Ruewell (Temp.), Mrs. D. K. P. Simons (Temp.), Miss G. Hooks, Mrs. D. Hill (Temp.), Mrs. P. Hurford (Temp.), Mrs. J. C. Ponting (Temp.)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—A. C. J. Poole
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
ASSISTANT HEAD OF OFFICE—D. J. Mouat
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. S. Caird-Lawrence
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss R. A. Cole
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—P. C. Kingsley
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. S. Harrison, Miss J. Bremner

COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc
ASSISTANT COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—Mrs. G. S. P. Smith

INTERNAL AUDITOR—Miss C. D. Stone, FCCA

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—K. S. Morgan
DEPUTY EDITOR—L. R. Johns
PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley
SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITORS—F. G. Brotherston, C. R. G. Watson, OBE
ASSISTANT EDITOR—P. Walker
DEPUTY ASSISTANT EDITORS—E. Holland, I. D. Church
COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—J. Withers, W. G. Garland, F. I. Williams, Miss V. Grainger, J. Ledgerwood, D. Crosswell, Miss C. Ritchie, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss H. A. Hales
REPORTERS—Miss L. Sutherland, Mrs. E. J. Gregory, Mrs. P. Pratt, Miss V. A. Widgery, S. M. Hutchinson, J. Robinson, Miss C. Fogarty, Mrs. J. Ballard, Miss H. Thompson, Miss M. Babington, Miss C. G. Black, P. Oglethorpe, Miss C. Hanly, Miss A. Harris, J. Bonner
FIRST PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington
SECOND PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—Mrs. E. M. Bangay
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—Mrs. H. Stollery
CHIEF HANSARD ASSISTANT—D. J. Lawler
HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington
ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—H. J. Wellings

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF
DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA
PERSONNEL OFFICER—Mrs. B. D. Bulley
PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn
BANQUETING SUPERVISOR—C. J. Griffiths
CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA
ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley
EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay
HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe
HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland
PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—W. H. Lewis
HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent I. K. Slessor
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—D. Todd
POSTMASTER—C. E. Tomkins
TRANSPORT MANAGER—Miss M. F. Ward

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 73**

SEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1984-85

House of Commons

Monday 11 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Limited List Prescribing

1. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the proposals to limit the range of drugs prescribed under the National Health Service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The proposals for limited list prescribing announced on 8 November 1984 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services have been the subject of consultation with the medical, dental and pharmaceutical professions and the pharmaceutical industry. The consultation period ended on 31 January and the many responses received are now being considered.

Mr. Raffan: Will my hon. Friend give the most serious consideration to the introduction of an over-rule that drugs not on the list may be prescribed under the NHS subject to accountability to the local general medical committee? Would that not ensure not only that doctors could meet all clinical needs, but that they would be less likely to trade up, which could dramatically reduce savings?

Mr. Roberts: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comment. He will know that it is our intention that the list of NHS drugs should meet all clinical needs, but if it is demonstrated that there is a real problem in particular circumstances, we shall consider how best to deal with it. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his suggestion.

Mr. Abse: The 900 people employed at the Parke-Davis factory in my constituency could be severely affected if the list is restricted. Has the Secretary of State for Wales, as I requested, made representations to his colleague the Secretary of State for Social Services pointing out the serious employment consequences if the proposed drugs list goes through?

Mr. Roberts: My right hon. Friend has of course been closely involved with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services because of the responsibility that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has for health in Wales. He has made known his views about likely effects on the pharmaceutical industry in Wales. I cannot comment further on our proposal until conclusions have been reached.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is it possible for my hon. Friend to give assurances that where there is a long history of a patient being allergic or intolerant to certain generic drugs, but able to take some particular proprietary drug, the doctor will have some scope for selecting such a drug?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is basically on the same point as my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), and I stress yet again that it is our intention that the list should meet all clinical needs, but we are aware of problems, and they will be considered before the final list is drawn up.

Dr. Roger Thomas: Why does the Minister not accept the method suggested by the Greenfield report, which will lead to savings in the drugs bill that will not discriminate against the less well-off members of our society?

Mr. Roberts: We have no intention of discriminating against the less well-off members of our society, and I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the comments by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health in an Adjournment debate last Thursday. He said:

"The Government have no intention of debarring any of the poor or elderly from the treatment, free if necessary, under the NHS that they require. We have every intention that under the NHS it should be possible for doctors and patients to have access

to a complete list of preparations, which is sufficient to cope with all the clinical and medical needs of the service."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1231.]

Mr. Best: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a capacity for real saving in the prescribing of drugs by ensuring that doctors, whether through oversight or otherwise, do not over-prescribe? Many recipients of drugs commonly find that they are given far more than they need for a course of treatment. Will my hon. Friend look into that aspect?

Mr. Roberts: The point has been made by hon. Members on each side of the House, in particular in the debate on 8 November. There has been a doubling of the cost of drugs used in Wales. In 1978-79 the cost was £41·2 million; in 1983-84 it had risen to £80·7 million. That is an increase of 96 per cent.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that Aneurin Bevan introduced a National Health Service based on the principle that the best health service should be available to all, and that money should not be the consideration or the passport to better and quicker treatment?

Does he further appreciate that the proposal to limit the range of drugs will, if implemented, bring a two-tier system of medical care into every surgery, and that such a system has been banished since 1948?

Mr. Roberts: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has not listened to my remarks. It is our intention that the drugs list will cope with all clinical needs of people within the Health Service.

Heath Hospital, Cardiff

2. **Mr. Abse** asked the Secretary of State for Wales why the details of the settlement between the Welsh Health Services Technical Organisation, S. W. Milburn and Partners and W. S. Atkins and Partners pertaining to structural and material defects at the Heath hospital, Cardiff, were not published at the time of the settlement; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): Yes, Sir. I intend to make a statement to the House tomorrow.

Mr. Abse: So grave, in my judgment, is the breach that the Secretary of State for Wales has committed against the House in this matter, that he could do no other than reply that he will make a statement. But in the meantime, will the Secretary of State, having presided over the most massive administrative blunder in the history of the Welsh Office, and being known throughout Wales as Mr. "Nobody-tells-me-anything" Edwards, will he explain why, in a parliamentary reply in May 1983, he denied me access to reports on the hospital on the ground that they were relevant to litigation, and now admits that he so failed to monitor the chaos of that litigation that he knew of the final settlement only by reading the *South Wales Echo*?

Why does the Secretary of State shamelessly seek to blame his own civil servants, including, of course, Mr. Lloyd, his assistant principal secretary, who, on his behalf, signed the settlement? Even more absurdly, why is the Secretary of State trying to blame a Labour Administration when it was in his period of office that the decision had to be made whether to issue writs, and when all he did was to issue a writ that was five days late?

Finally—[HON. MEMBERS: "No. Too long."]—since the Secretary of State clearly has no control over his own Department, why does he not have the dignity to admit ministerial responsibility and resign?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal for briefer questions, otherwise we shall not get anywhere today.

Mr. Edwards: So many, so serious, so wild and so inaccurate are the allegations that I think it best that I deal with them all in the statement tomorrow. The hon. Gentleman is wrong in most of his allegations, including the allegation that the matter was out of time.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the way that he has acted so typically quickly and completely correctly in the matter, in obtaining a full disclosure of all the information.

Will my right hon. Friend consider telling the House, in his statement tomorrow, whether it would be appropriate for the matter to be considered by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, as the important point now is to ensure that it does not happen again?

Mr. Edwards: I would welcome the fullest possible examination, becsause it is a story that covers many years, many organisations, many people, and different Administrations. I believe that there are lessons to be learnt from it. I will accept my degree of responsibility in the matter; I hope that others involved will accept theirs.

Mr. Williams: When he makes his statement, will the Secretary of State explain how he reconciles the concept of ministerial responsibility with his statement that he knew about the settlement only when he read about it last week in the newspapers? Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind that the House will not accept as honourable a Cabinet Minister who tells the House, "It is not my fault. My officials got it wrong."?

Mr. Edwards: I shall deal with those points in my statement tomorrow. It might also be a good idea if at some point it could be decided whether it is right that your rulings, Mr. Speaker, should appear for the first time not in the House but in the *South Wales Echo*.

Mr. Barry Jones: In supporting what my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to say whether the legal proceedings and writs involve any other major hospitals in the Principality? Has the right hon. Gentleman in any way concealed the true cost of repairs at the Heath hospital? In his estimate of an outline cost of £4 million, in reply to a parliamentary question from me, did he leave out the cost of repairing the roofs?

Mr. Edwards: That £4 million figure is absolutely correct and will be dealt with in my statement tomorrow. A writ was issued on 1 November in respect of Ysbyty Gwynedd and a statement of claim is being prepared.

Cigarette Smoking

3. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to discourage cigarette smoking *(a)*in his Department and *(b)* amongst the general public in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In addition to various nationwide activities by the Government to discourage smoking, specific action in Wales includes the provision of funds for

Action on Smoking and Health and the production of bilingual advice to retailers and schools to combat smoking by children. Within the Welsh Office, certain no smoking areas are already designated and an extension of them is being considered.

Mr. Grist: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the cost in lives and to the Health Service in Wales of cardiac and respiratory diseases, let alone cancer? What success is his campaign likely to have?

Mr. Roberts: Of course I hope that our campaign is very successful in Wales. My hon. Friend is certainly right, in that many deaths and much of the incidence of heart disease are due to smoking. Indeed, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security on 14 December 1984. It is because of the relationship, particularly in Wales, between smoking and heart disease that the health community in Wales welcomes the Welsh heart programme.

Mr. Soames: Will my hon. Friend take it from me that such interference is absolutely intolerable? Although I accept that there is everything to be said for educating children about smoking, will my hon. Friend accept that if adults wish to smoke,, that is entirely up to them and has nothing to do with the state?

Mr. Roberts: No, I cannot agree with my hon. Friend. There is a connection between smoking and disease. Although I am a smoker, I say so with regret, and can only say video meliora proboque deteriora sequor.

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

5. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure that Government measures to restrict capital expenditure by local authorities in Wales take full account of the loss of assisted area status and of diminished access to European Economic Community loans and grants.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Government measures announced last December are restrictive only in the sense that they should ensure a much closer match between local authorities' capital spending and the sum allowed for this in the Government's expenditure plans than has been the case this year under the previous arrangements.

Sir Anthony Meyer: In the light of that reply, will my right hon. Friend assure me that no local authority will find that its calculations on the availability of capital for urban schemes or such like will be seriously affected by the unexpected withdrawal of assisted area status, leading in turn to reduced ability to obtain, for example, loans from the European Investment Bank?

Mr. Edwards: Capital allocations are now largely determined by formulae agreed with the local authority associations. Urban programme applications are considered individually on their merits. As I have already told my hon. Friend, we are considering whether any further action is possible in connection with the European Community.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that Government restrictions on capital expenditure have, to some extent, at least in mid-Wales, been counterbalanced by the successful activities of Mid-Wales Development? When shall we hear that Mid-Wales Development is to have a substantially increased budget for the next financial year?

Mr. Edwards: I agree that Mid-Wales Development has been doing extremely good work. For example, I welcome its contribution to the recent Laura Ashley decision. The announcement about the budget will be made shortly. I cannot anticipate the amount, but among other matters the Laura Ashley involvement will be properly taken into account.

Mr. Best: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that local authorities' accumulated capital receipts will remain theirs to spend and that they will be spent by the local authorities as soon as it is possible to remove the restrictions by the Government on that spending?

Mr. Edwards: Yes. We have already said that we intend local authorities to spend the money over a number of years rather than in a single year, since many of them have already, in effect, used the money once by increasing their borrowing in the last year or two. We shall have to spread the expenditure over more than a single year.

Cynon Valley (Housing Survey)

7. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has made to the findings of the Cynon Valley housing survey.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The 1981 Welsh house condition survey had already made clear the poor condition of much of the housing in the south Wales valleys. As the House well knows, the need for extensive renovation and repair lay behind the Government's recent grants initiative. The particular situation in Cynon valley—as in all district council areas—was taken into account when determining the housing capital expenditure allocations.

Mrs. Clywd: I am afraid that the Minister has not answered the question. On 24 January my council in the Cynon valley sent the Minister the house condition survey of the valley, which that 48 per cent. of private housing is unfit for human habitation. Will the Minister receive a deputation from the council and make additional resources available under the capital programme, to come out of the housing improvement programme, to deal with the serious and shocking housing conditions in the Cynon valley which without doubt are the worst in Wales and probably the worst in the whole of Britain?

Mr. Roberts: I am already aware of the council's request to send a deputation to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Consultative mechanisms already exist for discussing such matters. It would be easier to be more sympathetic Cynon valley if it had a better record of spending on renovating its private sector stock.

Mr. Roy Hughes: When will the Government recognise the need to build new houses in areas such as the Cynon valley, which has such massive unemployment? Does the Minister agree that a housing drive would not only improve the infrastructure at a stroke, but provide jobs where they are so vitally needed?

Mr. Roberts: It is for the local authorities to decide their spending priorities within their allocations. There is a record spend on housing for 1984-85. Apart from

1983-84, when there was exceptionally high expenditure on improvement grants, 1984-85 is the subject of the highest forecast expenditure figure for housing in Wales over a run of years going back to 1978-79.

River Dee (Pollution)

8. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are proposed to minimise the further risk of pollution of the River Dee.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Improved monitoring introduced following the pollution incident in January 1984 has enabled recent incidents to be detected in sufficient time to prevent polluted water entering the public supply. A working group established by the statutory water undertakers which abstract water from the Dee is considering the need for further measures, and its report will be made public shortly.

Dr. Marek: I accept that the majority of companies act responsibly after a pollution incident. However, does the Minister agree that, in the light of the phenol incident last year, it would be desirable if there was an obligation on companies to notifiy the water authority as soon as possible after any pollution incident?

Mr. Roberts: I am very glad to tell the hon. Gentleman something that he may already know — that the last incident, when some melamine was deposited in the river, was reported by the company of its own volition. I agree that when pollution is even suspected it is highly desirable that any company associated with it or knowing anything about it should report it to the relevant authority.

Mr. Raffan: Will my hon. Friend tell me how much the voluntary system depends on the co-operation of local companies? Will he assure us that they can all be relied upon to be as conscientious as Kronospan at Chirk?

Mr. Roberts: The procedures adopted after the first phenol pollution incident in January 1984 have been very successful. Although there have been two pollution incidents since then, the intakes of water from the Dee into the public supply system were closed in time so that the pollutants did not enter the supply system. The water authorities and the companies involved are to be congratulated on their prompt action after the phenol incident.

Mr. Barry Jones: Is the Minister aware that the Connahs Quay town council and the Alyn and Deeside district council still favour a public inquiry into the phenol incident, which poisoned many thousands of my constituents? Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that those who requested a public inquiry were told that a court case would ensue? It did not ensue. People on Deeside are angry and astonished that there is not to be a public inquiry. May we have one, please?

Mr. Roberts: We must ask ourselves whether a public inquiry would serve any useful purpose, and I believe that the answer to that is no. Following the phenol incident, the chief executives of the authorities and the companies concerned set up, their own inquiry and instituted remedial action. In addition, something known as the Dee working group was set up and it will be reporting shortly. When the report is published, I hope that Opposition Members will give it as much publicity as they can so that consumers' fears are allayed.

Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales compared with 1979, as a total and as a percentage; and, of the total unemployed, how many are long-term unemployed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 January 1985 there were 25,105 unemployed claimants in Clwyd. A comparable claimant-based figure for 1979 is not available. The figure for registered unemployed in January 1979 was 13,569. For Wales as a whole, for the same dates, the figures on a claimant-basis calculation were 185,529 and 86,416 respectively, an increase of 114·7 per cent. The latest figures for the long-term unemployed relate to January 1985, when 75,697 had been unemployed in Wales for over one year.

Mr. Jones: In the light of those quite disparate figures, will the right hon. Gentleman seek an emergency jobs package from his Cabinet colleagues? Will not his tenure of office be remembered as terribly destructive to manufacturing industries in Wales? With more than one in five men in Wales jobless, and growing social and economic problems ensuing from those policies, is not the right hon. Gentleman's record the worst of any Secretary of State for Wales?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we are spending about £2 billion on employment and special training measures, and that more than 41,000 people in Wales were covered by those measures at the end of December 1984. There is also a massive capital programme in Wales. I am glad to say that, as a result of the activities of the agencies and other Government initiatives, a large quantity of new investment is being made, much of it in Clwyd, which has been outstandingly successful in attracting new projects which are building their labour forces.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the process of finding badly needed new jobs in Clwyd would have begun much earlier and been much more successful had it not been for pressure from both sides of the House to delay the closure of the steelworks at Shotton?

Mr. Edwards: The problems of the steel industry were undoubtedly magnified by the fact that essential decisions were not taken earlier. But hon. Members on both sides of the House must welcome the way in which the Welsh steel industry has faced competition during the past two or three years and made itself outstandingly successful.

Mr. Foot: In view of those terrible figures — the worst in Wales, at any rate since the 1930s — will the Secretary of State take into account the fact that he has added insult to grievous injury by telling me in a letter that the cut in regional aid will assist in creating employment? When will the cut have that beneficial effect, and what will be its precise effect in the areas deprived of special development status?

Mr. Edwards: We believe that the new regional scheme will be more beneficial and cost-effective than the previous scheme. There will be no cut in regional expenditure in Wales during the next couple of years; the reduction will come only after that. The area which the

right hon. Gentleman represents retains the highest level of assistance under the new scheme and is in an especially good position to compete.

Mr. Grist: Does my right hon. Friend agree that major contributors to unemployment are political strikes and real pay rates increasing faster than productivity?

Mr. Edwards: Political strikes are undoubtedly especially damaging, although it must be said that any industrial dispute may threaten jobs. I hope that the unhappy dispute now taking place in Merthyr will be brought to an end, because we all hope that the new investment being committed for the Hoover plant there will go ahead and that the future of that plant will be safeguarded.

Mr. Rowlands: This is a civil question, and I hope that I shall receive a civil answer from the Secretary of State. When does he expect the figures for unemployment, in percentage and number terms, to return to the figures for May 1979?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that no Minister in any Administration has ever made such a forecast. It would be foolish to do so.

Council House Sales

10. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Wales since May 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A total of 39,432 council dwellings were sold to sitting tenants in Wales between May 1979 and 30 September 1984. In addition, 2,292 dwellings were sold by the Cwmbran Development Corporation and Mid-Wales Development.

Mr. Knox: How do those figures relate to right-to-buy applications?

Mr. Roberts: There were more than 60,000 right-to-buy applications to Welsh local authorities. In addition, more than 3,000 applications were received from tenants of Mid-Wales Development and the Cwmbran Development Corporation. At the end of September 1984, sales represented about 59 per cent. of right-to-buy applications and about 88 per cent. of live applications. Offer notices have been issued to about 88 per cent. of applicants.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister, in response to an earlier question, ingenuously said that housing expenditure this year was the highest since 1978-79, thus comparing expenditure with years of Conservative control only. Does he not feel some shame at the fact that sales of council houses have gone ahead at a time when house building in both the public and private sectors has slumped terribly under this Government and when the property that is being sold is not being replaced?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that sales of council houses to sitting tenants do not decrease the housing stock. The secure tenants who have bought would have remained as tenants had they not become owners. There is no doubt that sales of council houses have resulted in considerable receipts for local authorities, and those receipts have been spent on improving older properties. The Government's policy has been extremely successful both in increasing home ownership and in improving the housing stock.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the principles of the right-to-buy legislation are being extended fairly to all tenants of houses owned by county councils in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend will know that the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 extended the right to buy to groups of tenants who did not previously qualify, including some county council tenants. The Act increased the maximum discount to 60 per cent. and introduced the right to buy on a shared ownership basis. I am satisfied with the implementation of the Act.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that one result of the sale of council houses is that district councils have been supplying large sums of money by way of mortgages? If so, will he explain why the Welsh Office is dictating to district councils what they can do with the mortgages? As the mortgages are the assets of the district councils, they should be allowed to use them as such.

Mr. Roberts: Local authorities have been lending money for the purchase of council houses. That is a right that tenants have under the right-to-buy legislation. It is entirely for the local authorities to decide what they will do with the mortgage books. If they choose, as many have, to sell the books to the private sector, I see no objection to that.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the male, female, youth and total unemployment rates for Mid-Glamorgan for the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 January 1985 in Mid-Glamorgan there were 26,264 males unemployed, a rate of 23·3 per cent., 9,884 females or 13·1 per cent., giving a total of 36,148, or a rate of 19·2 per cent. The number of unemployed youngsters between 16 and 19 in October 1984 totalled 7,800 or 4·1 per cent.

Mr. Davies: First, may I suggest to the Secretary of State that he has a word with the chairman of British Rail? I am sure that British Rail could reduce the unemployment figures by employing a few extra linesmen to hasten the unfreezing process for the HS125 service from Cardiff to London.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the figures that he has recited reflect the fact that in Mid-Glamorgan there are 37 unemployed adults for every vacancy that exists? Will he also confirm that in the Rhymney Valley 1,500 young people are searching for jobs and that on 10 January there was not one vacancy? How will the cut of £60 million in regional aid solve the problem?

Mr. Edwards: I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would wish to express regret at the death of some linesmen on British Rail last night in a sad and unhappy accident, and I take this opportunity to do so.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman at least welcomes the fact that there has been a substantial reduction in the number of unemployed school leavers in Wales, including Mid-Glamorgan. I am sure also that the hon. Gentleman is pleased that again Wales has had the highest success rate in Great Britain in finding youth training scheme places. We have met the Christmas undertaking. Only 77 minimum-age school leavers had not received an offer of a place at the time that undertaking concluded.

Mrs. Clwyd: However much the Secretary of State tries to sugar the pill, the fact is that Wales has suffered a massive cut in regional aid. My constituency is again at the top of the league table with 27·7 per cent. male unemployment—the highest unemployment rate in the whole of Wales. The only things that the Secretary of State can offer are factories such as Hitachi which encourages people at the age of 35 to become redundant. The National Coal Board plans to shut at least one pit in my constituency. What hope can the Secretary of State offer to those men in my constituency who, under this Government, have only long-term unemployment to which to look forward?

Mr. Edwards: I am sure that the hon. Lady welcomes the fact that her constituency receives the maximum assistance under the new regional policy scheme. I am sure that she also welcomes the fact that there is no blockage of an area with an even higher level of assistance further to the east. I am surprised at the suggestion implicit in the hon. Lady's question, that she was somehow running down the jobs provided by firms such as Hitachi, which provide not only jobs but a degree of technical innovation and standard of management which are likely to improve job prospects generally.

Mr. Barry Jones: The right hon. Gentleman has cited statistics which depict the daunting problems of our valley communities. Why, therefore, do the Government propose to close skillcentres in South Wales? Since the Scottish local authority member of the MSC has resiled from his support for closure, the Secretary of State now has the excuse to go to the Cabinet and say that the skillcentre at, for example, Pontllanfraith should not close. Will the right hon. Gentleman do that?

Mr. Edwards: Part of the MSC's programme is to extend and enlarge the training programme, and to provide in a more flexible way, more, not fewer, training places in Wales. The MSC has recently put specific proposals to Ministers, which are being considered.

East Dyfed Health Authority

12. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide additional finances to the East Dyfed health authority to enable the completed intensive care unit to receive patients.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No, Sir. East Dyfed health authority is responsible for the revenue cost of running the intensive care unit.

Dr. Thomas: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware of the deep outrage felt in that area, especially as almost one third of the money for the capital cost of that unit came from the public and recently the unit has been lucky enough to have a consultant cardiologist?

Mr. Roberts: If there is a sense of outrage, I am afraid that it reflects on the East Dyfed health authority, because the authority should not have embarked upon the unit until it was sure that it had the money to run it. I am aware that, of the total capital cost of £341,000, some £54,000 was raised from voluntary sources locally and £287,000 came from the district health authority. As I understand it, the authority is waiting for some savings to be made. It is to be hoped that the unit will be opened in the not-too-distant future.

Nuclear Burst

13. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what effect a megaton nuclear burst at a height of 300 miles overhead would have on the equipment and resources in his charge.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am advised that there would be no physical damage by blast, shock or heat, but that the electromagnetic pulse produced could cause damage to unprotected electrical and electronic equipment over a wide area.

Dr. Twinn: Can my right hon. Friend assure me that his Department will be studying the effects of electromagnetic pulses, and will he ensure that the civil defence authorities in Wales have that information and are able to plan effectively with it?

Mr. Edwards: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department is responsible for these matters and for giving that kind of advice, and I shall draw his attention to my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Buchan: Does not the description of the electromagnetic effect on Wales bear a startling resemblance to the Government's effect on the country at large?

Mr. Edwards: I am not sure that that arises from the question that I have answered.

Labour Statistics

16. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the male unemployment figures in Swansea at the latest available date; and what were the figures for the equivalent months since 1978.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 January 1985 the male unemployment figure for the Swansea travel-to-work area was 13,816. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available because of changes to travel-to-work area boundaries and the move to claimant-based figures.

Mr. Anderson: Have not male unemployment figures in the Swansea area increased by roughly three times since 1979, when they stood at about 8 per cent.? They are now almost 23 per cent. Does the Secretary of State recall that when he was Opposition spokesman there was a large advertisement in Swansea in 1979 which read, "Labour is not working"? Is he not now ashamed of the con trick which over the years has led to three times the male unemployment of 1979?

Mr. Edwards: We must all be anxious about rising unemployment. The hon. Gentleman was no doubt worried when it rose steeply under the Labour Administration that he supported. He will be aware that we have been taking a number of measures, particularly in his constituency, to attract new investment and jobs. There have been notable successes through the urban programme in regenerating the lower Swansea Valley, and the enterprise zone there is proving a considerable success.

Nuclear Burst

17. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to harden vulnerable equipment in his charge against the effects of nuclear electromagnetic pulse.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: None, Sir.

Mr. Bowden: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that adequate places are available on training courses so that those who need to know about the effects of the nuclear electromagnetic pulse can learn, study and make provision for such an emergency?

Mr. Edwards: Once again, that is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I shall draw that suggestion to his attention.

Mr. Best: Will my right hon. Friend deprecate the decisions of some county councils in Wales, under whose charge the citizens are placed in the event of such a catastrophe occurring, not to involve themselves fully in civil defence matters? Will he also remind the House that a unilateral declaration that Wales is a nuclear-free zone is not of much use unless the Kremlin agrees to it as well?

Mr. Edwards: I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend says. I believe that it is of great importance that we should pursue civil defence measures. My Department will continue to give every possible encouragement to the activities of those involved to ensure that proper civil defence arrangements are made.

Labour Statistics

18. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of unemployed in Wales in 1979 and at the latest date; and what is the change, expressed as a percentage of the 1979 figure.

4. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of males and females unemployed in Wales at the latest date for which figures are available; how many were unemployed in May 1979; and what, in percentage terms, is the difference.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 January 1985 total unemployment in Wales was 185,529, comprising 131,720 males and 53,809 females. In May 1979 the equivalent figures were 77,200, 55,800, and 21,400, respectively—an increase of 140·3, 136·1 and 151·4 per cent.

Mr. Hughes: In relation to those disgraceful figures, has the Secretary of State's attention been drawn to the article in the *Financial Times* this morning, which said that the Japanese Honda company had acquired a huge 330-acre site in Swindon for the development of an engine plant and full car production? Does he appreciate the anxiety that that has caused throughout British Leyland's ranks? If that project is to go ahead, will he ensure that the Government have the necessary powers to see that that plant comes to South Wales; or is he prepared to see the further rundown of our communities?

Mr. Edwards: I have, of course, seen this morning's press reports. I am aware that Honda has taken a site at Swindon, where it intends to carry out pre-delivery inspection of cars manufactured jointly with BL as well as perhaps producing certain components. No proposal for a major car assembly facility has been put to the Government by Honda. If such a proposal were advanced, we should clearly have to consider it carefully and judge whether mutually acceptable arrangements to benefit the United Kingdom as a whole could be worked out.

AIDS

19. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received asking him to take early steps to make acquired immune deficiency syndrome a notifiable disease in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have not received any representations on this matter.

Sir Raymond Gower: Does my hon. Friend agree that information from other countries, including the United States and Australia, shows that there is a terrifying possibility that this disease will spread? Does he also agree that there is probably far too much complacency about the matter in this country?

Mr. Roberts: The Government are certainly not complacent. We are very concerned, but the consensus of the DHSS expert advisory group on AIDS is that there are, as yet, no clinical grounds to support making AIDS a notifiable disease. However, the point is very much under consideration. While appreciating the gravity of the problem, we are anxious not to cause unnecessary panic.

THE ARTS

National Theatre

23. **Mr. Freud** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what representations Her Majesty's Government have had regarding future funding for the National Theatre; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): My noble Friend had a case put to him and discussed it with the theatre's chairman; but it is for the Arts Council to decide the level of funding.

Mr. Freud: Will the hon. Gentleman persuade his noble Friend to look at separate funding for the National Theatre building, in the way that the National Gallery and the British Museum are separately funded, and thus allow the National Theatre to continue to produce plays of excellence and to collect seven-figure sums in VAT for the Treasury?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is one point which I am sure Sir Peter Hall put to my noble Friend. If it means that, from one source or another, more money is to be spent on the National Theatre, that will have to be met out of the budget somehow.

Mr. Jessel: Does my hon. Friend agree that the superb and brillant standards of acting and production at the National Theatre do not always require quite such lavish sets and costumes and extras as they sometimes receive? Does he agree also that it is not self-evident why a cut of one fiftieth in real terms in the grant should lead to the closure of the Cottesloe Theatre and the sacking of 100 people? Is Sir Peter Hall sacrificing his staff to make a point?

Mr. Waldegrave: I saw a suggeston in an article by Michael Ratcliffe at the weekend that Sir Peter Hall might be closing the Cottesloe to make the maximum stink. I doubt whether that is so. We must remember that the National Theatre has had an increase in its budget from the

Arts Council since 1979 of a little more than the inflation rate. Therefore, it should be able to live within those figures.

Mr. Foot: What is the use of having a great and adventurous National Theatre and a Cabinet of barbarians? Cannot we get rid of the second instead of the first?

Mr. Waldegrave: One of the things that soon gets lost in any discussion of money for the arts is relevance to reality. The right hon. Gentleman has given us another example of that. There has been an 18 per cent. real increase in Government spending on the arts since 1978-79, and that is not a record of which to be ashamed.

Mr. St. John-Stevas: As my hon. Friend is a distinguished hon. Member and not only not a barbarian, but a Fellow of All Souls, would he care to essay an answer to Machiavelli's question, "What good is power without glory?" Is not the National Theatre one of our greatest glories? I appointed an independent commission to examine the financing of the Victoria and Albert Museum and my successor appointed an independent commission to examine the financing of the Royal Opera House. Could not my hon. Friend do the same for the National Theatre and give satisfaction all round?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his kind words. Certainly we need the glory, but, as the Arts Council has said, perhaps the glory needs to be spread around the country. That is one reson why some pressure has been brought to bear on the London companies. I believe that an investigation by the National Theatre is already in train. We hope that when other ways of raising money have been examined, the Cottesloe will still be open.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If the Minister believes that Sir Peter Hall is not closing the Cottesloe to make a point, presumably he accepts that it was inexorable that its closure would follow the level of grant given?

Mr. Waldegrave: No, I do not think that that necessarily follows. There must be a whole range of things to which the National Theatre and other companies can look. For example, it is always taken that the level of pay is given in all those matters. I am not sure whether that should be accepted without question.

Mr. Hannam: Does my hon. Friend accept that the investigation by Lord Rayner has already corroborated the need to close the Cottesloe Theatre so that the National Theatre can survive the cuts that are taking place? Does he agree that the Arts Council's reduction in the amount that should have gone to the National Theatre as a result of its policy of taking the arts out to the regions will kill off the main trunk that is necessary to sustain the arts?

Mr. Waldegrave: With respect to my hon. Friend, I think that we must keep some sense of proportion. The National Theatre will still get a larger grant—it is a considerably larger amount—than that of any other theatre company in the country. I believe that just under £7 million in subsidy to the National Theatre is not unfair when taken with the fact that there has been a real increase in its funding since 1978-79.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: If the Cottesloe closes, the Minister's noble Friend will be the first Minister for the Arts to be responsible for shutting rather than opening a theatre that is the subject of public funds Is that not a disgraceful turn of events? Will the hon. Gentleman report to those responsible how the House feels about the matter, and bring about a change in policy?

Mr. Waldegrave: My noble Friend is no more responsible for closing the Cottesloe Theatre than he is for the superlative performance of "Guys and Dolls" which National Theatre put on this year. Those are matters for the management of the theatre, in conjunction with the Arts Council.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that the quality of Sir Peter Hall's work has always been excellent and stimulating? However, does he agree that the National Theatre is receiving a subidy of nearly £7 million a year, and that Sir Peter Hall should be able to cut his coat according to that cloth?

Mr. Waldegrave: Sir Peter Hall's work has always been adventurous and always on a large scale. The successes have been on a large scale and sometimes the failures have also been on a large scale, as we saw with "Jean Seberg". The whole purpose is to be adventurous. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that with such a scale of financing it is possible to produce good theatre in the centre of London.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that there is a link between the low level of settlement which the Government made on the Arts Council this year, rate capping and the abolition of the Greater London council? When will he become alarmed and worried, and indeed honest, and admit that the Government have betrayed the arts?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no relationship between those things. The hon. Gentleman may have noticed that the GLC has not yet been abolished, unfortunately; and it may be of interest for him to know that the Arts Council's funding for the National Theatre has increased a little faster than the GLC's funding for the National Theatre since the Labour party took over the GLC.

Mr. Buchan: The Minister must not rest on this business of the amount of money being given to the National Theatre. It is not one theatre, but three. It has been bequeathed an extremely costly building at over £2 million. Is not the truth simply that, not content with running down our manufacturing and coal industries and, for that matter, the pound, the Government are equally complacent about running down one of our national glories? If we have any respect left in the world under the Government, it is with regard to our National Theatre. Will the hon. Gentleman bring the matter back to the Cabinet? He might remind the Prime Minister that the last major play put on at the National Theatre was about Coriolanus, who was not totally dissimilar, apart from his unfortunate predeliction for compassion now and again. The hon. Gentleman might show the same in relation to the arts.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall not venture into arguments about Coriolanus with the hon. Gentleman. We must remember that funding for the arts has increased sharply since 1978-79—by 18 per cent. in real terms. There has been a real terms increase this year as well.

Public Libraries

24. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what representations Her Majesty's Government have received on his planned expenditure on public libraries in 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: None, Sir.

Mr. Fisher: Is the Minister aware that the public expenditure White Paper shows a real decrease of £55 million in Government expenditure on libraries next year? Is he further aware that that decrease is forcing library authorities throughout the country to cut services, that Somerset has had to abandon all spending on adult fiction, and that the Highlands and Islands have had to reduce their book fund by 82 per cent? What does he intend to do about that? Does he perhaps think that libraries were overfunded this year and thus require a decrease next year?

Mr. Waldegrave: Since 1978-79 there has been a reduction of only 1 per cent. in the number of people employed in the public library service. My noble Friend is satisfied that the level of provision is adequate, although no doubt there are hard choices to be made in individual instances.

The Arts (Private Sector Funds)

26. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what representations he has received with regard to tax advantages to private sector funders of the arts.

Mr. Waldegrave: My noble Friend the Minister for the Arts has received some letters from the National Federation of Playgoers' Societies advocating further tax concessions. The question of tax reliefs for the arts continues to be kept under review.

Mr. Proctor: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is continuing concern about the activities of the Inland Revenue special unit at Bristol, which tends to depress available private sponsorship for the arts? Is he further aware that the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts is currently collecting representations from its members and that a document prepared by leading accountants will be in the Minister's hands in April? Will he give that document and those representations the most careful consideration?

Mr. Waldegrave: I was aware that ABSA was looking into this, and I will take seriously any representations submitted by it, although I am not aware of any evidence that the Inland Revenue has changed or tightened its rules in this area.

Mr. Speaker's Letters to Members

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Secretary of State for Wales, whose capacity for getting things wrong seems to be unlimited, said in a supplementary answer at Question Time that it was improper that your ruling on a recent application in relation to contempt was read in a newspaper before it was heard on the Floor of the House or notified to the House. As this is an important matter perhaps you, Mr. Speaker, will confirm for the record that you told me that you would rule out of order any attempt to raise the matter on the Floor of the House but that I was perfectly free to make the contents of your letter known to whomever I wished, although the releasing of the letter was a matter that you wished to consider. Will you confirm that you are currently considering the question of the confidentiality of Mr. Speaker's rulings given in letters to Members?

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman is quite correct. I am considering the extent to which letters from me to right hon. and hon. Members could be released to the press. Clearly, I cannot give a blanket agreement to all my letters being released, but I am looking at the matter and I will be in communication with the right hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps you will also consider whether it is good practice for a Member to approach you to inquire about a possible breach of privilege involving another Member without that other Member being in any way involved in the approach and for that other Member to read about the matter in a newspaper in which your letter is published in full under the headline, "Edwards Secrecy Contempt Warning," as that does not seem to me to be a very satisfactory way to proceed.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know the date on which that article appeared.

Mr. Edwards: It was on 5 February.

Mr. Speaker: Last Tuesday. I think that puts into perspective my comments about my letters having wide distribution in the press. I am considering the matter. Clearly, my public rulings are available to everyone, but private letters to Members should perhaps not be quite so public.

Haringey Borough Council

3.34 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about meetings and other contacts between his Department and Councillor Salinger or other councillors of Haringey borough council and the disclosure to Councillor Salinger of the Secretary of State's assumptions under the Rates Act about the finances of the borough council.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): There has been no impropriety. *The Guardian* headlines are flatly wrong in suggesting either that Councillor Salinger has been
"given information refused to Councils"
or that I misled the House.

The majority parties in the rate-limited authorities are refusing to negotiate with the Government about their rate limits. I have made it absolutely clear that in those circumstances I am prepared—indeed, legally bound—to take account of information from elsewhere, including of course from elected councillors, of whatever party. It was in that context that one of my officials telephoned Councillor Salinger on 5 February because he understood that Councillor Salinger might have relevant factual information to provide. In Haringey's case I have not needed to make any assumptions, as all the figures required to calculate its rate limit have been supplied to me at various times by the council itself. The suggestion that I have privately revealed assumptions made in calculating Haringey's rate limit is, therefore, entirely false.

There have been meetings between Ministers or their special advisers and Conservative Members of Haringey council. One of the meetings was attended by officials, who, in accordance with the normal conventions of such meetings, recorded factual information and commented on its technical relevance.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State's statement is singularly unconvincing. Will he confirm that Councillor Salinger has confirmed that there were discussions with officials of the right hon. Gentleman's Department about the assumptions and has clearly stated that the assumptions were given to him at an open meeting of the borough council?

Did not the Secretary of State tell the House as recently as last Wednesday that there had been no contact between his Department and Conservative councillors on the borough council? That is on the record. Why has the Secretary of State not taken this opportunity to put the record straight and to be candid with the House about his dealings with minority group councillors in an attempt to bypass the decisions of the ballot box at Haringey?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm the figures given in *The Guardian* and in the letter of the chief accountant of Haringey borough council?

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a question, not a statement.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that in exercising his discretion in this matter he has capriciously withheld £6·4 million from Haringey borough council? Does not the whole sorry affair demonstrate the fact that the punitive centralising legislation is a mess, and that fixing the budgets of councils, is no business of the House or of the right hon. Gentleman's Department?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman continues to make a very bad case. He should accept that I have made no assumptions whatever in relation to Haringey. The council gave me all the figures necessary to enable me to calculate its rate limit. The accusation made in the House last week was that I told Conservative members of Haringey council of assumptions made in calculating the Haringey limit.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman's Department told them.

Mr. Jenkin: No. What I said in the House was absolutely correct. Indeed, I went on to say that had there been any meeting with officials at which such assumptions had been disclosed——

Dr. Cunningham: They have been.

Mr. Jenkin: No, they have not. I have made no assumptions in relation to Haringey. In suggesting that if an elected councillor chooses to contact a Government Department that is bypassing the ballot box, the hon. Gentleman is carrying the argument to absurd lengths.

We all know what the hon. Gentleman is up to. It is spelt out in *The Guardian*. The hon. Gentleman and the councils which he supports are trying to demonstrate that the assumptions are unreasonable, so that I can be beaten in the courts and the whole rate-capping policy reduced to tatters. That is what he says, that is what he is after and that is what this is all about.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Haringey is one of the most extravagant and profligate local authorities in the United Kingdom, with expenditure running at 34 per cent. above GRE; that for the past 12 years both Labour and Conservative Secretaries of States alike have drawn attention to the council's spending policy but that it has refused to heed any of them; and that currently it is more concerned with an expensive advertising campaign and confrontation with the Government — with the encouragement of the Opposition Front Bench—than with trying to bring about economies in expenditure? Is he also aware that my constituents and ratepayers will welcome and endorse anything that he does to reduce the intolerable burden at present upon them?

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If I may say so, this is all a very sad falling away from the days when he and I served on Hornsey borough council, Haringey's predessor.

Mr. Norman Atkinson (Tottenham): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) is precisely the same as his remarks to justify his call to the Haringey authority to dismiss some 2,200 of its workers from service? The hon. Gentleman stands condemned for demanding that of the local authority.

Is it not the explanation for all these revelations much more politically sinister than the Secretary of State makes out? Has not the right hon. Gentleman indeed made a number of assumptions? He quoted the figure of £6·4 million, which was one of his assumptions and which

appears in the correspondence. Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman is condemned by his own correspondence with the local authority.

Is not this part of a political strategy? The Secretary of State knows that all the rate-capped authorities have agreed to act in unison. The right hon. Gentleman wanted Haringey to come to see him personally and he would then have conceded the £6·4 million, thereby making it beneficial for those authorities to come to see him, and as a result breaking the unity——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have speeches during questions on a statement. The hon. Gentleman must bring his question to a close, because he has now been on his feet for several minutes.

Mr. Atkinson: Is not a political strategy the purpose of these "behind the scenes" discussions with friends of the right hon. Gentleman's own family whom he has known for many years? Was it not from out-of-hours discussions that these revelations emerged?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman knows that the leader of Haringey council, Councillor Meehan, has consistently argued that he ought to be free to talk to the Department about the rate limit, but that because of this stupid boycott imposed by Labour's national executive committee he has been precluded from doing so. There is still time, and if Councillor Meehan wishes to argue for a higher rate limit, my door is open.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm the statement apparently issued by his Department on Friday that the deputy treasurer of Haringey telephoned his Department and had certain calculations confirmed? Will he make a similar service available to the other rate-capped authorities? More important, will he make available to the House details of the assumptions which he has used so that we do not have a repetition of last week, when the House was asked to rubber stamp rate limits without adequate information?

Mr. Jenkin: I have made it clear that in relation to Haringey there were no assumptions. If any authority wishes to discuss the calculation of its rate limit, it is absolutely clear under the Act that it should use the right of appeal to come in and put forward an alternative rate limit. These matters may then be discussed. The deputy treasurer of Haringey did have a consultation, and, as I have said frequently, skilled treasurers are perfectly well able to work out how their authority's rate limit has been calculated. Haringey got the relevant calculations right within two days of the announcement last December.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Private notice questions are an extension of Question Time. We have a heavy day ahead of us, with Private Members' motions.

Mr. Clive Ponting (Trial)

3.45 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may be of assistance to the House if I say now that it is the Government's intention for an oral statement to be made tomorrow concerning the Ponting case.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be in order for me to make an application under Standing Order No. 10 at this stage? If not, at what stage would it be appropriate?

Mr. Speaker: Not until after the statements.

Mr. Morris: In that case, I give notice that I intend to do so.

Mr. Speaker: I say to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) and other right hon. and hon. Members who have given notice of Standing Order No. 10 applications that this is a private Members' day, and we already have two statements and two other applications under Standing Order No. 10 that came in before 12 o'clock. I appreciate that the judgment in the Ponting case was not received until after noon, so it might be appropriate to delay further applications under Standing Order No. 10 until tomorrow, in the interests of private Members.

Mr. Morris: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is my intention, as I have given notice, to move my application today because the earliest that we could have a debate, as opposed to a statement, would be tomorrow.

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas (Chelmsford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As many hon. Members will not even have heard the verdict in the Ponting case as yet, and as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has given an undertaking that there is to be a statement tomorrow, would it not be reasonable for hon. Members to read and reflect on the verdict before we have a discussion in the House?

Mr. Speaker: I have not heard the details either, so I am as much in the dark as anybody else.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the Leader of the House has raised this point of order, would it be in order to ask him which Minister will make the statement? Will it be the Prime Minister, in view of her responsibilities as head of the Civil Service? Can it be made clear to the Government that many of us feel that, as the Prime Minister has misled the House, she should make the statement?

Mr. Biffen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of my point of order was to inform the House that a statement would be made at the earliest possible opportunity. I shall take account of what right hon. and hon. Members have said.

Sleipner Gas

3.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the proposed purchase of gas from the Norwegian Sleipner field.

As the House is aware, major negotiations have been in progress for some time between the British Gas Corporation and the licensees of this gas field, which has reserves of some 7 trillion cubic feet, for supply of gas to the British market. Any deal resulting from the negotiations required the endorsement of Her Majesty's Government, and I had made this clear to the parties concerned.

The British Gas Corporation approached me during 1984 with the terms of a provisional agreement under which delivery of gas would start in the early 1990s, reaching a plateau in the mid-1990s at a rate which would be sufficient to meet up to 30 per cent. of United Kingdom requirements and continuing at that level well into the 21st century. The Government immediately examined the details of the contract from the point of view of the broader national interest and thereafter entered into discussions with the Norwegian Government. We explained to the Norwegians that, at the rate of delivery proposed, there was a serious risk that prospective development of gasfields on the United Kingdom continental shelf would be held up. We accordingly sought agreement that the rate of delivery provided for in the draft contract should be reduced. Discussions with the Norwegians on this and other matters continued throughout the remainder of 1984 and good progress was made.

The Government have now reviewed the proposed purchase in the light of the situation which has developed during the period of these discussions. In particular, the Government have been impressed by the results of the recent record levels of exploration and appraisal activity. As a result the estimates of proven and probable gas reserves remaining in the United Kingdom continental shelf, as shown in the Brown Book published in April 1984, have increased by 6·2 trillion cubic feet. As a consequence the Government have concluded that it will no longer be necessary to import gas in the 1990s on the scale anticipated even last summer. Accordingly, the Government have decided not to endorse the draft contract negotiated by the British Gas Corporation for the purchase of gas from the Sleipner field. The Norwegian Government and the British Gas Corporation have been informed of this decision. We recognise that the Governnent's decision will cause disappointment to our Norwegian friends. I emphasise that we shall continue to value the relationship which has developed between our two countries through our common interest in oil and gas matters.

The Government welcome the fact that current and prospective developments on the United Kingdom continental shelf now seem likely to provide sufficient gas to meet the needs of the British market well into the 1990s. However, they recognise that the British Gas Corporation has clear obligations in regard to the security of gas supply. The Government, in consultation with the corporation, will therefore keep under review the likely availability of supplies to meet demand in the coming decades.

The improved prospects for the development of our own offshore gasfields over the next few years will have important and welcome implications for the generation of additional orders and employment in the offshore supplies industry as well as reducing expenditure on imports in the 1990s.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The statement begs as many questions as it answers. Above all, I find it astonishing that the Secretary of State has made no mention of price. He has based his decision on a major revision of North sea gas reserves. The question is not just about the size of the reserves but whether they can be developed to meet gas demands in the 1990s.

In recent reviews it was assessed that 45 new fields could be developed between now and the year 2000, providing North sea related jobs, but that that would still leave a significant gap between supply and demand. Will the Secretary of State tell us which additional fields he has identified to fill that gap?

In view of the potential demand for gas in the 1990s, will the Secretary of State at least confirm that British Gas will be allowed to consider importing gas in the future if it finds that it has insufficient supplies?

The Secretary of State mentioned the discussions with the Norwegian Government. I hope that the decision will not damage our good relations with Norway. Will he make it absolutely clear that there will now be no question of exporting North sea gas from Britain?

With regard to the future of gas, will the Secretary of State say whether supplies from the North sea will be significantly cheaper than those offered under the Sleipner contract?

What role has the collapse of the pound played in the Government's decision?

The Secretary of State has taken a risk and a gamble on the nation's future gas supplies. The House deserves a much fuller assessment than he has included in his statement. Will he provide it as urgently as possible, so that the House can make a proper judgment as to the extent of the gamble?

Mr. Walker: I understand the views put by the right hon. Gentleman. I understand his fears about supplies, as he does not have the updated detailed information. We shall be making that detailed information available to the Select Committee in the very near future, so it will be available to the House, and the right hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members can then make their judgments on the validity of the improvement in the supply position. It is a genuine improvement and a pleasing one for both sides of the House. Some people think that we are still underestimating the supplies that will be available during the period concerned, but we have made our estimates in accordance with the usual prudent methods employed by the Department, under all Governments.

With regard to price, if we are talking about the price of deliveries in 10 years' time, obviously the exchange rates then prevailing will have an enormous influence. The variation in the currency exchange rate during the period since the contract was originally negotiated shows the degree to which, if the dollar is strong at a particular time, it produces a big variation in the price.

In looking at the availability of our own supplies, as opposed to the need to import them from Norway, my guess is that the availability of our own supplies will mean

that prices will be lower than they would have been if we had taken the Sleipner contract—*[Interruption.]* There is no way in which one can make a valid pronouncement on that. However, that is my genuine guess about the position.

As I made clear in my statement, I accept that there is a statutory obligation on the British Gas Corporation to ensure security of supplies. It is the duty of any Government to ensure that that is so. As I also made clear in the statement, judging by the now known reserves, we believe that far fewer imports will be required in the 1990s than was originally envisaged. On current estimates, it is still likely that some imports will be required during that period. Of course, the BGC will negotiate in consultation with Government—as it always has done—about the possibility of those supplies coming from Norway or elsewhere. While that remains the position the question of exports does not arise, especially if the demand for gas in this country is not met by our own supplies. In the foreseeable future we shall need all the supplies from the North sea. As hon. Members know, at present we are a major importer from the Frigg field in Norway.

I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I have not taken a gamble. We have consulted carefully, and the BGC has increased its estimate of gas reserves since it began negotiations. That implies is no criticism of the corporation because when it began negotiations it was working, perfectly sensibly, on the then known facts.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat that we have a private Members' day today, and it would be very unfair if a lot of time was taken up by the statements. I therefore propose to allow questions to run for a further 15 minutes on this statement, and that goes for the next statement as well.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is not the key fact that we now have a rate of increased finds in the North sea? Does that not have major implications for security of supplies and, just as importantly, for British jobs? Can my right hon. Friend estimate how many British jobs will flow from this decision?

Mr. Walker: It is impossible to give any accurate estimate, but, obviously, as we find more gas fields in the North sea there will be substantial investment. As the majority of that investment will come from firms operating in Britain, the availability of more supplies, and new and better discoveries, are obviously good news for jobs, particularly as many of those jobs will be provided in the north east and in Scotland, which are areas of high unemployment.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): In view of his statement, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will not in any circumstances permit the export of southern sector gas from the United Kingdom? Will he give some assurances about the finds of probable and possible reserves about which he spoke. The probable reserves are very futuristic. What is the right hon. Gentleman's guesstimate of how long we can be assured of security of supplies? What——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Douglas: Yes, Mr. Speaker. What is the likelihood of publishing the BGC's background papers, together with the right hon. Gentleman's views, on the contract that he has renounced?

Mr. Walker: Obviously, it is for the BGC to decide what it should publish.

The hon. Gentleman asked about security of supplies. I can only say that the increase of about 15 per cent. in availability that has occurred since we published the Brown Book in July is something that I could not have predicted last June. The hon. Gentleman has considerable experience of, and interest in, these matters, and he will understand the difficulty. Ten years ago, when I previously had responsibility for oil and gas, I was shown predictions which have now been proved to be totally wrong. I hope that that trend will continue, because they are often proved wrong in the right direction for this country. The estimates that we are now making are below those of some oil companies and above those of others. To some extent, because of what is required from the licensing agreements that we have with various fields, is only the Department that has all the detailed information. Thus we believe that there is good security of supply. Judging by present requirements, all the gas in the North sea will be required by the BGC in the immediate future. Obviously, if the time comes when our gas supplies are such that we have surpluses, any Government would have to review the scene.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his statement, because had it not been for the excellent news about reserves additional to those published in the Brown Paper in April the position would have been unfortunate for my constituents. Will my right hon. Friend maintain close liaison with the British Gas Corporation on the question of increased production? Does he agree that that would not only secure existing jobs at St. Fergus in my constituency, but possibly create further jobs?

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend referred to the Brown Book published in April. He is right. I referred to it as the July Brown Book, but it was published in April. This decision will be helpful for jobs. A great deal of investment will take place in the new fields. In the period leading up to the 1990s there will be further requirements for pipelines, which will also provide more work.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): In the light of the Secretary of State's encouraging words about improved prospects for the development of our own offshore gas fields over next few years and his hope that they will have welcome implications, will he look sympathetically at the desirability of extending supplies of gas from the continental shelf to areas such as Northern Ireland, where such gas is not currently avaialble?

Mr. Walker: I shall certainly discuss that with my right hon. Friend who has responsibility for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although deciding not to buy may or may not be a big decision at this time, it could have traumatic effects upon a supplier who has relied upon a contract, as in this case? May we have my right hon. Friend's assurance that the Norwegian Government—very good friends of ours—have been kept fully in the picture and that there is no financial liability upon us for non-completion of the contract?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I can assure my hon. Friend that we value the manner of our talks with the Norwegian

[Mr. Walker]

Government. I have been involved in meetings with Norwegian Ministers and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has been in Norway over the last few days having full consultations with the Norwegian Government. They will be disappointed, but they understand the reasons. The Government's objective is to continue to have good relations with Norway.

Mr. James Tinn (Redcar): Is the Minister aware that, following the earlier Government decision not to go ahead with the gas-gathering pipeline, to encourage the development of a totally unnecessary and unwanted petrochemical complex at Mossmorran is yet another body blow to the people of Teesside, where unemployment is the highest in mainland Britain? What does the right hon. Gentleman propose to do? Why will the Government not allow the corporation to go ahead with an agreement which makes good commercial sense to it and sound common sense to our good friends the Norwegians?

Mr. Walker: I do not think that the news is bad for Teesside. There will be more developments in our own sector of the North sea and more suppliers, investment and equipment will be required, much of which can come from the north-east. Further pipelines are likely to be developed in this period and requirements in refining capacity are likely to be increased from our own resources of gas in the North sea. That should not be bad news for the north-east.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the unsatisfactory aspects of the proposed deal was that the British Gas Corporation was prepared to offer a higher price for Norwegian gas than it was to our own suppliers? If our suppliers had been offered better prices earlier, we should not have had to negotiate for the gas.

Mr. Walker: The fact that there has been such success in our exploration over the period, and that there have been finds, shows that every encouragement and incentive have been given for people to develop and produce. If one is negotiating an import contract for the 1990s, one has genuinely to calculate the world price for that volume of contract at that time. I am sure that that is what the British Gas Corporation did. I am pleased that the taxation and other policies pursued by the Government have encouraged this development of our own resources.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Is the Secretary of State not in danger of misleading the country by presenting this as an either/or decision, when the reality is that even the best forecasts suggest that we are likely to need Sleipner, and everything else that has been discovered and is not yet discovered? Is the Minister not gambling on supplies which have not yet been found? Will he acknowledge that by using the improving success rate as a justification for his decision he is giving the opposite reason to that which the Government gave for not going ahead with the gas-gathering system, which might have secured the gas supplies which we now need?

Mr. Walker: I think that further pipeline developments will take place. I totally disagree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. If he looks at the facts and the figures he will see that a contract for sales from Sleipner is not needed for the 1990s.

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, to get security of supply, it would be best to link the European grid system with the English grid system? Is my right hon. Friend aware that by his good decision announced today producers will be given the incentive to bring their gas production forward, because there are ample supplies in the North sea?

Mr. Walker: My projections show that there are better supplies in the North sea than we predicted for the 1990s. Forecasts of consumption suggest that there might well be a need for imports during that period. Any Government and the corporation have a duty to keep the position under careful watch and care. Linking pipelines here with those in Norway or elsewhere depends upon the nature of the supply and demand built up. At present we are in the happy position of being able to take ourselves all the gas from North sea.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): In reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) the Secretary of State said he was unable to make any prediction about price. How then is he able to predict capacity and volume? Further to that, and following the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Mr. Tinn) about employment—which is of dire importance to us in the north-east—is the right hon. Gentleman saying that the 650 jobs at the Philips handling, storage and processing facility which will be at risk before the end of the decade will be guaranteed beyond the end of the century by the home-based reserves which he says we shall tap for the next 15 to 20 years?

Mr. Walker: There was no guarantee under any Sleipner agreement. Under that agreement, no decision was made about where the liquids would go. There was no agreed position on that. As a generalisation, I think that for jobs in the north-east today's announcement is a plus. On estimates and capacity, one must take the best information available. The Department of Energy, under all Governments, can never be accused of having made over-optismistic estimates of capacity. The Department has made the current estimates of capacity in the same way as it has done over the years, under all Governments. The estimates are highly conservative and they are not as accurate in their optimism as they could be. The Department has always been wise to be on the side of prudence rather than of extravagance. It has continued that with these estimates.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have given a great deal of thought to this complex problem for many years? Does he think on reflection that, looking at the possibility of a serious gap in the 1990s, we might have passed up a valuable opportunity by turning down this contract? Does he agree that we might have to resort to panic buying of Dutch and even Soviet gas in the 1990s?

Mr. Walker: Obviously, if I had thought that I should have given approval to the Sleipner deal without hesitation. As my hon. Friend knows, we examined the matter carefully, without any prejudice against the deal. The situation has genuinely changed to the advantage of our country. It is the duty of any Government and the British Gas Corporation to ensure that they have secure supplies for the decades to come. Those supplies may be available from many parts of the world, including Norway, in the future.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Do not the anxieties mentioned by the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) exist because the country and the House are so uncertain about the Government's hopes and intentions for energy supplies from all different sources in the coming years? Will the Secretary of State make much more clear to the House and to the country how the Government see the energy mix for the future, so that better judgments can be made on such deals? What is the British Gas Corporation's reaction to the decision that he has just announced?

Mr. Walker: The British Gas Corporation must be free to make its own pronouncements. It has been fully consulted throughout and knows of the adjustments we have made with regard to capacity and also the validity of the reasons on which we have based our judgments. Obviously, having negotiated the Sleipner deal, the corporation must be disappointed that it has not been completed. I am sure that the BGC will wish to continue good relations with Norway as a potential supplier of gas in future, as it is at the present time.

On the hon. Gentleman's question about projections on a whole range of energy supplies, I remind him — although not wishing to do so — of his political past. The party of which he used to be a member published a series of projections for energy supplies over five and 10-year periods, but the only thing that can be said about them is that they were all proved to be dramatically wrong.

Atomic Energy Authority

4.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future of the Atomic Energy Authority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy told Parliament on 28 March that he had set in hand a wide-ranging review of the role and activities of the authority. On 3 October he placed in the Library of the House a press statement which summarised the recommendations of the review. Following consultations with the interested parties, I can now inform the House of the conclusions reached by the Government.

Since the authority was established in 1954 as a vote-funded body with a high degree of statutory independence, it has made a crucial contribution to the development of the civil uses of nuclear power in this country. Today, civil nuclear power is an essential and established part of our national life. Last year more than 18 per cent. of electricity supplied in the United Kingdom was nuclear. The proportion will reach 21 per cent. when the three nuclear stations most recently linked to the national grid reach full power, with a further increase when stations now under construction are completed. The civil nuclear industry in the widest sense now provides about 100,000 jobs. All this has been achieved with an excellent safety record. The authority's work is held in high regard and it will continue to have a major role to play in both the nuclear and non-nuclear field.

The review had two guiding principles: first, that the authority should move further towards a commercial basis of operation; secondly, that a defined customer-contractor relationship should be applied as far as possible to its work. The Government fully endorse those principles.

The review recommended, and the Government accept, that the activities of the authority should be placed on a trading fund basis. The authority will be required to account for its activities in a fully commercial manner, within financial objectives set by the Secretary of State. We intend to provide the authority with a capital structure and powers to borrow as required to enable it to operate as a trading fund from April 1986, and will introduce legislation as soon as possible for that purpose.

I have considered carefully, in consultation with the authority and with its customers in the nuclear industry, how the principles of the review should apply to the funding of particular programmes at present financed by my Department. A balance is required between the application of the customer-contractor principle, which is valuable for financial discipline and a more commercial approach, and the retention of an independent capability for safety and underlying research in the authority. The electricity industry, like the Government, attaches importance to that independent capability. Although the generating boards will increase the amount of work which they pay for on a customer-contractor basis, my Department will continue to fund a substantial authority programme of thermal reactor and general safety research. The Government broadly endorse a recommendation of the review group that there should be an element in the authority's charges to customers, including the

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

Department, in respect of underlying research. I am discussing the application of this recommendation with those principals concerned.

The effect of the proposals will be to carry further the development of recent years under which the funding of the authority's expenditure has become more broadly based and proportionately less dependent on Department of Energy Votes. In particular, there will be a further increase in funding by the CEGB. With other changes, I expect this to result in a reduction of £5 million in my departmental Vote in 1985-86 compared with previous plans.

I have already mentioned the authority's contribution to the development of civil nuclear power in this country. It continues to give valuable support to the nuclear industry in both the public and private sectors. It is diversifying its services in the non-nuclear field, and has made an important contribution to technology relevant to North sea development.

The evolutionary changes I have just announced will put the authority on an increasingly commercial footing and will give its staff a new incentive. I am confident that the changes will enable the authority further to develop its role and contribution to the economy on both a national and international basis. I am also confident that all those concerned will join in taking full advantage of this new opportunity.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The Minister's announcement is unsatisfactory on three counts. First, as the Minister said, to put the authority on a commercial basis is an evolutionary change. We believe that it is a change towards privatisation. I draw the Minister's attention to the note appended to the statement of 3 October so that the House is under no misunderstanding about the way in which the Government have clothed today's statement. Paragraph 9, entitled

"The Authority as a Trading Fund"

states:

"The extension of the customer/contractor approach to the Authority's nuclear work for the Department would be facilitated by putting the Authority on a Trading Fund basis. This would require all work to be accounted for on a fully commercial basis, impose additional discipline through the requirement to meet financial objectives, create financial flexibility between years, highlight major issues which need to be dealt with in commercial terms, and facilitate possible eventual privatisation."

Secondly, does the Minister realise that the people of this country will be appalled that work connected with nuclear power, whether research or in any other area, will be on a commercial basis, in private hands? The Minister has argued that the justification for that is the saving of £5 million. That is not an argument; it is an unsafe betrayal in the interests of private profit.

Thirdly, is it not monstrous that the result of the announcement will be to take from Parliament the right to question and seek accountability for that aspect of nuclear power activity?

The Government appear not only to be preparing the way for privatisation, but to be weakening the authority of Parliament.

Mr. Goodlad: I may be able to put some of the hon. Gentleman's fears at rest. There are no plans to privatise the Atomic Energy Authority. Therefore, the fears that animated his first and second points do not apply.

On the hon. Gentleman's third point, there will be no reduction in accountability to this House because of the change to the trading fund.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Does my hon. Friend agree that this decision really consolidates the existing trend on outside financing? Will he reiterate that research into the safety of nuclear reactors will still be a top priority of the Government?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is quite right to say that the move to a trading fund will reinforce a trend that is already taking place. He is also correct to say that the resources available to the authority for thermal reactor and general safety research will not be reduced. The Department will continue to fund substantial authority programmes in that area. The Government attach paramount importance to safety, and will continue to do so.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Under the trading fund structure, will capital borrowings now cease to be counted by the Treasury in the public expenditure totals?

Mr. Goodlad: The capital structure of the trading fund has yet to be established by my right hon. Friend, and will be the subject of continuing consultations.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): In welcoming the statement, may I ask whether the authority will continue to co-operate with its European partners in the projects that are currently operating?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I accept that, after it has successfully spearheaded the development and research of the nuclear programme during about 30 years, it is sensible to move towards a recognition of the commercial possibilities of the authority. However, does the Minister realise that his statement is unsatisfactorily opaque in that, although it accepts in principle the recommendation of a trading fund, it does not begin to define which matters will still be funded by the Department? There have been six months of consultation on this matter. Is there a risk that fundamental research will not be commissioned, and therefore, not carried out? How does the Minister propose to continue to fund the fast-breeder reactor programme?

Mr. Goodlad: I said in my statement that the underlying research of the authority will remain a priority. That will be the case. My Department will continue to provide funding to underlying research, and the industry will also contribute. The position of the fast-breeder reactor programme will remain as it is at present. The programme is proceeding through the collaborative arrangements set out in the intergovernmental memorandum of understanding which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State signed in January last year. The resources available to the programme are not changed by this decision, but the work will be carried out on a more explicit customer-contractor relationship between the Department and the authority.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): My hon. Friend's statement will be studied with the keenest interest at the atomic energy establishment at Winfrith, which is the largest employer in my constituency. The workers there will appreciate his remarks about their work in safety

and nuclear matters, and about the additional research that they have done on North sea oil. However, will he give them some assurance this afternoon as to whether the commercial implications of his statement, which I am sure will be broadly welcomed, will give undue leverage to the Central Electricity Generating Board over the authority's activities? Does he accept that many people throughout the industry, and especially in my constituency, would be most grateful for a reassurance on this matter?

Mr. Goodlad: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the distinguished work that has been done at Winfrith for many years, in which I know he has taken a close interest. I assure him that no undue influence will follow this review either from the CEGB or anyone else.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): The Minister referred to research, notably in connection with the fast-breeder reactor. What effect will the Government's proposals have on longer-term research into changing to the fusion process instead of fission?

Mr. Goodlad: The review of the authority did not cover fusion. The position remains that research into fusion forms an integral part of the Euratom fusion programme and is a successful example of European co-operation in a high technology sector. Recently I announced that the Government's direct contribution to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's fusion work, which is carried out under a contract of association with Euratom, should be £15·9 million in 1985-86, £13·7 million in 1986-87 and £13·3 million in 1987-88. That funding, together with our commitment to the joint European Torus project under the joint understanding and the host agreement, will ensure that the United Kingdom maintains a substantial fusion programme.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Will the external financing limit of the electricity supply industry be adjusted because of its increased contribution, which will come about presumably because of this change?

Mr. Goodlad: In principle, changes will be reflected in the EFL.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the Minister accept that nuclear power capacity is a matter of considerable political sensitivity, and that there is genuine concern that increased commercialisation is bound to impinge on control and accountability? Will he expand his previous assurance and tell us what changes are being made to ensure that, in this different perception of the authority's role, there will be genuine accountability to, and control by, the House?

Mr. Goodlad: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government and the House will have as much control and accountability as they have always had.

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Will the financial objectives be set out in White Papers or in specific legislation brought before the House for that purpose, like section 29 of the Water Act 1973? When is such legislation likely to appear?

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be responsible for setting the financial objectives of the authority, with the agreement of the Treasury and after consultation with the authority. The timing of legislation will be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

NHS (Theft and Corruption)

4.25 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the detailed revelation that has just been made of the magnitude of theft and corruption in the National Health Service by a number of consultants who abuse NHS facilities in their practice of private medicine at a cost to the public purse of some tens of millions of pounds a year."

The matter is specific because, for the first time, after an in-depth audit of 37 district health authorities after the revelation of significant fraud at Sutton Coldfield last summer, several hospitals and consultants were named in a detailed analysis of the official evidence by a "TV Eye" programme last Thursday evening entitled "Consultants on the Make." It revealed point by point how even the recently tightened procedures adopted by many health authorities cannot prevent abuse by private medicine on a significant scale, and showed that it is now becoming endemic in the National Health Service.

The matter is of vital national importance because it reveals that the fundamental principles of the NHS are being eroded, not by the odd rotten apple in the barrel here and there, but systematically and all over the country. In Darlington, consultants destroyed 27 key forms which showed that fees were owed to the NHS. In Merthyr Tydfil, NHS patients were told that they would have to become private patients if they wanted hospital treatment urgently. In Sutton Coldfield, after the original row had been made public and a tightening-up exercise instituted, consultants' fees to the Good Hope hospital suddenly increased by £1,000 a month. In Wakefield, consultants manufactured forms to conceal evidence of having treated private patients. In Derby, NHS laboratory facilities were used for testing hundreds of animal specimens for local vets, without the knowledge or permission of the health authority, and such tests were given precedence over tests for some human patients. Yet the "TV Eye" programme shows that those examples are only the tip of the iceberg.

This matter is urgent for two main reasons. First, Ministers have a clear public duty to stop this haemorrhage of public funds from the abuses now uncovered as being of a serious and growing magnitude. The annual loss to the Exchequer is already substantially greater that the annual income to the Exchequer from the overseas visitor regulations which the Government insisted on introducing because a tiny number of foreigners were not making full payment of fees to the National Health Service.

The matter is also urgent because in any other walk of life theft on this scale would have resulted in instant dismissal and criminal proceedings, possibly involving years in prison.

Where persons are found to have been deliberately using their positions of power and prestige to defraud the rest of the community, the issue should be taken up without delay. The individuals concerned should be named and dealt with immediately. I submit that it is incumbent upon us to ensure, for the good name of the House, that that happens. For these reasons, I request that the matter be debated in the House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the

[Mr. Speaker]

House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the wholesale evasion of fee-paying by those practising private medicine in the NHS and the consequential major loss of public revenue as revealed by a Thames Television programme entitled 'Consultants on the Make'."

I have listened with care to the hon. Gentleman, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Coal Industry Dispute

4.32 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the deteriorating situation in the Scottish coalfield which raises questions about man management relations, the future of jobs and investment prospects in the area and the survival of local communities, indicating the need for a principled and negotiated settlement of the current dispute."

The matter is specific, Mr. Speaker, because, while it is part of the miners' general dispute, it relates to a specific coalfield. The background for that coalfield is different from that for other areas of the United Kingdom, because before the present dispute there was evidence of a difference in the approach of management to safety cover. In other areas of the coal board, the British Association of Colliery Managers was called in to provide safety cover, but in Scotland that has not happened. I have made submissions previously on this issue and referred to the Bogside colliery in my constituency.

We have no doubt that management has a right to manage, but anyone who knows anything about the coal industry will recognise that this is an extremely circumscribed right because of practice and legislation. A suitable analogy is that of the safety of a ship at sea. The coalmine manager wants the right to manage, but he cannot manage properly without the co-operation of others in the industry, especially the members of the NUM and NACODS.

In my constituency and in other areas of Fife there has been a massive loss of jobs, which has made the matter extremely urgent. We have lost faces at Castlehill and at the Frances-Seafield complex. The evidence is that the men have provided safety cover when requested to do so. On the other hand, management has played a cat-and-mouse game.

There has been disagreement in the House about a principled and negotiated settlement of the dispute because of different interpretations of the NACODS agreement of October 1984. I shall quote briefly from the agreement to show that we must adopt a different interpretation from the one that has been adopted by Ministers. Part of the NACODS agreement states:

"the Board are very ready to re-examine the Review Procedure and to adopt any amendments which will improve its effectiveness. The Association will appreciate, of course, that this must be done in a way which will meet with the approval of all the parties concerned, including NUM and BACM."

I submit that that sentence gives the lie to the Government's interpretation of the agreement. The agreement cannot be triggered, except with the approval of the NUM and the BACM. That reflects the negotiated intentions of the parties.

The matter is urgent, because we are suffering a massive haemorrhage of jobs in the coal industry in areas of high unemployment. We need to reach a settlement because of the damage to Scottish employment and the effect that the dispute is having on areas of high unemployment, such as my constituency in Fife.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this matter should take precedence over the business of the House as set out on the Order Paper, and request you to grant a debate on it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the deteriorating situation in the Scottish coalfield which raises serious questions about man management relations, the future of jobs and investment prospects in the area and the survival of local communities, indicating the need for a principled and negotiated settlement of the current dispute."

I regret that I have to give the hon. Gentleman the same answer as I gave to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I listened carefully to what he said, but I do not consider that the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Clive Ponting (Trial)

4.36 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the misuse of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and whether the Attorney-General, in current circumstances, should have granted his consent to prosecute in the case of the Queen v. Ponting."

The intervention of the Leader of the House on a pre-emptive point of order does not satisfy us. A statement is to be made by a person unknown—the Government are coy about revealing who will make the statement. That is no substitute for a debate at the earliest opportunity.

This matter is specific. As the House began this afternoon's sitting, the news reached us of the aquittal of Mr. Clive Ponting. It might be said that it was as much a conviction of the Government as an aquittal of Mr. Ponting. It is possibly a reflection on the role of the Secretary of State for Defence and his Minister of State, both of whose actions must cause considerable anxiety to the House.

It is important that the Attorney-General, with the Solicitor-General, took the decision to prosecute in a case where there was, on the Crown's admission, no security consideration. It is important that we hear the Attorney-General's justification for his decision. On 12 November 1984 he told the House:

"Once the case has been disposed of, I shall have to answer for my decision here, and I am not frightened to do it."—[*Official Report*, 12th November 1984; Vol. 67, c. 410.]

The matter is urgent because, for all we know, there may be other cases pending that are awaiting the decision of the Attorney-General. Can the House save the Crown from falling flat on its face again? Are others to be put in unnecessary jeopardy because of the Attorney-General's decisions and Parliament's failure to substitute a code that is more intelligible and more capable of enforcement? That was the effect of the Lord Chancellor's words when he was introducing a Bill seeking the protection of official information in 1979. That measure sought to deal with the issue and to limit criminality.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the misuse of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and whether the Attorney-General, in current circumstances, should have granted his consent to prosecute in Regina v. Ponting."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has raised this matter at the first possible opportunity. He knows that the verdict was announced after I took the Chair and he has heard the Leader of the House say that there is to be a statement tomorrow. I have listened with care to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish in any way to contest your ruling on the application of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris)

[Mr. Chris Smith]

to seek to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10. However, I have a constituency interest in the matter that he raised and I seek your guidance on how it will be possible, after tomorrow's statement, to call the Government to account for their motives and reasons for bringing the prosecution in the first place. It does not seem to be possible, after a statement, to put such questions to the Attorney-General. I ask for guidance on this extremely important matter.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot advise the hon. Member about tactics, and he would not expect me to do so. He should wait for the statement tomorrow. If he catches my eye he will have the opportunity to put a question to the Minister who makes the statement. There are other parliamentary ways of bringing this matter before the House.

Abortion

4.40 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I beg to move,

That this House notes with concern the continuing high numbers of abortions in the United Kingdom, particularly the number of late abortions highlighted by the recent study group of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists; and calls upon the Government to pay attention to the moral and ethical questions raised by abortion.

A Member of Parliament may have to wait a considerable number of years before he is fortunate enough to have a motion called for debate. I could have decided to ask the House to debate the economy, which is of central concern to the nation, but the House spends virtually every day of every week discussing such issues.

Abortion is one issue of vital moral and ethical concern to millions of people which has not been discussed in the House for nearly five years. Since that issue was last discussed, about 600,000 abortions have been performed. Since the passing of the Abortion Act 1967, 2,234,326 abortions have been carried out — 145 every day of every year. As one person put it, "It seems that the Abortion Act has got cancer." It has resulted in many more abortions being performed than the original sponsors of the 1967 legislation intended. For those reasons, I believe that it is my duty to give Parliament an opportunity to debate this issue.

The abortion issue raises classic arguments between principle and expediency. I shall deal, first, with the arguments of principle, then go on to the arguments of expediency and finally review the law as it stands.

Two questions are raised in the arguments of principle. First, is human life sacred? Secondly, where does human life begin?

The answer to the first question must be an unequivocal yes. Human life is sacred to the Christian who believes that every soul has a right to conscience so that it can know God. Human life is sacred to the humanist who believes that, because life terminates with death, everyone has a right to life. I believe that human life is sacred because everyone has a right to life. The mentally retarded have as much right to life as the mentally normal. The old, the sick, the weak and the stupid have as much right to life as the young, the healthy, the strong and the clever.

The second question is: where does human life begin? Foetology has made great strides in recent years. Ultra-scan techniques allow us to peer into the secret life of the womb. We know that the embryo is genetically complete at conception. We know that at the 25th day following conception the heart beats. We know that the bones are being formed by the sixth week and that by the 10th week all limbs are established. Even to the layman's eye, the foetus is obviously a human being. We know that at the 16th week the heart pumps about 50 pints of blood a day. We know that at the 20th week eyebrows and eyelashes have already formed. From the knowledge that has been built up during the past 20 years, we know that birth is an incident in a long-established process. A line cannot be drawn at any one stage — whether at six, 12 or 20 weeks, or even birth — at which one can say, "This is where life begins." The only logical conclusion is that life begins at conception.

Another objection to these arguments is that life begins when it is capable of being sustained away from the

mother. That begs other serious questions. Is life sustainable immediately after birth when a baby is still reliant on outside support? A baby left in the womb would have a chance to survice. Most important of all is the question: does dependence deny existence?

A woman certainly has a right to choose to have, say, her appendix taken out. Her appendix is dependent on her and can have no prospect of independent existence. Does a woman have a right to choose to terminate the foetus, which is certainly dependent on her but which has the opportunity of independence in the future? Those are two very different arguments.

I should have thought that those arguments show that, if one looks at this issue purely from the point of personal principle, there can be only one answer—that abortion is wrong. However, many would say, "Although, speaking for myself, I may think that abortion is wrong, I am not prepared to impose my views on society."

I do not want to deny the seriousness of the back-street abortion argument or to deny the pain and humiliation suffered under the previous law by many women through back-street abortions. I must, however deal with the moral argument put forward by the anti-abortionists who say, "Because burglaries will always take place, is that an argument for making them legal?"

One need not take the moral point of view alone. There is evidence that the 1967 abortion laws created a new clientele for abortion. Society today is very different from society in 1967. Birth control is universally available. Society hopes to care and counsel women faced with unplanned pregnancies rather than to censure them.

An interesting report published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1966 showed that, based on hospital admissions and deaths, there were about 14,000 illegal abortions in 1966. That compares with 128,000 abortions a year now. It is said by those in favour of abortion that the official statistics camouflage the real state of affairs. If that were the case, one would have expected the deaths to figure somewhere in the official statistics. In fact, the figures show that, although the number of deaths among women of child-bearing age was decreasing by 300 a year before 1967, in the first full year of the operation of the 1967 Act the number increased.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Britain has one of the lowest abortion rates in the world—a rate that has changed little during the past 10 years — contrary to the impression that he is trying to give?

Mr. Leigh: I said that there had been about 128,000 abortions a year. The abortion rate has been fairly steady in recent years, as the hon. Lady said. That is a matter of interest and concern to the House.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Since the passing of the 1967 legislation, there have been about 2,333,000 abortions. That is a substantial and damaging figure.

Mr. Leigh: I said that at the beginning of my speech. My hon. Friend has made a fair point.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Gentleman has cited the number of abortions since the 1967 legislation was passed. He seems to be motivated by the increased numbers. Have we any means of finding out the number of back-street abortions? Does the hon. Gentleman assume that the number is less since the 1967 Act and that more abortions are now carried out in a proper way because that is the more sensible approach?

Mr. Leigh: I said that the report by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists suggested that there were about 14,000 illegal abortions in 1966. There is no doubt that, although the Act has resulted in fewer back-street abortions, it has created a considerably enlarged clientele for abortions, and that is a matter of anxiety. They have increased. There have been 2 million abortions since 1967. There is no doubt that the Act has resulted in a considerable increase in abortions in this country.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood) *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: I am sure that the hon. Lady will wish to speak. I want to go on to other points. If she wishes to intervene on them, I shall give way.

I shall deal with the difficult arguments about rape. I do not deny the existence of the serious and heartfelt anxiety about that issue. The Churches take a moral line which I must mention briefly. It is that one act of violence can never justify another, but the figures show that only about 2 per cent. of abortions are for genuine medical reasons, including rape. Many people who are worried about the abortion legislation as it now operates would be prepared to provide for rape, but that would not affect the 108,000 abortions carried out last year under section 2.

The main argument pursued by pro-abortionists is: better no child than an unwanted child. In modern Britain there is and need be no such thing as an unwanted child. For every child there are 10 childless couples desperate to adopt. Our want is not a reliable judgment as to whether a human life should be allowed to exist. There is no evidence to show that wanted children are not maltreated. Dr. Edward Lenoski calculated that 91 per cent. of child abuse took place with wanted children. Since the passing of the Act, there have been 317,000 more children in care. The arguments about wanted or unwanted children are the same as those used in the pagan world about infanticide and exposure of children on the hillside.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my hon. Friend agree that the statistics show that in 1968—the year that the Abortion Act came into effect—there were about 24,000 adoptions in this country, and that in 1983 there were about 9,000 adoptions, of which only about 3,000 were for truly illegitimate children and were non-parental applications? Does not that vast decrease in the number of children available for adoption since 1968 say a great deal in favour of the point that he is making?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. There is the argument that, as a man, I have no right to discuss this issue. It is not my business to apportion blame. I do not underestimate the considerable pressures caused by unwanted pregnancy. Society has no right to censure unplanned pregnancy. Society has a duty to care and to give unstinting love, guidance and advice on how life can be saved rather than on how it can be destroyed. The House has a duty and a right to speak up for the weak against the strong.

I said that I would begin by looking at the arguments of principle and then of expediency. I wish briefly to review the law as it stands. The fundamental law on this subject is the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which proscribed abortion. That was amended by the

[Mr. Leigh]

Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, which introduced the offences of child destruction or causing the death of a child capable of being born alive. That is an important point to which I wish to return later, because it is of significance to late abortions. The Act was amended as a result of the case of Regina *v.* Bourne which decided that a woman's life depended upon physical and mental health as much as anything else.

Those Acts were amended by the Abortion Act 1967. The Abortion Act provided four grounds for abortion—life saving, therapeutic, social and engenic. In 1983, out of 127,375 abortions, 108,806 — the vast majority — were performed under section 2, which relates to the risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman; only 538 abortions were perfomed under section 1, which relates to the risk to the life of a pregnant woman; and only 2,019 were carried out under the engenic section, which relates to the risk of birth of a severely abnormal baby.

Apart from the strongly pro-abortion lobby, there is almost universal anxiety about the number of late abortions. I am talking about abortions performed between the 24th and 28th weeks. Advances in medical science have ensured that babies of fewer than 24 weeks gestational age can be born alive. As *The Times* put it on 9 January 1984:

"Every advance in obstetric techniques makes the present position less tenable."

My reading of the Acts, and that of many others, tells me —I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will comment on this point — that the Infant Life (Preservation) Act defines child destruction as the killing in utero of a child capable of being born alive regardless of gestational age. A baby aborted alive is covered by the law relating to homicide.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to comment on the view that it is unnecessary to have a new upper limit Bill. All that the Government need do is to circulate and inform area health authorities that, with the advances in medical science, the age of viability stands, according to the Department of Health and Social Security, at 20, 22 or 24 weeks and that abortions committed beyond that gestational period are illegal.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): How many abortions have taken place after 20 weeks of pregnancy during the past five years or so?

Mr. Leigh: I do not have the figures in my head, but I have them in my briefing papers.

Mrs. Short: That is the case.

Mr. Leigh: Of course, the hon. Lady is right. The vast majority of abortions are performed within the 10th or 12th week period.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride) *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: May I just answer the hon. Lady's point? As I said, the vast majority of abortions are performed early in pregnancy, but that does not deny the argument about principle that I put forward earlier. Abortions are still carried out beyond the 20th week.

Mrs. Renée Short: How many?

Mr. Leigh: I wish to deal with that point now.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): In the interest of accuracy, will my hon. Friend accept from me that in 1983 —the latest year for which figures are available—the number of abortions carried out later than 20 weeks was 1·38 per cent. of the total and that the reasons for those abortions were good and strong?

Mr. Leigh: To answer that point, I wish to deal with the confidential study carried out by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, which was worried about late abortions, and some interesting facts emerged from that study. The number of late abortions was six to one in the private sector as against the National Health Service; 54 per cent. were carried out on women from abroad; 87 per cent. were under section 2, which, I think, answers the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison); and only 0·16 per cent. were carried out under section 1—risk to life of the pregnant woman.

There is anxiety about late abortions and the financial link between referral agencies and abortion clinics, which are not allowed to advertise, and how people are persuaded to go to abortion clinics on the advice of referral agencies.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the issue of late abortions—I sympathise and agree with much of what he is saying—does he accept that it is not as easy as he says to pinpoint the exact time when an abortion is late? He says that 26 weeks is accepted, but it is not accepted. There is no consensus that viability is certain at 26 weeks, for the simple reason that the exact moment of conception is never known. There can be differences of one, two, three or four weeks.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman is right, but I think that most people accept that 28 weeks as the age of viability is far too late, given the advances that have taken place in medical science. There have been cases of babies being born alive, even though their gestational age is less than 24 weeks.

I do not believe that the sponsors of the original Act wanted to see a close financial link between referral agencies and abortion clinics.

On the conscience question, under English law, a person is innocent until proved guilty, but under the abortion legislation doctors are required to prove conscience. Recently nurses have been sacked for refusing to insert instruments prior to an abortion, for refusing to fill in forms or for refusing to make appointments. There should be an absolute right for doctors and nurses with conscientious objections not to be involved in abortions.

One of the most difficult areas considered in the recent amending Bill was the tightening up of the sections of the 1967 Act. In December 1979, during proceedings in Standing Committee C on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, the then Solicitor-General dealt with the statistical argument. The Act in general gives the right to carry out abortions if the risk of childbirth to a mother's health is greater than the risk of her having an abortion. Abolitionists claim that the figures prove that fewer women die from abortion than used to die from childbirth. That is true, but the figures are not comparable, because women who die during childbirth tend to be suffering from some gross abnormality, whereas those who die from abortion tend to be healthy young women who would have had a normal pregnancy.

In 1979, the Solicitor-General stressed the lack of yardsticks in determining relative risks. I believe that the statistical argument could be overcome by including in the

1967 Act the words "serious or substantial". It is interesting to note that Sir John Peel, the Queen's gynaecologist, told the Standing Committee in 1979 that between 5 and 10 per cent. of women having abortions suffered sterility; that figure did not include abnormalities.

In my review of the law, I have refrained from taking the absolutist line that all abortions are wrong. I have simply tried to review the law as it stands. Politics being the art of the possible, I do not believe that one can take an absolutist line. There is a case for a step-by-step approach in this immensely important issue. Parliament has a right to discuss it, and I hope that hon. Members will support me for having given Parliament that opportunity.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the debate must end at 7 o'clock, so we have less than two hours left. Many hon. Members wish to speak.

5.3 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): I think that the House would have preferred not to have this debate. In the past 16 to 18 years, some of us have sat through numerous debates following the passing of the 1967 Act, which provided relief for women, and we remember hearing similar arguments to those presented today by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh).

It is disappointing that so many years after the passing of an Act that has been endorsed by the medical profession an hon. Member should present ad nauseam the same old jejune arguments that the 1967 Act rendered out of date. I shall not bother to respond to those old arguments, though the Minister for Health may feel the need to do so.

As regards the new points raised in the motion of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, there are legal restrictions on late abortions. The clinics where terminations are carried out are controlled and inspected; an inspectorate was set up under the 1967 Act.

In 1975, the Department of Health and Social Security laid down that terminations in non-NHS premises should be performed after 20 weeks only if resuscitation equipment was available and staff were present on the premises to use it, thus obviating the danger to the mother. In 1980, the DHSS wrote to all places that are approved to perform terminations saying that in cases of terminations where the stage of gestation was believed to be over 20 weeks or there was a reasonable possibility that it may become 20 weeks and the period of gestation was in doubt, an ultrasound scan should be performed. In the same year, the Department also recommended that scans should be carried out on all women who were 16 weeks to 20 weeks pregnant, in the hope that

"the additional assurance of an ultrasound scan will serve both as a safeguard to patients and prove also to be in the best interests of both the operating doctors and the nursing home proprietors against the possibility of subsequent allegations being made that a foetus was viable at the time of termination."

So strong regulations are laid down to control doctors working in private nursing homes.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Is the hon. Lady aware that in 1983 there were 1,747 abortions after the 20th week? Is that not still a matter of great concern?

Mrs. Short: I shall present figures later, but I wish to go through my argument in sequence.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle must have regard to what the BMA says, and the association's handbook of ethics states:

"the doctor should recommend or perform termination after 20 weeks only if he is convinced that the health of the woman is seriously threatened or if the child will be seriously handicapped."

That is a clear instruction to doctors.

The latest figures from the Department—for 1983—were published last year. They show that only 1·19 per cent. of terminations were performed at 20 to 23 weeks, and that only 0·19 per cent. were performed at 24 weeks or later. That puts the matter in perspective.

We should congratulate all those involved and thank the DHSS for what it is doing to control nursing homes. We should also congratulate the medical profession on ensuring that so few terminations take place after 20 weeks. We should be celebrating those facts instead of discussing this sort of motion. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle seems to think, the medical profession is carrying out its responsibilities.

The other serious ground for late abortion is that there is likely to be permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the mother. It is a serious decision, whatever the hon. Member and some of his supporters say, for both the woman and her doctor to terminate pregnancy at 24 weeks or later. One of the great benefits of the Act is that it has encouraged terminations to take place by a much simpler process and much earlier, so there is much less risk to the mother.

What does the hon. Gentleman suggest should be done when lateness is the responsibility of the NHS and not the patient? The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, whom the hon. Gentleman quoted twice in his speech, said that only last year—perhaps these are more up-to-date figures than the hon. Gentleman has —over 20 per cent. of women who had terminations between 20 and 23 weeks had been medically referred for termination before the end of the 12th week. It is clear where the delay occurs—in the NHS machinery. Had their terminations been carried out as soon as possible after the end of the 12th week, when they were referred, or as soon as is acceptable or desirable, they would have been terminated before the 14th week instead of at 20 to 23 weeks.

Therefore, I hope that the Minister for Health will discover why the delay occurs between consultation and operation in a small number of cases, which is obviously serious. It does not happen in the private sector where terminations are carried out very early. There is a considerable impetus for the private nursing homes to get their patients in as early as possible, and many of them are run precisely for carrying out that procedure alone. Therefore, I must conclude that either there is poor organisation in the NHS or perhaps some consultants hope that the patients will be diverted into the private sector, where they have an interest in performing terminations in private nursing homes. There could be that profit motive for some of the less scrupulous members of the medical profession. I am certain that they are only a minority, but they exist and delays are caused.

Does the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle give any thought to the problem of the menopausal woman who does not always realise when she is pregnant, or the young girl who is similarly unaware? The latter perhaps does not want to accept the fact that she

[Mrs. Short]

is pregnant and hopes that if she does nothing about it, it will go away. What about the mentally handicapped woman who becomes pregnant, perhaps because of rape, and who does not realise that she is pregnant? There are many such cases. They can lead to late terminations which, I emphasise, are a tiny proportion of the total number of terminations carried out.

I hope that the Minister will also examine this point. One of the most serious problems that is the responsibility of the NHS is the delay in carrying out amniocentesis. There is a problem for the older woman who is pregnant. Amniocentesis is carried out to establish whether the child is likely to be handicapped. That is crucial to the older woman, who is at greater risk of producing a handicapped child. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to deny her the relief that the law allows?

Professor Eva Alberman, who is well known to the Select Committee because she was our epidemiologist specialist adviser when the Select Committee carried out an inquiry into perinatal mortality, recently published a report in *The Lancet* which revealed that, in the absence of any other change in medical practice, a reduction in the legal age of foetal viability to 24 weeks would have meant that during 1982 a total of 26 abortions for seriously handicapping conditions could not have been carried out. A reduction to 22 weeks would have stopped 77 such abortions from being performed. Professor Alberman also referred to the importance of early diagnosis of foetal abnormality and yet found that in at least a proportion of the late abortions studied there were delays, some of which, she and others suggest, might have been avoidable both before and after the tests for abnormality.

Therefore, it is clear that the weight of medical opinion supports early terminations. The figures show that over 90 per cent. of terminations are carried out within the time limit prescribed by the Act, and only a tiny proportion —less than 2 per cent. during the past four or five years —have been carried out later than the legal time limit provided for in the Act. They are for serious cases where there is a late discovery of a suspected abnormality.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Lady has not answered the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). According to the official statistics for 1983, the figure was 1,509, which is a considerable number. It may be only 2 per cent. but some of us on this side of the argument realise that it is only 2 per cent. because the total number of abortions is so large anyway —and far too large.

Mrs. Short: If one takes the number of terminations that were carried out at that stage of pregnancy and thinks of the enormous number of deaths that occurred when women had terminations before the Act was passed, one finds that there is no comparison. The Act has brought enormous relief to women, and I am only sorry that so few terminations, certainly in my region, are carried out under the NHS. Nearly 5,000 legal abortions were carried out in the west midlands in three months up to December. Of the 4,919 total, the vast majority — that is, 4,225 — were carried out privately in private nursing homes, where the operation is carried out for private profit and gain. Only 694 were carried out under the Health Service in the whole of the west midlands region. Therefore, there can be no argument that terminations, certainly in the west midlands region, are preventing other gynaecological cases from having the treatment that they require. It is much to be regretted that the private nursing homes can make so much money out of carrying out those operations, but the Act provides for that.

The overwhelming majority of terminations should be carried out early, well before the 20th week, many before the 12th and 14th week. There should be proper inspection of the private nursing homes. The House and the country as a whole should be satisfied that the provisions of the Act can be carried out correctly and that there is no need for the present motion, which does not take account of the improvements in technique, in inspection and, above all, of the overwhelming number of cases where terminations are carried out so much earlier even than the limit that the Act now provides.

5.18 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I should like to begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on his good fortune in the ballot and his personal decision to choose what is to all of us a difficult, emotive and distressing subject. He argued his case with good sense and moderation. He is right to ask for a fresh look to be taken at the whole subject.

I should make it clear that I am not—and was not in 1966—opposed to abortion where there is a serious risk —I am using my words carefully—to the life of the pregnant woman, or a risk of grave injury to her physical or mental health, or where there is substantial risk that the child, when born, would suffer from physical or mental abnormalities which would deprive it of any reasonable enjoyment of life.

That, incidentally, was the view of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1966. If that advice had been taken by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the Act, which I admit was necessary in the circumstances, might not have led to so much criticism and we should not have needed to debate the subject again today. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) that in 1966 the law needed to be cleaned up. There is no dispute about that, although I do not think that it is possible to sustain the argument advanced by those who favoured abortion virtually on demand that the figures for criminal abortions were horrendous because, as the Royal College pointed out at the time, the figures it gave were

"without any secure factual foundation".

They were guesstimates. Nevertheless, I do not think that any one of us would deny that there was a serious situation in regard to criminal abortions and therefore an urgent need for legislation. The pity of it was that too little attention was paid to the wording of that measure.

I was involved in those early debates and many moments stand out clearly in my mind. On 22 July 1966 the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale told the House that he simply wanted to get rid of back-street abortion. He added that

"it is not the intention of the promoters of the Bill to leave a wide open door for abortion on request."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1966; Vol. 732, c. 1075.]

I believe that the right hon. Gentleman's intention was indeed as he stated it. That was also the intention of the Standing Committee and indeed of the whole House.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The right hon. Gentleman is widening the scope of the debate, but he must remember that the inclusion of words such as "serious" or "substantial" lead to problems. The legal profession said that such definitions were impossible to make, and the medical profession was not prepared to be put in jeopardy because the circumstances in which abortion was permissible were not clear.

Sir Bernard Braine: That is quite correct. The medical profession was divided, but the leading bodies concerned were not. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists gave us very clear guidance, but that guidance was ignored. In addition, I recall that the British Medical Association had carried out an inquiry into the subject. I believe that the present director, Dr. Havard, was a member of that working group, as was Dr. Gullick. They, too, gave clear guidance. But it is the business of Parliament to make up its mind on these matters and nothing that the hon. Gentleman has said weakens my argument that Parliament's failure to realise what was at stake led to serious difficulties.

In those early debates I repeatedly warned that the legislation would lead to abortion on demand, and I was quite right. [HON. MEMBER: "No."] I was indeed right, because the law has allowed abortion on demand. That is how it has been interpreted by a great many doctors. *[Interruption.]* We shall not make much progress if there is a running commentary on every speech. I listened in silence to the speech of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East because I respect her greatly and wished to hear what she had to say. Constant interruptions merely show a lack of conviction that one knows what it is all about; such chatter does not help parliamentary debate.

Week after week following the enactment of the Bill, anxiety increased at the practices developing. For example, there were taxi touts at London airport picking up foreign women who wished to take advantage of the new law. Those women were driven to abortion clinics which were able to pay the drivers generously out of the fat earnings which they were making from frightened women. I agree entirely that the whole matter should have been under the proper direction of the National Health Service from the start, and I said so at the time. It was not, and racket after racket developed. Taxi touts were even stealing girls from other clinics. One driver took girls to a clinic in Bournemouth although they had been booked for operations at a clinic in London.

Such was the public outrage and the ensuing row in Parliament that the Government were forced to set up the Lane committee. That committee consisted entirely of people who had originally favoured abortion on request, just as the more recent Warnock committee was made up of people who favoured the use of the human embryo as a guinea pig. Such was the weight of evidence, however, that the Lane committee was forced to admit that some doctors were practising abortion on demand. The fact that its members advocated no steps to prevent such practices was simply a measure of their views. They were also forced to admit that there was disappointingly little evidence to suggest that the legislation had stopped criminal abortions. *[Interruption.]* The report is in the Library if any hon. Member wishes to consult it.

Mrs. Clywd: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: No, I wish to develop my argument. I am dealing with matters that arose in the House long before the hon. Lady became a Member.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The right hon. Gentleman will accept that I was here at that time. I hope that he intends to quote the main finding of the Lane committee, which was that the advantage gained from the legislation far outweighed any criticisms that could be levelled against it.

Sir Bernard Braine: If the right hon. Gentleman had been here earlier he would have heard me say that in my view his Bill was necessary and that certain advantages flowed from it for that very reason. The Lane committee said that. Interestingly, however, increasing public disquiet led the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. White) to introduce the Abortion (Amendment) Bill which led in turn to the establishment of the Select Committee on Abortion, of which I was a member. That Select Committee, chaired by a distinguished Labour Member, exposed the fact that abortion on demand was virtually the order of the day. The evidence clearly established the fact.

Mrs. Clywd: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I am telling the House what the Select Committee recommended. When I have done that I shall give way, although I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak. *[Interruption.]* This method of conducting the debate does not help us to make progress.

The Select Committee not only exposed the fact that abortion on demand was the order of the day, but suggested a number of amendments to the Act to ease the situation. One involved the severing of financial links between abortion clinics and referral agencies. The Committee also advocated strengthening the conscience clause and urged that Parliament be given ample time to debate and vote on the criteria for abortion to establish whether we wished the law to be changed.

It is to the everlasting shame of the Government of the day that they failed to implement the main recommendations of the Select Committee. Moreover, it is dishonest of the pro-abortion lobby to claim that repeated efforts to change the law in Parliament have failed. They have failed for one reason alone — the perpetual and successful attempts to talk out every private Member's Bill.

We must not declare that the Abortion Act has achieved nothing. However, one of its achievements is nothing to be proud of. It has resulted in the denial of life to some 2 million unborn children. In fact, while this debate is taking place, some 60 babies will be deprived of the right to life.

Ironically, the Warnock committee was set up to deal with the problem of infertility. Infertility has always been with us, but the problem has been thrust into the foreground because the natural and laudable desire of childless couples to adopt has been frustrated as there are no more babies available because, under the law, we are killing them in increasing numbers.

There is another tragedy associated with infertility. It must be a very bitter thing for some women to have to bear. Few of us can claim to have done nothing in life to cause us regrets. I know that I cannot. But comparatively few of us have to live with the fruits of our misdemeanours. What must make infertility hard to bear is the fact that in many cases it is avoidable. Many cases

[Sir Bernard Braine]

of blockage to the tubes, for example, are avoidable. It is often caused by infection, which can result from previous abortion or sexually transmitted disease. Secondly, while I believe in contraception, I wonder how many women fitted with the coil realise that it can make them barren.

One of the most appalling aspects of women's right to choose, as it is often expressed, is the fact that they are not properly informed about what they are choosing. That is why I have always argued that there should be no connection whatever between abortion referral agencies and abortion clinics, because the one has a financial interest in the other.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East put her finger on the point long ago. If we are to have proper, therapeutic abortion in this country, it should have been controlled from the beginning under the NHS.

People complain about the way things are going, but refuse to see what is happening under their very eyes. They refuse to see that the cheap and shoddy rarely supplies the answer.

I refer again to the original abortion debates. One of the reasons put forward by the abortionists for liberalising the law was that by doing so they would reduce the number of unwanted children and level off—that was an often-used phrase—the rate of illegitimacy. In vain we said that killing babies in the womb would hardly lead to a more responsible society in which children would receive more love. We were right to say that. The numbers of children in care were not reduced after the abortion law came into operation. On the contrary, the numbers have risen by leaps and bounds. Between 1951 and 1967 the numbers rose by fewer than 7,000, from 62,700 to 69,300. In the 10 years after the Act came into operation, the numbers rose at an unprecedented rate and hit the 100,000 mark, where they remain today.

Pro-abortionists give every possible reason for this rise—and I would agree that our liberal divorce law has something to do with it—but the fact is that every other country which has liberalised its abortion laws has witnessed a similar increase in child tragedies.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: In so short a debate, I shall not enter into an argument on the causes. However, there is no scrap of evidence from anywhere in the world to support the claim by the pro-abortionists that their policies result in greater love and care for born children and that we are overcoming the tragedy of unwanted children. All the evidence suggests the reverse.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I wish to be brief, to give others a chance to speak. I end by asking a simple question: where should we go from here?

Mrs. Clwyd: The right hon. Gentleman said earlier that he would give way when he had developed his argument. If he is interested in evidence, he might like to know that I was a member of the Royal Commission on the National Health Service. We gave evidence to his Government and pointed out that far from abortion being available on demand the reverse was true. It is now more difficult to get an abortion under the NHS. According to the latest figures available, those for 1983, only 49 per cent. of women in this country who had abortions had an abortion on the NHS. How can the right hon. Gentleman say that we have abortion on demand?

Sir Bernard Braine: I am talking about abortion not on the NHS, but in the private sector. The hon. Lady has been so anxious to intervene that she has not listened to what I have been saying.

We started off on the wrong foot. From the beginning, therapeutic abortion based on clear-cut criteria—and the criteria were certainly not as clear-cut as they should have been—should have been performed within the NHS. The whole matter could then have been properly controlled. It was not, and, overnight, abortion clinics sprang up by the score. The racket was so great that the Lane committee had to be set up. Even then the racket failed to disappear. There was then the Bill of the hon. Member for Pollok. There followed the setting-up of the Select Committee. The hon. Lady was not a Member of the House at the time and cannot remember what intense anxiety there was both in the House and the country.

Mrs. Renée Short: The right hon. Gentleman keeps referring to abortion on demand and the need for better services under the NHS. I cannot recall whether, when I introduced a ten-minute Bill in 1981 appealing for an extension of NHS facilities, the right hon. Gentleman voted for it. Can he tell me whether he did or not?

Sir Bernard Braine: I would not like to give an answer off the cuff. However, I once served in the Ministry of Health and have always been a strong supporter of the concept of the National Health Service. In 1966 the leaders of the medical profession were concerned about two things: first, to whom the task was to be entrusted; and, secondly, where it was to be done. They said that there was no need for complicated legislation. If strict rules were laid down on those two points the matter could be left to the medical profession. By that they meant that at least one of the two doctors concerned should be a consultant and also that there should be the strictest possible control over where the operation was done.

If that had been our aim from the outset, we would probably not have been discussing the subject today. However, the decision was made not to entrust the task to two medical practitioners, one of whom would have to be a consultant. And so, presumably because of the fear of strain upon the NHS, the greater part of the demand was met by the mushroom growth of clinics, with all the abuses that I have mentioned.

I should like to recommend a number of courses of action. At the appropriate time the Government should give the House adequate time to debate an amending Bill. That is unlikely to be in the present Session, but the Government should be prepared to help an amending Bill through, so that it cannot be talked out by its opponents. Only in that way shall we see whether or not Parliament wishes to retain the present law unamended.

In my view, the grounds for abortion in the present Act should be more carefully defined to stop abortion on demand. I believe that that result could be achieved by the addition of two words to the Act. We should also put an end to the hypocrisy of allowing the referral agencies to advertise so that they can refer women to clinics in which they have a financial interest. All financial links between referral agencies and clinics should be severed. That

should apply equally to those clinics described as charities, from which doctors take home the bulk of the large fees of patients who have abortions.

The conscience clause should be strengthened. In addition, something should be done to help those genuine charities and agencies which offer positive assistance to girls with problem pregnancies. It is scandalous that abortion clinics should be receiving help from local authorities, while agencies which look after girls who wish to keep their babies receive no Government grants.

The Government should also take a positive stand to ensure that under-age girls are not aborted without parental consent. A dentist in this country is not allowed to extract a tooth from a young patient without parental consent, yet the entrepreneurs of the abortion business are allowed to carry out an operation on a young girl which could blight her entire life and leave her sterile. Indeed, if we look at the abortion figures, we cannot fail to realise that those most in need of protection—the young—have become more and more vulnerable. Abortions on girls under 16 increased from 2,619 in 1969 to 10,555 in 1983—8 per cent. of all abortions in England and Wales.

Great play has been made of the fluctuations in the number of abortions on girls in this group since 1978. Frankly, this means nothing at all as the total number of girls aged 13 to 15 has declined, while the number of abortions has remained constant at about four per 1,000 girls in this age bracket. That is a very sad commentary on the state of affairs in this country.

During the last election some of the leaders and spokesmen of my own party made great play of the importance that we attach to the family unit and our concern for the young and unborn——

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman said that he would be brief.

Sir Bernard Braine: Indeed, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that many Opposition Members share my view.

If, in fact, the Government are concerned about the family, children and the unborn, and intend to keep faith on this, they should give Parliament the time fully to debate the abortion law so that any amendments have the opportunity of reaching the statute book.

5.41 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): There is no point in my disguising my sincerely held belief on this issue, and I hope that the House will bear with me as I attempt to make a number of brief points. I am opposed to abortion and always have been. There is no point in saying that had I been in the House in 1967 I would have supported the legislation of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), because I would have been in the opposite Lobby. He and I have had many disagreements on this issue, although I respect his sincerity.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) spoke of my right hon. Friend's intention when he introduced the Bill. It was to turn the tide of human misery. I know that my right hon. Friend intended to address himself to the question of back-street abortions. I have no simple, easy answer to that problem and am well aware that because of my position I am open to the argument that without an abortion provision on the statute book there could well be a return to the back-street abortion.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point also referred to the Lane commission. That led me to recall that in 1980 I introduced a ten-minute Bill on the termination of pregnancies and whether, as the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) pointed out, termination should be allowed to occur beyond 24 weeks.

During that debate I quoted Mrs. Justice Lane's committee, which said:

> "Informed opinion is, and the Committee agrees, that a maximum gestational age of 28 weeks for abortion is too high, having regard to modern methods of sustaining prematurely-born infants".

Elsewhere in the committee's recommendations it stated "that the Abortion Act should be amended to authorise abortion up to the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy and not thereafter". In fact, *The Guardian* commented that two out of every 1,000 abortions which take place do so on developing children between the ages of 24 and 28 weeks. That goes some way towards answering the interjection made in the speech of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle.

I believe that this is something on which the House could agree, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale is very much of a view that at the very minimum there ought to be a reduction from 28 to 24 weeks. It is something on which he and I agree. Indeed, my right hon. Friend was a sponsor of my Bill. The World Health Organisation takes a similar view.

I am conscious that we are going over arguments that have been rehearsed before, but that is inevitable. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) said that she had heard these arguments before, but when 162,000 abortions take place each year it is inevitable that this House should want to continue to discuss the legislation and the way in which it is working. It would be surprising if it did not, given the sincerely held views of hon. Members and their constituents, apart from the fact that our constituents would require us, as their representatives, to raise these important issues.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that many operations are performed in this country, yet he is distinguishing between this one and the others? However, the Act has given some consideration to the 162,000 women who would otherwise have been placed in difficulty.

Mr. Alton: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's latter point in a moment. Like him, if I were concerned that insufficient was being done to help people who needed kidney transplants or those with cardiac complaints, and if I felt that the NHS was not helping them or that the system was not operating as it should, I would want to raise such matters in this House. However, when discussing a sincerely-held view among many people outside this House that too many abortions are taking place, it is legitimate for hon. Members to return to this issue. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept the sincerity of those who seek to raise the matter in this way.

Last week, a group of Liverpool women came to see me about the general problems that women face. I accept that society does not treat women in the dignified way that it should, and that many of the prejudices and taboos about

[Mr. Alton]

women and their place in society have placed women at a lower level than men. That is something to which we must address our minds.

Those women told me of a recent survey of women at Liverpool university who had undergone abortions. It showed that had a creche been available for under two-year-olds, 14 per cent. of the women would have been happy to go ahead with their pregnancies. Perhaps we can do something about that. If some people genuinely have abortions for such simple reasons, we ought to make adequate provision for women in that position.

To some of my fellow Roman Catholic churchmen I say that attitudes on birth control, which sometimes seem to have more to do with the Middle Ages than with life in contemporary Britain and the centre of places such as Liverpool, are undoubtedly one of the reasons why people have abortions. I hope that they will address themselves to that problem.

Like the right hon. Member for Castle Point, I also believe that there is a desperate need for more counselling facilities. There is also a need for more tolerance among families who reject their pregnant daughters and cast them on to the streets. Up to 30 per cent. of people living in parts of my constituency are single parents with one child, then two, who find themselves on the rackety road to ruin as they get lured into things such as prostitution.

We have already heard about a woman's right to choose, and women will ultimately make that decision whether they come within the system or are forced to use the back-street abortionist. However, many of us also believe that the developing child has rights. For purely philosophical and ideological reasons rather than reasons of religious conviction, I believe that the liberty of the individual is paramount. It is because I place such a high price on the rights of the individual that I take the view that I have just expressed.

There is a strange contrast between this debate and the one which will take place on Friday. That contrast concerns the premium that we place on life, the reflections of the Warnock committee, which has examined the whole question of in vitro fertilisation, and the Bill to be introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell).

A few weeks ago, a child psychologist and a doctor addressed a group of hon. Members at a forum held in one of the Committee rooms. The right hon. Member for Castle Point, who was present, will recall that during that discussion we were told that in London medical students were now paid £12 for sperm which is used to father up to six different children. That is £2 per child. The problems that they may cause to those children later in terms of a possible identity crisis over parentage——

Ms. Clare Short: That is out of order. Why not wait until Friday?

Mr. Alton: It is not out of order. I shall come to the point when I relate it to today's debate.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The hon. Gentleman's local newspaper probably comes out tomorrow, not Saturday.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady is mistaken. I assure her that there are as many people in my constituency who take the same view as she does, whom it would be easier for me to placate by not speaking, as there are those who maintain my view. It is wrong to try to ascribe such motives to hon. Members who have sincerely held views.

In the discussions that took place last week, many hon. Members listened to remarks, which concerned us all, about what would happen as a result of the in vitro fertilisation methods that are to be introduced. On Friday, we shall be having a debate about people bringing children into the world scientifically, as a result of methods that we shall place on the statute book. Today, we are talking about ways in which to remove the rights of children to be born. There is an odd and stark contrast. It is right that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle has given us a chance to discuss the other side of the equation, and it helps to put into some perspective the debate that we shall be having on Friday.

5.51 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I declare an interest, in that I am president of the Brook Advisory Centre, which counsels not only on birth control but on whether pregnancy should be terminated. As I did medicine and set up birth control clinics at about the time that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) was wrecking the law of Scotland in this respect, I have always had a particular interest in these matters. Without attempting to upset him — beautifully groomed as he ever is—I shall tell the House how the Abortion Act 1967 came about.

In Scotland there was a perfectly satisfactory law, the common law. It was exactly the same as the common law that governs every other medical condition. In other words, if I go to my doctor and ask him to cut off my ears, he will advise me that he does not think that it is in my interest to do so if I do not have leprosy, but it is if I do. The decision whether to terminate a pregnancy was, in Scotland, a matter of common law.

Until the week of the wretched 1967 Act, passed for England and Wales and extended to Scotland, there had never been a prosecution of a doctor or medical person in Scotland. I acted for the only person who ever was prosecuted, until he did not turn up for trial. It was quite proper that this person was prosecuted and pled guilty, because he did an unprofessional operation without anaesthetic on a woman to terminate her pregnancy, and sent her home on a tram, and in a condition in which she was still subject to the likelihood of septicaemia. Therefore, it was proper that he should have been prosecuted. However, that was the only prosecution for the termination of a pregnancy in Scotland.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman implying that no illegal abortions were carried out in Scotland? Does he not realise that there were quite a number of deaths from abortions in Scotland?

Mr. Fairbairn: I am sorry if I did not make myself clear, and I am glad to be able to be able to do so now. That was the only prosecution of a medically trained person for the termination of a pregnancy. Many people were prosecuted in Scotland for improper, non-medical abortions, just as someone would be prosecuted in Scotland if a person came along and asked him to pull out his teeth and he proceeded to do so with a pair of pliers. That would be an assault.

At that time there was a desire for change in England because, under the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, quite a large number of medically trained people had been prosecuted in England and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. It was to get over that difficulty that, when the then newly born foetus from Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles arrived in the House, the midwife stuffed into his hand, when he won the ballot, the Abortion Bill that became the Abortion Act 1967.

Having done that, and realising that it would look a little odd if this new tartan fairy were to cure the law of England, having been elected for a Scottish seat, he applied it to Scotland and ruined a perfectly satisfactory law. Interestingly enough, although Scotland has a much bigger proportion of Roman Catholics than any other part of the United Kingdom, there was never any complaint about the common law of Scotland and its application. If I were to ask my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) to say anything, it would be to say that he would have the words, "This Act does not apply to Scotland" put at the end of the 1967 Act.

Mr. David Steel: As always, the hon. and learned Gentleman is entertaining and inaccurate. He may recall that in 1966-67 Professor Sir Dugald Baird, who was the chief exponent of a liberal abortion law in Scotland, was in the Aberdeen health area, the only one to which the law which the hon. and learned Gentleman is describing applied. Professor Sir Dugald Baird told me that the reason for this was that a Lord Advocate of a few years before had sent round a circular to consultants in Scotland saying that they were liable for prosecution for carrying out abortions. It was because of that threat, arising out of the uncertainty of the common law hanging over doctors, that Sir Dugald Baird was one of those who advised me strongly to include Scotland in the Act.

Mr. Fairbairn: That is a strange recollection. I remember trying to persuade the right hon. Gentleman not to extend the Act to Scotland, and I personally addressed the Royal College of Physicians, with Professor Sir Dugald Baird in the chair, on the law of Scotland and on abortion. He did not take that view then or in any of the correspondence that I had with him afterwards.

Dr. M. S. Miller: My experience in general practice in the years before the Abortion Act was passed totally conflicts with the views expressed by the hon. and learned Gentleman. I was never able to have an abortion terminated for a patient by referring her to any hospital. No gynaecologist in Glasgow would perform abortions except in the most serious circumstances.

Mr. Fairbairn: That may be the hon. Gentleman's recollection of his private practice in Glasgow, and practice varied throughout the country, but, as Professor Sir Dugald Baird demonstrated, the law was satisfactory.

I introduced birth control clinics into Scotland and I am anxious about this matter because of what I have come across in my legal practice. I spent part of my time divorcing people who had married in the first place only because there was an unintentional pregnancy. I spent a great deal of my time in the High Court with children who had been unintentionally conceived and whose parents were not emotionally capable of looking after them. It was never the last child, but always the one in the middle. My practice involving this catalogue of misfortunes arose out of unintended pregnancies.

The difficulty which my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle gets into when he starts talking about the limitation of time period is that of the consistency of those who say that the correction of a mistake is forbidden, that the mistake is hidden or denied until later and later in the pregnancy. People say, "Perhaps I have missed my period, but it may be natural," and they say that about the next one as well, and so on. Unintended conception is a mistake. The parties may have used a contraceptive method which did not work, or they may have made a miscalculation. If a woman becomes pregnant unintentionally, is it right for this House to say that that is a mistake which she is not allowed to correct? That seems to me to be a strange moral judgment.

People talk about the right to life of the unintended foetus. The unintended foetus did not have a choice whether it should be unintendedly conceived in the first place, so why should it have a right not to be intendedly disconceived thereafter?

Mr. Nicholls: No hon. Members have yet said in the debate that they would ban abortion entirely in all circumstances. It is simply that, for a combination of practical politics and personal morality, they are saying that there should be fewer circumstances in which abortion should be allowed—not that it should be abolished.

Mr. Fairbairn: I appreciate that, but what I am trying to stress—it is very important and rarely understood—is the psychological barrier facing a woman who becomes pregnant unintentionally. The barrier is such that she tends to defer the taking of any action. If she were able legitimately, and with public approval, to correct the mistake when it was made, she would not face the difficulty later of getting into the period of gestation before any operation was performed.

I agree with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) that it is disgraceful that a woman who is referred to a consultant under the National Health Service can be held responsible for the lateness of the proposed abortion. I agree that the later the termination, the more difficult it becomes. I am in favour of very early abortion, but that can be achieved only if the moral climate alters and we move away from the idea that abortion, even if it is permitted by the 1967 Act, is wrong.

In looking round the Chamber—not, of course, this evening—one may well feel that from time to time a good many mistaken conceptions have taken place. There is no other mistake in human activity which we do not think it right to try to correct. What is wrong with correcting that one?

6.2 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Before commenting on the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), I should like first to refer to one or two of the points made by the mover of the motion, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). There seemed to be one or two contradictions in his speech.

The hon. Member referred to the sacredness of all human life. In looking round the Chamber, I noted that most of the Conservative Members who accept that view are in favour of capital punishmment. Either human life is sacred or it is not. It cannot be said that it is sacred in some circumstances and not in others.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Hamilton: In view of the limited time available, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will understand if I do not give way to him.

Another point that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle made has been mentioned frequently in all the debates on legislation dealing with abortion—that nurses and other people have been persecuted and even dismissed because of the exercise of their conscience. Whenever that has been alleged, we have asked for one such case to be produced. No one, in any circumstances whatever, has been able to produce a case of a nurse or anyone else in the medical profession who has been dismissed for the exercise of conscience under the 1967 Act.

The hon. Gentleman asserted that there is no such thing as an unwanted child. I wish that were so, but we live in the real world and we know that there are unwanted children. There are many women throughout Britain and throughout the world who find that they are pregnant and who, for whatever reason, do not want to bear the child for very good reasons. The ultimate test must be the consultation between the patient and her general practitioner, and the law should be at a minimum in dealing with that relationship.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) laid rather more stress than did the mover of the motion on the development of private clinics. I think that we are all agreed on the undesirability of such a development, but the only possible acceptable alternative is the improvement of facilities within the National Health Service. The answer is not to abolish all such clinics but to improve NHS facilities. I hope that the Minister will give the House some assurance in that respect.

Throughout the country public opinion, no matter what people's political or religious persuasion may be, is massively in support of the way that the 1967 Act is operating. There may be a case for considering a time limit for abortion. I served on Standing Committees which dealt with two abortion Bills. The right hon. Member for Castle Point will remember them vividly. Those Bills were talked out of existence. I think we were right to do that, because public opinion was massively on our side.

It is right that minorities should express their opinion. I understand that a petition containing 1·5 million signatures is to be presented by a Conservative Member. There are another 55 million signatures that are not on the petition. Let us not be under any illusion as to the strength of feeling on abortion. Minorities have a right to be heard but the majority have the right to prevail.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle was right not to lay too much emphasis on the grounds for abortion. I do not think that there is an authoritative body, in the medical profession or anywhere else, in support of any tightening up of that part of the 1967 Act. The main argument relates to a time limit. There may be a case for that. However, even if it is set at 24 weeks, there will always be cases where, for one reason or another, exceptions will have to be made. For that reason, the greater the flexibility in the legislation the better.

The 1967 Act does not lay down a period of 28 weeks or any other period, and that is for a good reason. There is a degree of flexibility to enable the medical profession to examine and treat each case on its merits. The less we do about changing that the better.

We are all against late abortions; indeed, we are all against all abortions. It is a horrible operation. At the weekend I was talking to a doctor who does abortions and he said that there is not a more undesirable operation, because it is an expression of failure. But if we can do anything in this House to eliminate that failure, it will bring happiness to many women and many families who would not otherwise have it. We legislate in this place for the sake of humanity. We legislate to make practices more humane than they would otherwise be. Whatever this House does, women will have abortions. They have had them over the centuries. It is up to us to make the operation more humane by putting on the statute book legislation which is flexible and which recognises the human problems that lie behind abortion.

6.9 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I shall not take up too much time by going over points that have already been made, especially as some of my comments may be almost identical to those made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh).

I should make it clear that I am not against abortion per se. In whatever proposals I might make, I am not working towards a day when abortion will be completely abolished. Whatever my private and personal views may be, other people will hold different views, and on this subject—perhaps more than on any other—one tries to achieve a consensus.

Two points need to be made. First, it concerns me that the word "abortion" seems to be caught up with the concept of contraception and birth control. That is extremely dangerous. Hardly anyone would now argue against contraception, but in talking about abortion we are not talking about contraception. Contraception ensures that human life or conception does not occur. Despite the argument that the spermatozoa and ova are alive, there is no human life until they are fused at conception. Thus, even a hard-line Roman Catholic—if I can use that phrase in a non-pejorative sense—who might be opposed to both abortion and contraception, would probably admit that one of them is much worse than the other.

It must be recognised that abortion is ultimately a form of population control. Whatever the motives may be, it terminates human life. That is not the same as preventing that life from forming in the first place.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The hon. Gentleman argues that human life begins at the moment of conception. But what are sperm and ova if they are not human life? What does he call them?

Mr. Nicholls: I call them on the one hand sperm and on the other ova, but they are not human life. The hon. Gentleman has asked a question so he must listen to the answer. Until they are fused, they are not human life which, unless it is interrupted by nature or some other physical event, will inexorably lead to a birth—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman goes on heckling from a sedentary position, but if he does not like the answer to his question he could at least have the courtesy to listen to it in relative silence.

Secondly, we are used to referring to the 1967 Act and to the fact that it liberalised abortion or allowed it in certain circumstances, as though that Act was the complete source of our abortion law. But it is not. It has to be read in conjunction with the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929. Subsections (1) and (2) of that Act say that if the gestation period is more than 28 weeks, it is assumed that the child is capable of being born alive. In combination, those two Acts form the basis of our abortion law. When the 1929 Act spoke of 28 weeks, it did so because at that time it was not expected that a child could be born alive before then. In law, capable of being born alive was not even taken to mean capable of surviving. I hope that the one common ground uniting us all is that 28 weeks can no longer be considered appropriate.

Ms. Clare Short: The hon. Gentleman has touched on a crucial point that is frequently misunderstood. It is not the case that it would be legal to abort a foetus that was capable of life, even if it was less than 28 weeks old. It is illegal to kill any foetus that is capable of being born alive. That is the law. Therefore, many of the arguments for reducing the 28-week period represent a misunderstanding of the present law.

Mr. Nicholls: I suspect that this will be the first and last time, even in this Parliament, that I say that the hon. Lady and I are in total agreement on a point.

The essence of that Act was the capability of being born alive and not the period of 28 weeks. The difficulty is that in practice the exception becomes the norm. It would be a brave, optimistic and, probably, well-heeled man, who would tell a doctor, who had gone through the procedures under the Act and who had aborted a foetus at 23 weeks, that he was to be subjected to a private prosecution claiming that at that age the child was capable of being born alive. That is the difficulty.

I think that I have correctly identified the source of the abortion law. We have moved a long way since 1929, and it is now obvious that a child is capable of being born alive at 28 weeks. It is not just a question of making a slight advance involving a week here or there. It is now possible for a child to be born alive at 23 weeks and, moreover, for it to survive. In such debates, the evidence inevitably tends to become anecdotal, and is sometimes no worse for that. But here the evidence is better than that.

On 10 March 1984 an article appeared in *The Lancet* entitled, "Capable of Being Born Alive". Mr. Dunn and Mr. Stirrat of the Bristol maternity hospital reviewed the state of the law as we all understand it to be. A footnote to that article read:

"At the time of writing two infants of 23 weeks gestation are in our care, one now being 2½ weeks old the other 1 week old."

I do not know whether those two children even survived the date of publication, but if they did, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the child who survived two and half weeks was capable not only of being born alive but of surviving.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will make a statement along the following lines. If those two statutes taken in combination are properly the foundation of our abortion law, it cannot be right that that 28-week guideline — I hestitate to use that word for reasons that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) would correct me for — with all the implications that it has, should still be valid. If we are concerned to get our abortion laws right, something must be done, sooner rather than later, to ensure that that time limit is reduced.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central, (Mr. Hamilton) spoke about the sacredness of human life, and that is right. He might have correctly identified me as being one of those who are in favour of capital punishment and in favour of strengthening or, as he might have it, of de-liberalising our abortion laws. We could both argue until we were blue in the face, but neither of us would be convinced that the other was right. But I would argue that a person can forfeit his right to life by a crime so heinous that he should be subject to a capital penalty. But ingenious though the mind of a lawyer is, I cannot begin to conceive of how a foetus that has yet to be born can have committed some crime that requires its extinction. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's point was no good.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central also spoke about the elimination of unhappiness. Again, that unites us. I am not arguing in favour of the abolition of abortion. With all due respect, however, the hon. Gentleman will have to do better than talk about the elimination of unhappiness. In talking about eliminating unhappiness, we are talking about eliminating human life. To consider the woman's happiness does not mean to say that one can simply ignore the fact that the child will be subject not just to unhappiness but to death.

Where do we go from here? We are entitled to say that the legislaion under which abortions are performed should be tightened up in view of what we now know about foetology. There is also a job to be done in terms of educating the public, and especially the child-bearing public, about exactly what is involved in an abortion. It is not just a question of going into hospital and having an anonymous collection of cells removed. If a woman has an abortion by vacuum aspiration, she is committing herself to allowing the child within her to be dismembered. If that is the sort of thing that abortion involves, the public should know about it. If a woman, knowing that, still goes ahead with an abortion, she has at least done so with her eyes open. I hope that a film such as "The Silent Scream" will be broadcast on ITV and BBC with all the counterbalancing propaganda that I am sure that the hon. Member for Ladywood will be able to provide.

Ms. Clare Short: That film is completely fabricated.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Lady howls that the film is fabricated. The death of the child certainly is fabricated, but if it is such a monstrous fabrication, I can see no reason why it should not be given air space so that the hon. Lady can produce her arguments to prove that it is fabricated.

Since 1967, 2¼ million babies have been killed before being born but after conception. In only 2 per cent. of the cases were the mothers' lives at risk or the babies seriously deformed. In 98 per cent. of the cases, therefore, the babies were killed because under the Abortion Act 1967 one can have one's child killed for what amounts to little more than the fact that one finds it inconvenient to bear it or because it might be inconvenient to its existing brothers and sisters. In a civilised society, we cannot allow that to continue indefinitely.

6.20 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has just made the most

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

unbelievably, incredibly patronising speech. He talked about educating the child-bearing population. It is about time that he and some of his hon. Friends were educated. The trouble with this House is that it is dominated by males who think that they know what is best for women.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) is one of a string of hon. Members who have said that the Abortion Act brings to the country an air of permissiveness, a lowering of moral standards and a diminution in the sanctity of the family. He and others suggest that the Act allows abortion on demand. That is not true. They say that women frivolously use abortion as a contraceptive. That is not true either. They say that the tightening up of this already limited legislation will ensure a rosy picture of happier and more stable parents and children. Nothing is further from the truth.

As everyone in the House knows, abortion has existed since the beginning of time. Throughout history, wealthy women have always been able to have abortions without problems or questions; they simply had to provide the money. No comfortable place in a private clinic was open to those without money. Poorer women had two options. Their first was to continue the pregnancy and have an unwanted child. It is not true that children are always wanted when they arrive. Their second option was to have a back-street abortion—a messy and dangerous practice which I am glad to say has almost disappeared. However, I fear that it may be on the way back if some Conservative Members have their way.

Many figures have been quoted, and I want to put mine on the record. The number of abortions on residents in England and Wales fell each year between 1980 and 1983. However, in the first half of 1984 the number increased by 3,052—5 per cent.—compared with the first half of 1983. That rise occurred in the 16 to 29 age group. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has pointed out that this took place about three to five months after the publication in the previous October of papers associating certain malignant diseases with the long-term use of oral contraceptives. It is obvious that many women were frightened by the pill scares and changed to less reliable means of contraception. The result was more unwanted pregnancies and more abortions.

It is more important to consider the rate of abortions rather than the numbers, because the rate takes account of the increases and decreases in the numbers of women in the fertile age group.

The abortion rate has remained at or under 12 women per thousand for the past 13 years. That is one of the lowest abortion rates in the world, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said. It is remarkable that it has remained so steady. It shows that women are using contraception in the most effective way possible. There is no foolproof method of contraception. Women are not using abortion as a method of contraception. Abortion is used only in the most dire circumstances — when contraception has failed or when conception is the result of an unplanned act.

Much has been made of the number of abortions performed on young women between the ages of 16 and 29 who are not married and have no children. The implication is that all such women are fit and healthy and that they should have babies or, if they do not want babies, that they should bear them and offer them for adoption. Many hon. Members have said that. It is an odd argument, because many of those who use it are now holding up their hands in horror at the idea of surrogacy. They suggest that everyone should go through with an unplanned pregnancy to term and then offer the child for adoption, but when it comes to surrogacy they say, "No, we cannot have that." I do not understand their argument.

The House should take account of the trends. Women are no longer prepared to put up with a pregnancy that they do not want and with which they cannot cope. Many women want to plan a family. They want to develop their talents, to work and to earn a living before having a family. Few women now feel compelled to marry if they become pregnant. In 1969, about 44·5 per cent. of pregnant women married before the child was born. In most cases, they were shotgun marriages. In 1981 the figure was 19 per cent.—a much healthier figure.

Society no longer condemns a woman for having an illegitimate child. That is another reason why women do not feel that it is necessary to marry. Many women categorised as single live with their partner in a stable relationship. They simply do not think it important to marry. In 1982, 59 per cent. of illegitimate births were jointly registered. Parliament must take account of changes in attitudes and values and in the way in which people live.

Births and abortions to under 16-year-olds since 1974, when contraceptives were made freely available to all, regardless of age, have remained static. At least, they have up to now. Abortions for women in that age group have remained at under 10 in 1,000 since 1974. The rate of live births in that age group has been at or under three in 1,000 since 1974. The number of illegitimate births has risen as young girls have decided to keep their children, because they believe that society will tolerate that decision.

An acute danger to that stable position now hangs over young girls and their doctors. I refer to the recent judgment by the Appeal Court which stops girls under 16 from getting help from their doctors without the express consent of their parents. Lord Justice Parker, one of the Appeal Court judges, said that that might lead to pregnancy, back-street abortion or even death.

On 8 February, *The Times* reported that the British Medical Association had received information that two young girls were alleged to have committed suicide as a result of not receiving the contraceptive advice that they sought. One was a girl who was sexually assaulted by her father and who learnt that she could not obtain contraceptive advice without her mother knowing of it. The other was a 12-year-old girl who sought advice, but her parents objected. They are reported to have taken their lives. Is that really what Conservative Members want?

Perhaps hon. Members with teenage daughters have a close and understanding relationship with them. I hope so. If so, they are fortunate, because many do not have that relationship. Many daughters do not feel that they can discuss sex with their parents. Family situations vary enormously, and there is often conflict in the home which creates a tense atmosphere in which young girls find it difficult to talk about matters at that time in their development. Therefore, they need access to their doctors.

Under-16s are badly frightened and feel abandoned. I suppose that that fear and sense of isolation is viewed by the moralists on the Conservative Benches as a healthy deterrent to young girls under the age of 16 having sex. Goodness knows how many girls have become pregnant

since the Court of Appeal judgment. The moralists have tabled an early-day motion against abortion for girls under 16. I am afraid that that will not stop pregnancies. I hope that the Court of Appeal judgment is changed. Do hon. Members really want no advice, no counselling, no contraception and, if the worst comes to the worst, no abortion, other than illegal or back-street abortion, for girls under 16?

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I want girls under 16 to take advice from their parents and not to obtain contraceptive advice that is not officially allowed because it is against the law. That would help to bring about a decent family life for those girls.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. Contraceptive advice for under-16s is not against the law. He overlooks the fact that many girls cannot and will not discuss it with their parents. They feel that they cannot talk to them. Of course, it would be preferable if they could, and that is what the counselling service and the doctors advise. If we follow the advice of Conservative Members, the clock will be turned back.

Almost every day during Question Time we urge girls to make the most of education and employment opportunities. We tell them to stay at school, get on with their education and grasp the chances to make something of themselves, yet we deny them the understanding advice and help that would enable them to view sex in a sensible manner at a difficult time in their lives.

There is little support among the public or the medical profession for restricting the grounds for abortion. In 1983, the Gallup Poll found that 74 per cent. of the public thought that the decision whether or not to continue a pregnancy should be left to the woman in consultation with her doctor. Support for that view has been high since 1979 —never lower than 74 per cent., which is three quarters of those sampled. The support is high regardless of the age, sex, political opinion or religion of those polled. There is growing support for a more liberal abortion law that would allow women to make their own decisions on abortion. In 1979, the National Opinion Poll found that 56 per cent. of people thought that abortion should be available legally to those who wanted it. That was confirmed in a later NOP survey in *The Sun*.

People tend to think that it is easy to obtain an abortion. It is not. Many of my hon. Friends have pointed out the difficulties that face women and girls seeking abortion. We know of the widespread concern about the unevenness of NHS provision—from the disgraceful figures in the west midlands where only 3 to 4 per cent. of women can obtain abortions on the NHS to the 97 per cent. who can do so in the north of England. It would have become the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle more and earned him my respect if part of his motion had referred to the inadequacies of NHS provision for abortion. That would have been a good point to debate, and preferable to the high moral tone that the hon. Gentleman chose to take.

A number of different organisations and bodies have taken a similar view about NHS facilities—for example, the Royal Commission and the Select Committee which considered abortion in 1981, on which both the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and the Minister's predecessor served. Indeed, the Minister's predecessor expressed his concern that NHS abortion facilities should be improved. However, those facilities are still not good enough. Only last month the Women's National Commission working group on health, chaired by Dame Ann Springman of the Conservative women's national committee, said that where an abortion is permissible, NHS facilities should be made available at the earliest possible stage and that day care facilities should be extended. The Labour party's programme gives priority to improving NHS facilities, including day care, so that choice can be effective wherever the woman lives.

During all the agitation, the pontificating, the attacks on the existing abortion laws and the moralising that we have heard this evening, nothing has been said about the role of the man. Women are blamed for needing abortions. It is represented as their fault if they become pregnant —they have not taken precautions; the precautions have gone wrong so it is bad luck on them; they must bear the agony and the fear of not finding a doctor willing to help; they must bear the main brunt of an abortion and all the difficulties that go with it. Nowhere in the argument is the role and the responsibility of the man pointed out. That was most noticeable in the speech of the hon. Member for Teignbridge. The women are made to feel blameworthy and guilty. If they cannot cope, people look down on them. They are talked about as though they did not exist or work in this place. They are continually put down by less than half the population—the men—who want to decide for them what they should do with their bodies.

Even in the argument about the under-16s and the recent Court of Appeal judgment, it is the daughters' difficulties that are exposed and it is their lives that are being endangered. The law actually protects boys of 14, but they have not been mentioned in our discussion. The House should remember that in our moralising we must understand that women will not for ever be prepared to go on being unable to control their fertility and their bodies. They will continue to demand more rights and more of a say in how they shape their lives.

6.39 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), first, on his good fortune in obtaining this allocation of parliamentary time and, secondly, on giving the House the opportunity to consider this subject again. Since the Abortion Act 1967 was passed the House has considered its provisions on several occasions and several attempts have been made to introduce amending legislation, although none has been successful. But it is surprising—it has surprised me during my time as Minister for Health—that the House has not considered the subject since 1981. The previous occasion on which the House considered it was when the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) introduced a Ten-minute Bill, which did not reach the statute book.

Although some hon. Members criticised my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, and although I do not agree with all of his views on this subject, the way in which he put them forward commanded respect, and I am sure that his reasonable proposition will be supported by many inside and outside the House.

I must make it clear that the Government, like all their predecessors, are neutral on the great issues of principle that are raised by abortion. The Government believe that it is for Parliament to decide the law and to take any opportunity that the majority wishes to change the law. Since Parliament has decided that abortions may lawfully

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

be carried out in the circumstances specified in the Act, the Government have a duty to ensure that the provisions of the law are properly applied. That must remain our view. I have always been a supporter of the 1967 Act and believed that the way in which it has been applied has, on balance, been beneficial to society. But as I speak in this debate, because I happen to be the Minister for Health, I shall not take advantage of the time to discuss at length some of the issues that have been raised, which I might have done were I not on the Front Bench.

Following the examination of the working of the Act by the Lane committee and later by the Select Committee on abortion, we now have a strict system of control over the application of the Act. I assure the House that my Department takes seriously its duties of inspection and control of private clinics. We monitor closely the operation of the Act, and I assure hon. Members that our monitoring machinery does not reveal any abuse of it. The Government are satisfied that they are ensuring, to the best of their ability, that the wishes of Parliament are respected. That means that abortions are being carried out in proper circumstances and only when the provisions of the Act are satisfied. Obviously, we must strive to ensure that that continues to be the case.

I and the Government share my hon. Friend's concern that many abortions are still considered necessary, for the reasons that were expounded by the hon. Member for Barking. The background to most abortions is at least error, but often it is severe emotional crisis. Abortion is often the cause of considerable distress and difficulty. The figures for 1981, 1982 and 1983 showed a slight decrease in the number of abortions. From the best test that can be applied, which is the number of abortions per thousand women between the ages of 15 and 44, we discover that the rate fell from 12·62 in 1980 to 11·94 in 1983.

It is regrettable that the 1984 figures that we have so far show a slight increase in abortions. No one knows what caused that, but I share the theory of the hon. Member for Barking that it almost certainly resulted from the scare that followed last year's reports of possible dangers from the contraceptive pill. When those stories emerged, we did our best to give proper advice to women, which included asking them to ensure that they finished the course of contraceptive treatment upon which they had embarked, and that they took advice about alternative methods of contraception. But it seems likely that some women, in panic, stopped the course of pills that they were taking or made a mistake in changing to other methods. Everyone who has spoken in the debate, with whatever views, must hope that the downward trend which we previously witnessed will soon return and continue.

I agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), who put his views in his usual colourful way, that one of the best things that we can do to reduce the large number of abortions is to encourage the sensible use of family planning. We do that by the provision of a free family planning service, which we believe is an essential preventive measure which contributes to the avoidance of unwanted pregnancy, to the proper spacing and timing of children and, therefore, to better maternal and child health and to a secure and stable family life. For that reason, we support financially those voluntary bodies that work in this area and the family planning information service.

The hon. Member for Barking felt free to express her views about the case that has been brought against the Department by Mrs. Gillick. She will understand that, as the matter is still waiting to go to the House of Lords, I would rather not be drawn into that discussion. But it is important that that Court of Appeal decision is appealed, if only to clarify some of the doubts left unanswered by the way in which the judgment was expressed. This is an important matter for our society, and the highest court in the land must give a clear ruling on whether the guidance issued by the Department was lawful.

In the brief time that I propose to take in the debate, I shall say a few words about the matter which most concerned my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle. He was worried, as were many hon. Members, about the late stage at which some abortions are performed, especially having regard to the advances in medical techniques of helping premature babies to survive. This matter has caused anxiety for many years, and it has been considered from time to time since the Lane committee produced its report. Several hon. Members have accurately described the legal and statistical position, so I shall not repeat everything that has been said about the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, which was described by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), and its relationship to the present law. As he said, the Act requires prima facie proof that a foetus is capable of being born alive if a pregnancy is of more than 28 weeks' duration.

As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) made clear, the Infant Life (Preservation) Act protects the life of any foetus capable of being born alive, but in practice the 28-week period has been taken as the usual guideline for the application of that Act. The Lane committee recommended that it should be made illegal for an abortion to be carried out after 24 weeks, but, after repeated attempts, the House has not yet been able to resolve that matter, and the law stands as it was in 1929 and in 1967.

The Government have become concerned about the state of the law because of the changes in medical techniques. In March 1980, my predecessor—my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) — asked the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to undertake a review of late abortion practice. Its report was published early in 1984, and I commend it to those hon. Members who have not read it. The Government have been considering how best to follow the eight major recommendations in the report, which examined the causes for late abortions and the way in which unnecessary delays and, therefore, the number of late abortions might be reduced. The report has been helpful in drawing attention to the factors which cause abortion to be carried out later than need otherwise happen. We hope that those who provide abortion services, whether it be the National Health Service or the private sector, will consider its findings carefully.

The Government propose to act in several ways. First, to take the point made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) among others, we propose to discuss with NHS representatives the report's findings about delays between referrals and operations in the NHS. We shall be having serious discussions with National Health Service representatives to ascertain whether improvements can be made in practice in areas where delays seem to be inexplicably longer than

in other parts of the country. We shall try to disseminate the best practice so that the lessons learnt in one place can be applied by authorities elsewhere. I understand that there is a good scheme which appears to be working well in Newcastle. If it is proved that Newcastle has a better method of handling these matters, we shall do our best to commend it to other health authorities and so spread it through the service.

Secondly, the recommendations of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists point to a need for more education, especially for younger women, to make them appreciate the urgency of early consultation and decision making when pregnancy occurs. We shall be consulting our colleagues in the Department of Education and Science about the prospects for more health education and counselling facilities for young people in this sensitive area.

Thirdly, we shall be seeking to reinforce in every other way the importance of early recognition of pregnancy and recourse to advice when anyone faces a crisis of the sort that we are discussing. That message has already been highlighted by the Maternity Services Advisory Committee, which the Government set up and whose report we have already commended to health authorities.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, together with other medical bodies, is considering actively whether to recommend that the 1929 Act should be amended to change the definition of "foetal viability" from 28 to fewer weeks. The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), the only Member with a medical qualification to speak in the debate, told us that there is not unanimity within the medical profession on this matter. However, I feel that most doctors consider that 28 weeks is too long a period. This important matter needs to be considered at the level at which the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is now examining it. When the medical bodies produce their advice, I am sure that it will be widely debated and that the House, as well as the Government, will want to consider it and decide what implications it has for abortion law. I suggest that until we have had time to consider the views of the Royal College it will be foolish for the Government to take a view about any alternative to the 28-week provision. It is probably a little premature for anyone to try to introduce a proposal to make changes in the law.

I think that we all expect the Royal College to come out with a shorter period than 28 weeks. Long ago the Lane committee said that 24 weeks should be the maximum for a legal abortion. Practically everyone who has contributed to the debate has suggested that perhaps 28 weeks is too long a period and that it should be reduced.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and others reminisced about previous Bills. I remember the issues which have been discussed this evening being canvassed when the House considered the Bill that was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie). My hon. Friend tried to introduce a substantial amendment to the 1967 Act. In this debate those with views as opposite as the hon. Members for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) have supported a reduction from 28 to 24 weeks. I remember that I did when the Corrie Bill was passing through the House. I think that I voted to that effect, although I have not checked to ensure that I was present when the Division took place. However, I recall that I supported a reduction from 28 to 24 weeks. The majority of the House voted in favour of the reduction when the Division took place in the course of our consideration of the Corrie Bill.

It is my recollection that the sponsors of the Corrie Bill insisted on adding many other drastic amendments, with the result that those like the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), for Fife, Central and for Barking and myself, who would otherwise have been happy to see a reduction from 28 to 24 weeks placed on the statute book, found that everyone's wishes were frustrated because the Bill was eventually talked out.

If the Royal College returns with some clear advice, I think that the House will have a duty to recognise that there is an amazingly wide spread of opinion. I hope that I shall be forgiven for referring to the opinions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and of the hon. Member for Barking. Probably 28 weeks is too long a period, and the House must concentrate on making progress on that issue, if on nothing else, if that proves to be the recommendation of the Royal College. It will be for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to decide whether the Government will provide time for these matters to be considered by the introduction of a Bill, if and when this hypothetical situation ever arises. That is not a matter to be decided before the Royal College reports to us.

Mrs. Renée Short: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that only 0·6 per cent. of terminations take place at 28 weeks or later? It is still a tiny percentage and we should not get it out of all proportion when considering this matter.

Mr. Clarke: I accept that the number is tiny, but it is not insignificant. If the Royal College says that 28 weeks is now an unrealistically long period for "foetal viability", to use the jargon, and that medical practice has been transformed during the period from 1929 to 1985, I think that the House will wish to address itself to modern practice and, perhaps, to insert a more realistic limit in the statute book. However, I accept that we must not get this issue out of all proportion.

Mr. Alton: I think that earlier the Minister said that he did not think that this would be the right moment for any hon. Member to introduce amending legislation to reduce the time limit when abortions can be carried out from 28 to 24 weeks. The Lane committee, a long time ago, said that that should be done, the World Health Organisation said that that should be done and the sponsors of earlier legislation took the same view. When does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think will be the right time?

Mr. Clarke: The Government will not produce any legislation of that sort. I was expressing a personal view. As the Royal College is considering the issue at this moment, I take the view that we might as well await its report. It may be that the Royal College will not say that 24 weeks is the right time. It is possible that it will opt for some other period. As I have said, I do not think that it will be long before it reports.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle addressed himself to nurses and whether the so-called conscience clause needed to be strengthened. When the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North was being considered, it received a great deal of support from all sections of the House as it

[Mr. Clarke]

contained provisions that suggested that the conscience clause might be rewritten. I have no evidence that the clause is not being applied properly now. I am not aware that any nurses have been dismissed for refusing to take part in abortion operations. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle that we would wish to intervene to ensure that something was done if we found that any nurse had been so ill-treated.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have been told that when doctors have applied for posts in certain hospitals they have been denied appointments because they said that they would refuse to terminate pregnancies. Will the Minister corroborate or reject that allegation?

Mr. Clarke: I am not aware of any such cases. We have no evidence that such cases have arisen. The allegation has been made repeatedly, but no cases of that sort have been brought to me as Minister. That applies to nurses and to doctors seeking appointments. If anything of that sort has happened, it should not have done.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Let us suppose that there are two gynaecologists at a hospital, one of whom performs abortions and the other does not because of his conscience. Let us suppose also that the one who performs the abortions leaves. The post would have to be filled, and the board would be within its rights to insist that at least one gynaecologist at the hospital should fulfil his obligations to the Health Service.

Mr. Clarke: I cannot say what considerations a hypothetical board might take into account in the hypothetical situation that the hon. Gentleman has postulated. However, nurses are protected. We insist that they have a conscience clause. A doctor's prospects should not be adversely affected if, for some religious scruple, he does not want to take part in abortions.

I have considerable sympathy with the two basic issues that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle raised. I do not believe that he had a fierce opponent or critic on the proposal to shorten the period during which abortions can take place or on his remarks about a conscience clause. I am grateful to him for raising these matters. I assure him that the Government will maintain their neutrality while seeking to ensure that all the safeguards in the present Act are applied in practice from now on.

6.59 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): To pregnant women, especially those in an advanced stage of pregnancy, the decision whether to have an abortion is agonising. I do not believe that abortions are lightly entered into. I am convinced that the decision whether to have a late abortion is not taken without a great deal of heart searching. Because it is a difficult decision, I very much deplore the attitude of those who talk about abortion in terms of numbers or as though it were entered into flippantly. That attitude is particularly deplorable when it comes from men.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) will never have to struggle with the problems of contraception which, despite recent advances, can not only make a person ill, but be painful and unreliable. He will never have to face the shock of a pregnancy that has not been diagnosed until it is well advanced. The hon. Gentleman will never have to face the agony of deciding whether to carry to term an abnormal foetus and bring into the world to lead a short life a child who might be severely handicapped.

It being Seven o'clock, the proceedings lapsed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of Public Business).

Local Government Bill (Allocation of Time)

7 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move, That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1. The Standing Committee to which the Bill (except Clause 1) is allocated shall report the Bill (except Clause 1) to the House on or before 7th March 1985.

Report and Third Reading

2. — (1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 45 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who moves, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be moved to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill (or such of its provisions as were committed or re-committed to that Committee) to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be moved in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on first allotted day

7.—(1) On the first allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9. — (1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is moved by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 9 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10. — (1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

[Mr. John Biffen]

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Re-committal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of re-committal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Local Government Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

As the whole House is only too well aware, this motion sets out a timetable for the Bill designed to abolish the Greater London and metropolitan county councils. This is a major piece of legislation. The Government have been committed to it since before the general election in June 1983. The case for the Bill will be dealt with in greater detail by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government at the conclusion of the debate, but let me say at once that I believe that case to be formidable and to have been fully made out during the prolonged debate which has taken place on the issue, both in Parliament and outside.

The Bill had its origins in the White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" which was published in October 1983 together with a series of consultation papers. These documents gave rise to a lengthy period of consultation and discussion. In addition, there were long and probing debates in Parliament during the last Session on the Bill which became the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984. I do not believe, therefore, that anyone can claim that the policy that lies behind the Bill has not been thoroughly examined.

The Bill is substantial. It has to make arrangements for the transfer of functions to the successor authorities, including police, fire, passenger transport and the newly constituted Inner London education authority. The Bill has to deal also with the implications for staff and to settle the financial arrangements. It is therefore right that a substantial amount of parliamentary time should be provided for it to be debated, and the Government have recognised this.

In addition to two full days on Second Reading, clause 1 was committed to a Committee of the whole House. The remainder has now been under discussion in Standing Committee for over 100 hours.

In referring to the proceedings in Standing Committee I recognise that the Opposition have demonstrated their developing expertise in these matters. I congratulate them on the fact that they have not on this occasion chosen to rely solely on the tactics immortalised by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). There has been no repeat of the marathon filibusters which were such a lamentable feature of the Telecommunications Bill in the last two Sessions of Parliament. None the less, progress has been slow.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): To backup the right hon. Gentleman's point, will he recognise that one of the longest speeches made in Standing Committee — 72 minutes — was made by the Minister of State, Department of Transport? If the guillotine motion is implemented, hon. Members will have less than 40 minutes to discuss each remaining clause. It is a matter not of filibustering but of the Government trying to curtail debate.

Mr. Biffen: That statistic shows the generosity of my hon. Friend the Minister in giving way to the many interruptions that marked her speech.

In its first sitting the Committee discussed the three lines that make up clause 2 for two and a half hours, despite the fact that no amendments to that clause had been selected. Thirty eight hours were then devoted to clauses 3 and 4 and schedule 1. At that rate of progress the Bill would have spent well over 400 hours in Committee— [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] The Opposition's cheers indicate that that was their aspiration.

After more than 100 hours, there are more than 80 clauses and nine schedules still to be debated.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The right hon. Gentleman seems to be surprised that the Opposition should say, "Hear, hear" to the idea of the Bill being discussed for more than 400 hours. He will recall that the London Government Act 1963 at least had the benefit of three years of a Royal Commission to consider all the proposals for reorganisation. If we had had a similar amount of time to consider these proposals for reorganisation, the right hon. Gentleman would not now be moving the guillotine motion.

Mr. Biffen: I am happy that the hon. Gentleman referred to a measure which, in its day, was also guillotined.

Furthermore, the debate has to be concluded to enable the other place to carry out its own measured consideration of these major local government reforms. It is therefore clear that the imposition of a timetable is required to secure proper consideration of the very important provisions still outstanding. That timetable is realistically drawn and will not be unreasonable. The motion will allow the Committee a further 16 sessions if the Business Sub-Committee decides to continue morning and afternoon sittings. Sensibly allocated, that will allow all the significant issues to be discussed. In addition, two full days—one lasting until midnight — will be provided on the Floor of the House for Report and Third Reading.

Mr. Tony Banks: We will all turn into pumpkins.

Mr. Biffen: That fate overtakes a great many Opposition Members as they run out of reasoned arguments and resort to a level of contribution that is barely above a reading of the London telephone directory.

I think it appropriate that at this point I should say a few words on the subject of timetabling in general.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Before my right hon. Friend goes on to discuss timetabling in general, will he state whether he is aware that, under the timetable he is setting out—ending in Committee on 7 March—hon. Members will be allowed a maximum of 40 minutes per

item to discuss the 56 clauses and schedules left? Is that a reasonable amount of time in which to consider such a complicated measure?

Mr. Biffen: I believe that it is a reasonable amount in the light of my hon. Friend's known quality to present his arguments succinctly and persuasively.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): All the metropolitan counties and the GLC will be affected. The electorate in those areas expect the person representing them to contribute in Committee to a debate on the major issues. If we have only 40 minutes for each clause, it will not be possible for Opposition Members, let alone Government Members, to speak for more than two minutes on major issues such as the police. I would be able to contribute for only two minutes to the debate on the consequences for the police force in the whole of Merseyside.

Mr. Biffen: That is just an argument for debate sharing. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman, who has a reputation for putting his arguments with accuracy and effect, will put his case even more accurately and effectively if it is allied with the quality of brevity.

As the House knows, the Select Committee on Procedure is now engaged on an inquiry into public Bill procedure, and timetabling figures in that inquiry. My own evidence to the Committee is a matter of public record and I do not wish to rehearse the arguments now. At business questions last week I was made aware by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) of the continuing desire in some parts of the House for automatic timetabling. I still believe that adequate and balanced debate on matters of great interest can generally be better secured by negotiation and agreement than by the imposition of a prejudged timetable from the outset. Agreement is, unfortunately, not always possible. My reluctance to abandon the system of negotiation and agreement is, I hope, a testimony to my personal instinct for unfettered debate.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend know how many times after discussions with the Opposition there has been agreement to have reasonable discussions on a Bill without having to timetable it? Secondly, has he sought such an arrangement over this Bill, and if so what was the answer?

Mr. Biffen: On my hon. Friend's first point, without notice I cannot give him a statistical answer, but most Bills go through the House with an overt or tacit agreement as to their broad time schedule. His second point can more appropriately be dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government.

I make those comments notwithstanding the scepticism of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), contained in an article in *The Times* last Monday. In that article, and again at business questions last week, he alleged that the statistics demonstrate this Treasury Bench to be the most enthusiastic guillotiners since Robespierre.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I did not say that.

Mr. Biffen: The implication was even more dreadful. As we are all aware, an innocent reliance on global statistics can mislead. The House may benefit from a rather more detached, if not desiccated, analysis of recent history.

The Labour party was in power for five years and two months from February 1974. During that period it introduced a timetable on 12 occasions. This Government took office in May 1979, and five years and nine months have elapsed. This is the 16th guillotine motion that we have introduced. One must also bear in mind, however, the fact that two of those timetables were introduced on the same Telecommunications Bill because of the fortuitous circumstances of the 1983 general election. In addition, on one occasion in 1982 I had the irksome task of introducing a guillotine against some of the Government's supporters. The incident left me with the clearest impression that it was no ordinary guillotine occasion. I do not include it in the tally. Thus, a true reading of the score would be 12 to the Labour Government, 14 to the Conservative Government — *[Interruption.]* I have not finished. This is just the beginning of this in-depth analysis.

We must also consider the fact that the Labour Government were effectively in a minority in the House from March 1977 onwards. Thereafter, the Government could only guillotine by courtesy of the Liberal party. Thus, it is fairer to say that an autonomous Labour Government introduced nine guillotines in three years and this Treasury Bench, on a comparable basis, 14 guillotines in five years nine months. I believe, therefore, that a dispassionate analysis of the facts——

Mr. Harry Cowans (Tyne Bridge): While the Leader of the House is reading out those statistics, will he tell the House how many of those guillotines were of a constitutional nature, as on this Bill, and how many of them the Government recognised as a constitutional issue by allowing two days to discuss clause 1 on the Floor of the House? If he were to allow two days for the rest of the clauses, that would make sense.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman belongs to a party which during its last term of office forced through guillotines to support devolution—the Wales Bill, the Scotland Bill and a Bill for the establishment of a British contingent to a directly elected European Assembly. The Government need no instruction from him about the constitutional proprieties in these matters.

A dispassionate analysis of the facts does not support the argument of the hon. Member for Blackburn. If there is any lesson to be learnt, it is that over a period of many years Governments of different persuasions have found the use of the timetable motion to be occasionally necessary to ensure the passage of their legislation. The timetable is as necessary to a legislative programme as sewerage is to civilisation.

Mr. Straw: We have all been entertained by the speech of the Leader of the House, especially his dispassionate analysis of the the facts, which reflect his Treasury background. He will not deny that a dispassionate analysis of the facts in the Clerks' evidence to the Select Committee on Procedure clearly showed that in five years the Government guillotined more Bills in Standing Committee than previous Governments guillotined in 20 years.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, but they were the same basic raw statistics in respect of this Government and the previous Labour Government. *[Interruption.]* They are raw statistics, as I believe I have demonstrated to the general satisfaction of the House. On a more refined

[Mr. Biffen]

consideration, it is clear that there is no preponderance of a disposition for the guillotine on one side of the House rather than on the other.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if sewerage is important for civilisation it should not be taxed? On the subject of a guillotine motion, following his arguments a few moments ago, does he agree that on both sides of the House guillotines have been used where constitutional arguments and perhaps constitutional propriety have been at stake, and that therefore that is a just criticism of the Bill which he now wishes to guillotine?

Mr. Biffen: I do not believe that the character of the Local Government Bill is any more a constitutional measure than the three propositions of the Labour Governments which I read out a few moments ago. Any attempt to divert argument in that direction would merely lead one to a cul-de-sac.

I do not wish to delay the House further. The Local Government Bill is an important part of the Government's programme. Its passage is awaited by millions of ratepayers and by all those in local government whose decisions will reflect the Bill's contents. This motion will facilitate that passage and do so in a way that allows sensible debate of the issues. I commend the motion to the House.

7.16 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I have taken part, as has the Leader of the House, in a number of guillotine debates during this Parliament, but I cannot recall one where so great a folly and so much damage will ensue from foreclosing and limiting debate as in the case before us today.

I found the right hon. Gentleman's speech to be completely unconvincing, and not merely in the content and the raw or refined statistics that he put before us which sought to justify or ensure his reputation as a liberal in the matter of guillotines. It was generally delivered in what can only be described as blazing insincerity.

The Government's reasons for stifling debate are all too clear. When the Second Reading of the Local Government Bill came to an end on 4 December, the Opposition's reasoned amendment was defeated and the Government's proposition for the Second Reading was carried by majorities of about 135. It has been remarkable how the Government's majorities have faded since that initial event.

When clause 1, which contains the principle of the Bill —the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils — was taken on the Floor of the House on Wednesday 12 December, the Government's majority on the Opposition's amendment not to proceed until the House had received a report by a Royal Commission on those proposals was only 51 votes. The next amendment by the Opposition which asked for a prior report by the parliamentary committee of inquiry was defeated by only 44 votes, and on the third amendment calling for an independent inquiry into the cost implications for local services the Government had a majority of only 45. In the last vote of that day, an amendment calling for the replacement of the GLC by another directly elected authority was defeated by a mere 23 votes.

The strongest argument against the Bill, though not the only powerful argument against it, was put by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The right hon. Gentleman says that majorities fell during the discussion of clause 1 in two days' consideration on the Floor of the House. That clause abolishes the GLC and the six metropolitan counties, but the right hon. Gentleman did not say what majority we had in the Division on clause 1 stand part. How many over 100 was our majority?

Mr. Shore: It was about 100, but there was a super three-line Whip to recover from the humiliation of the 23 majority that reflected the sentiments of Conservative Members at the end of the previous debate.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said:

> "The Bill contains proposals for a major constitutional change and it comes without precedent because no public inquiry has been carried out as the basis for it. What is more, the case against the GLC and the metropolitan counties remains unproven. No substantial evidence has been produced for abolishing the GLC or the metropolitan counties."

That is the heart of the matter.

The Bill is, indeed, a constitutional measure. It marks a major shift in the distribution of powers between central and local government. It greatly diminishes the power of local government and local democracy. Indeed, how could it be otherwise when elected local authorities in the metropolitan counties and London, providing services for 18 million people, are to be abolished from 31 March 1986 and no new elected authorities are to be put in their place?

The Secretary of State has disingenuously argued that the overwhelming majority of services taken away from the metropolitan authorities and the GLC will be exercised in future by the lower tier elected authorities in those areas. But he arrives at that conclusion only by listing the trivial with the major functions of the local authorities. Surely what really matters is that services involving 82 per cent. of the spending of metropolitan areas will be removed from directly elected bodies to statutory boards and quangos and that only 18 per cent. will go to the district councils. That conclusion was reached by PA Management Consultants, which carried out a major study of what the Government have proposed.

We have no written constitution, but it has been the practice of successive Governments for a century or more to extend the scope of local democracy. The Bill, along with measures that have preceded it, including the Rates Act, which enables the Secretary of State to determine the rates levied by local authorities, the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act, which abolishes for London and the metropolitan counties the elections that were to have been held on 2 May this year, and the earlier powers that enable the Secretary of State to impose an elaborate system of targets on local authorities, have halted and reversed the long-established trend towards greater local democracy.

Indeed, more powers are now exercised at the centre, by the Secretary of State and, through him, by nominated boards and bodies, than were at any time in the past 100 years. As the right hon. Member for Bexley and Sidcup stressed, all that has been done without an independent inquiry. Not only has there not been an independent inquiry, but there has been no serious thinking in Government Departments about the implications of the policy that they are pursuing and the future arrangements for the services that are affected.

How the Government landed in this miserable state was revealed by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup when he told us — and his words matter enormously:

"The last sad part of the saga is being justified on the ground that the proposals were set out in the Conservative party's manifesto. They were put in nine days after the election was called against the wishes of the party policy committee. They were inserted without the general agreement of those who had been London Conservative Members." — [*Official Report*, 4 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 190-1.]

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): When we had an independent inquiry—the Redcliffe-Maud inquiry —my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) not only rejected its recommendations, but produced the present hopeless arrangements. In addition, the Labour Government did not accept the Redcliffe-Maud recommendations. They produced different proposals. The met counties had education, and that was not proposed by Redcliffe-Maud.

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman's memory has let him down. There was a minority and a majority report in the Redcliffe-Maud inquiry. The Labour Government had no difficulty in going for the large unitary authorities which were then proposed. Following the 1970 election, a botched-up scheme was put forward, but at least it had some relevance to a recent independent inquiry.

The difficulties facing the Government were predictable. Local government structures and services form a complex jigsaw. By removing the GLC and the six metropolitan county councils, the Government have removed seven major pieces from the board, without any thought-out strategy for redesigning the remaining structure or filling in the gaping holes. That was bound to lead to chaos, improvisation and muddle—and we have had all three.

It is the plain duty of the House and its Standing Committee fully to explore the ramifications of this ill-prepared measure. I reject—though I hardly need to do so, because the Leader of the House has conceded our claim—any suggestion that there has been filibustering in the 100 hours of Committee consideration that the Bill has so far received. Indeed, the longest speech — 72 minutes—was made by a Minister.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the progress made on the Bill in Committee, he will see that, at that rate of progress, there was no chance of the measure coming back to the House in time to become law in this Session. If the Opposition really wanted a full discussion on this important subject—I accept that they do not want the Bill—would it not have been helpful and wise if they had volunteered a timetable for the Bill?

Mr. Shore: No proposals were made by the Government for handling the Bill by agreement. The Government simply reached whatever bench mark of progress they had in mind and came forward with the guillotine motion.

During that period, the Committee has considered the complex questions of town and country planning, development plans, listed buildings, national parks, highways and road traffic functions, waste regulation and waste disposal, land drainage and flood prevention, the administration of justice—including magistrates courts and the coroners service — valuation panels and the probation service.

No one in his senses would argue that those are small or trivial matters. They are of vital concern to people in communities throughout the metropolitan areas and our capital city. The new arrangements for the reallocation of those services, mainly to the London boroughs and the metropolitan district councils, needed the most careful scrutiny.

What is really appalling is the vast areas of the Bill that have not even been reached. Not a word has been spoken yet in Committee on the future of our largest education authority, the Inner London education authority, nor has there been any opportunity to discuss such major matters as the fire service, the police and passenger transport, all of which are to be transferred to non-elected joint authorities. Yet, in the case of the metropolitan counties, those services account for no less than 67 per cent. of their current expenditure. Those joint authorities will at least be comprised of members appointed by the borough or district councils in their areas. However, that will not be the case in part V of the Bill, which transfers such major facilities as the historic house museums in London to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. Collections of national importance belonging to the metropolitan county councils will be transferred to new trustee bodies. The South Bank arts complex is to pass to the Arts Council.

Those are all transfers to non-elected bodies, but even that will not do the job. Part VII of the Bill provides for the establishment in each area of the body to be known as the residuary body, consisting of members appointed by the Secretary of State to deal with all those difficult and inconvenient matters for which no other body can be made responsible. To add insult to injury, all those new authorities—the joint authorities, the non-elected bodies and the appointed residuary bodies—will be empowered to issue a precept and will, from day one and at least the following three years, be rate capped by the Secretary of State. Along with the named authorities, they are to be brought within part I of the Rates Act 1984 at the moment of their existence.

Those are very complex arrangements, and it is intolerable that there should no longer be the opportunity seriously to debate, amend and discuss them in what is now left of the Committee stage. Of course, the Leader of the House says that the timetable motion allows for further debate. It does. But since the Bill has to be reported to the House on or before 7 March, that will leave time for no more than seven further Committee sittings. So far the Committee has debated 16 clauses of the Local Government Bill, clauses that are linked with no fewer than eight schedules running to 62 pages of text. That is what the Committee has done already. In the seven remaining Committee sittings that we are now allowed under the guillotine, a further 81 clauses fall to be considered together with another eight schedules comprising 52 additional pages of text. Of one thing we can be certain: much the larger part of this most controversial and ill-thought-out Bill will go to the other place undiscussed and unamended.

While the Government have persistently refused to subject their proposals to any sort of independent scrutiny, the authorities affected have called in consultants of repute. The report published by PA Management Consultants, after an intensive study of the new structures proposed, concludes with these words:

[Mr. Shore]

"the multiplicity of compulsory and voluntary joint working between Metropolitan District Councils is an unsound basis for an effective lasting structure".

The report goes on to say:

"overall we have been unable to find a single service where the quality of service to the local elector is likely to be improved as a result of the change in structure. In many cases we believe there will be a marked decline in quality".

The only justification that the Government have attempted to advance during the discussions of their proposals is that there will be some cost savings. In the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill they say:

"The government's current estimate . . . is that, subject to decisions yet to be taken by successor authorities, a saving of the order of £100 million annually will be achievable by removing a tier of government and eliminating duplication of functions.".

No evidence has been presented by the Government to justify that claim. Against it, the councils themselves have commissioned Coopers and Lybrand to give its own independent estimate. In its second report, it concluded as follows:

"the proposed changes cannot be expected to lead to savings in themselves . . . savings therefore can only be sought as a result of policy changes about the levels of services and hence expenditure in an area."

One can get savings only if one cuts the services. That is nothing to do with changing the structure of local government. On the very claim that the Government make of a £100 million saving by abolition of the GLC and the six metropolitan counties, Coopers and Lybrand concludes not only that the Government's claims cannot be supported but that likely additional annual costs at least in the six areas of the metropolitan counties will be up to £69 million per year.

The plain truth is that the Bill is part, perhaps the crowning achievement, of the Government's campaign against local democracy, the hard-hit inner cities and conurbation areas of the country, and areas where their political opponents, the Labour party, are in local control.

Mr. Nellist: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shore: I shall not give way to my hon. Friend as I must conclude.

Not content with fining and penalising local councils that maintain their services, not content even with taking powers to limit their ability to raise and set their own rates, the Government have now reached the ultimate stage of abolishing the offenders altogether. That reflects all too clearly the authoritarian temperament of the Government, particularly of the Prime Minister. The new arrangements are not only an affront to democracy, but are illogical, cumbersome and unworkable. The guillotine at this stage of the Bill that gives legislative authority to the proposals adds insult to injury, and we shall oppose it in the Lobby tonight.

7.36 pm

Mr. Martin Stevens (Fulham): Those of us who have the pleasure and delight of serving on the Standing Committee on the Bill that we are discussing will have heard the remarks by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House with the greatest possible pleasure, first, because of the felicity and charm that graced their utterance, but no less because his speech spelt out for us not the end of debate on the Bill, but the beginning. As we know, the Select Committee on Procedure is now examining this matter. Many of us feel that there would be benefit in Standing Committees always working to time from day one. First and, in my submission, not least, that would give the Government's supporters on the Committee a fair chance to participate in the debate. Second, and perhaps more important, it would tie down the Committee to debating the realities that are at stake and to forgetting, or at least passing over with relative speed, the emotional frivolities that we have been forced to hear throughout the past eight weeks.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): If we thought that the guillotine would assist Conservative Members to take part in the debate, my hon. Friends and I on the Committee would welcome that because so far we have heard almost nothing in justification of the measures on which Conservative Members regularly vote. The hon. Gentleman said that timetabling the Committee would allow adequate participation in debates. Does he include Ministers in that? Once the guillotine is passed, does he expect real answers from Ministers, rather than the casual reading of briefs which we have had so far?

Mr. Stevens: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to answer for my ministerial colleagues. It is up to them what they say and do. I have no doubt that they will continue to give a good account of themselves.

When I said that there had been a certain amount of emotional frivolity, I go along with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, in that on this occasion I do not accuse the Opposition of filibustering. They have, however, concentrated their whole line of argument on a series of propositions which are false. For example, they have told us ad nauseam that no Government since Boadicea have ever denied people the democratic right to vote for an outgoing local authority. Yet that is exactly what the Labour party did in London in 1964 and in the rest of the country in 1975 when forms of local administration were being phased out.

I do not say that this action was our first choice, but the House knows the reasons for it and there is ample precedent for it in the history of Labour Governments. If the Opposition keep repeating what everyone knows to be rubbish, I think that I am entitled to describe that as emotional frivolity.

Mr. Tony Banks: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, far from repeating emotional rubbish, the Opposition have cited reams of evidence submitted to all members of the Committee from learned bodies, royal institutions and impartial sources to the effect that the Government have got it completely wrong. Meanwhile, the Government have been unable to produce even one substantial piece of evidence to support their proposals. Finally, why have 10 Conservative Members sat in the Committee and said absolutely nothing throughout the proceedings?

Mr. Stevens: It is always a pleasure to hear interventions from the hon. Gentleman. The reams of evidence from more or less interested outside bodies to which he refers do not relate to the point that I was making, from which he was careful to divert attention. As for the allegation that 10 Government supporters have not yet spoken, the timetable motion will give them the opportunity to break forth into compelling words. I look forward not just to hearing them but to joining them in weeks to come.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am not here to defend either Tory or Labour Governments, but the hon. Gentleman is wrong about a Labour Government having set a precedent, as both the GLC and the metropolitan counties were set up by Tory legislation. Moreover, neither occasion was a precedent for what the Government are now doing, because on both occasions the life of an elected authority was continued pending the replacement of higher-tier authorities. In this case, however, the life of an authority is continued for one year by the abolition of elections, but no interim authority is to come into existence. In this case the authority is to be dissolved. There is no precedent for that from any Government.

Mr. Stevens: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting technicality and in so doing draws attention to another Opposition argument — the wilful assertion that less government means less democracy. I should have thought that the fewer tiers of government the people of this country have to find their way through, the greater the presumption should be that there will be more rather than less democracy.

Mr. Tony Banks: Why not scrap the whole lot then?

Mr. Stevens: Surely no one would argue that the abolition of the area health authorities has undermined the conduct of the National Health Service.

Mr. Tony Banks: They should never have been set up in the first place.

Mr. Stevens: My party set up the GLC and no one could be sadder than I at what has happened to it. I played a small part in that, as Chris Chataway and I put to the Royal Commission the evidence that came closest to its final proposition. That being so, I should have liked the GLC to operate successfully as a strategic authority. From the first GLC election in 1965, however, the GLC triggered off its reserve powers on a daily basis, and instead of being the strategic authority that it was set up to be it became a very slow and expensive duplicating authority, duplicating the functions of the boroughs which both parties had agreed should be, and now will be, the primary instruments of local government.

Dr. Hampson: I understand that the Liberal party favours abolishing the metropolitan counties and not replacing them. It apparently wants an even more distant tier in the shape of some colossal regional government system.

Mr. Stevens: That is a helpful intervention and I see some nods from across the way.

Mr. Simon Hughes: At least we are consistent.

Mr. Stevens: It is interesting that the right hon. Gentleman who leads the Opposition in Committee—I am sorry, the hon. Gentleman who leads the Opposition in Committee——

Mr. Tony Banks: It is only a matter of time.

Mr. Stevens: I am sure that that is so. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has made it clear that an incoming Labour Government would not replace the six metropolitan counties, but he has not yet said whether an incoming Labour Government would reinstate the GLC. At Labour party local government conferences up to and including 1981 the speeches made by Labour Members now passionately committed to the opposite view show that there is a twist of hypocrisy in the outrage and condemnation to which they now subject us.

One very unpleasant feature of the Standing Committee on the Bill is the presence round the clock in the Public Gallery of a group of agents, presumably paid for by the ratepayers—some have assessed the number as being as high as 26, although it is difficult to identify them accurately——

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman can do better than that. As he well knows, GLC officers have been present, but at no time have there been more than four paid officers present. They are there to advise not just the Opposition but Conservative Members. I have made it clear to the Committee that if Government supporters need information—from the paucity of their arguments it is clear that they do—they are welcome to consult those officers. The hon. Gentleman should not continue to mislead the House. He should take it from me as a GLC councillor that there have never been more than four paid officers present.

Mr. Stevens: May we also take it from the hon. Gentleman, as a member of the GLC, that at least some of the people who, day and night, accompany the Committee in the Public Gallery are not concealing their identity by means of false names or code names? Can he repeat——

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stevens: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) after giving way to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Banks: It does not take much persuasion to make me rise to answer the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) or any other Government Member. Yes, there have never been more than four paid officials there. From time to time there have been a number of elected members who have a close interest in the matter and a more detailed knowledge of what the Government are trying to do.

Mr. Stevens: That was not the answer that I had hoped for. I had thought that my question was precise, but clearly it has been avoided.

Mr. Allan Roberts: There have been visits from officers and elected members of Merseyside county council. Not many officers have been present, but one or two elected members have come here under their own steam, paying their own expenses. The chief officer responsible for the waste disposal services took unpaid leave in order to attend the Committee.

Mr. Stevens: The idea of ladies and gentlemen from Merseyside county council undertaking such work gratis in their own time is an inspiring vision. The House is grateful to the hon. Gentleman for telling us about it.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was careful to say that at any one time no more than four GLC officers were present in the Committee. He did not say that only four had ever been present. Is it not possible that, through the long hours, relays of four different people at different times have been involved in the argument?

Mr. Stevens: That is what is called playing the numbers game. I do no more than thank my hon. Friend for his kind intervention.

Mr. Cowans: I am following the hon. Gentleman's arguments closely, which is more than I have had a chance to do in Committee. He should remember, first, that there is a bevy of talent in the Committee sitting by the Chairman, all of it presumably paid for by the taxpayer. Secondly, if the hon. Gentleman's argument is so substantial and his case so good, why should he worry even if there are 30,000 people in the Public Gallery?

Mr. Stevens: I would not go so far as to say that I am worried. My modest comment—I have referred to only what is on the Committee's record—has attracted so many excited interventions from the Opposition Benches that it has consumed more time than I had in mind.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): It was offensive.

Mr. Stevens: I do not know that it was offensive. It is a fact.

Mr. Soley: I can tell the hon. Gentleman why his comments were offensive. He has launched an attack upon people who have a proper interest in servicing that Committee in the same way as it is done by the civil servants, whom the hon. Gentleman has not attacked. He knows that they cannot answer back. He even says that they appear under false names. That is offensive to many people who work hard and properly.

Mr. Stevens: The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has uttered a clear denial of my point. Hon. Members will no doubt take account of his intervention when judging the veracity of what I said.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred to a remark that he said had come from the lips of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), whose seat in the Chamber I have momentarily usurped. My right hon. Friend is alleged to have said that the question of abolition was introduced into the Conservative party manifesto without any considerable discussion with Greater London Conservative Members.

Since 1979 I have continuously been the secretary of the Greater London group of Conservative Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]. The position is indeed not without honour. My right hon. Friend is a member of that group but has never attended a meeting.

Mr. Tony Banks: The right hon. Gentleman is no fool.

Mr. Stevens: Tempting nets are laid before our feet in these debates. I shall resist the temptation to dance on that trampoline.

Mr. Banks: What an awesome thought.

Mr. Stevens: In the two years leading up to the 1983 general election it sometimes seemed that there was not a weekly meeting of the Greater London Conservative Members at which the issue of the GLC and its abolition was not discussed ad nauseam. By the time of the election there was no doubt at all—pace my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) — that the overwhelming majority of Conservative Greater London Members—who then as now exceeded in number the Labour Members for Greater London—were in favour of abolition. On a number of occasions we sought interviews with the leader of the party, including my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to make them aware of our views.

That may well be the only topic on which I speak with greater authority than my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. Since I can outspeak him on that one point, this may be a suitable moment for me to resume my seat.

Mr. Banks: The right hon. Gentleman's seat.

Mr. Stevens: My right hon. Friend's seat. Before I do so, I must assure my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House of my full support.

7.57 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) on a speech today that was longer than the total sum of his utterances in Committee. I shall not take up all the points made by the hon. Gentleman. I was fascinated by his fantasies of sinister GLC officers, giving false names and no doubt sporting false beards, controlling the affairs of the Committee.

I was impressed by the use of creative accounting—as it is now called—by the Leader of the House in order to prove that the Government's record on guillotining is no worse than that of their Labour predecessors. However, though entertaining, the argument was not persuasive.

I still believe that there is a powerful case for timetabling Bills from the start. However, whether Bills are timetabled by agreement or whether, as in this case, a guillotine is imposed, there should be adequate time for proper debate. The Leader of the House was not persuasive on that point in relation to this Bill. It is a complex piece of legislation. Those who believed that removing one tier of metropolitan government would be an easy operation have learnt the hard way that it is far from easy. This is not just a Local Government Bill. For the seven largest conurbations in the country, it is also an education, transport, police and fire authorities Bill.

As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) correctly reminded us, many important issues remain to be examined in Committee, and, on the basis of the timetable now before us, they will have to be rushed. Part III sets up a completely new body to oversee London's education. That will be a free-standing, one service authority. Modern local government has no experience of that sort of organisation—not since the days of the London School Board. This issue needs proper scrutiny, as does the method of electing the ILEA.

Part IV introduces the joint boards. That has aroused considerable controversy and detailed criticism.

Part V restructures the funding of voluntary organisations. Here again, there has been considerable criticism. Among the critics is the London Churches Group, which wrote to the Prime Minister on 9 November detailing its criticism of that part of the Government's proposals. That letter was signed by some distinguished churchmen, no less than the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Southwark, the Methodist Chairman of London, south-eastern district, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and the Archbishop of Southwark. I should have thought that even this Government would have taken seriously a letter signed by so many distinguished churchmen. However, I do not believe that we shall have adequate time to debate that important part of the Bill.

Part VI contains all the complex arrangements for staff. The future allocation of staff as a result of the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties will be anything but straightforward. Staff will have to be slotted in to successor authorities, be they joint boards or borough or district councils. That will be a complex operation. The staff involved are entitled to see that this part of the Bill is examined in detail and is treated with the seriousness that it deserves.

Part VII sets up the residuary authority. Here again, there is more than one view. Some Conservative Members are clearly anxious to use the residuary body to take over many of the GLC's existing powers. They are surely entitled to have adequate time to develop their arguments, but that will not be available on the basis of the timetabling that is now proposed.

Mr. Dykes: As time goes on, is it not becoming clearer that the only way to get out of the dilemma that the Government have created for themselves is to allow this residuary body to take over those functions and to become an elected successor authority?

Mr. Cartwright: I do not believe that that is the ideal solution, but it is one solution. It is certainly more attractive than the one that the Government are putting forward. I am simply arguing that, given some measure of support for that idea among Conservative Members, that alone should have persuaded the Government to give ample time to enable it to be properly examined and discussed. I do not believe that that time will be available on the basis of the timetable before us.

Part VIII deals with the principles of rate levying and precepting, the complexities of reorganising grant-related expenditure assessments, and all the other myriad complexities of local government financing which will result from abolition. Therefore, major elements in the Bill will not be properly examined on the basis of the timetabling that has been proposed.

The Leader of the House was happy to remind us of the precedent established by the London Government Bill in 1963. That was timetabled almost from the very start. Clause 1 and schedule 1 were taken on the Floor of the House, but a timetable applied to the remainder. It was a similar timetable to the one now before us. About seven weeks were allowed for Committee stage and only two days for Report. Two arguments put forward by the Government in support of that timetable do not apply today. The late Iain Macleod argued that the Bill implemented the unanimous recommendation of a Royal Commission and that as a result the Government were entitled to timetable it. That does not apply to this Bill, which is the result of a manifesto commitment but no serious independent examination.

Secondly, in arguing the case for a timetable based on the London Government Bill, the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) said:

> "We have the support of the bulk of our hon. Friends on every part of the Bill. We have the support of all our hon. Friends, except, I think, for one, on the principles of the Bill as a whole". —[*Official Report*, 29 January 1963; Vol. 670, c. 893-94.]

It is clear that that argument cannot be used in relation to this legislation, in respect of which there are considerable doubts among many Conservative Members.

When we look at the 1972 legislation which reorganised local government outside Greater London and set up the metropolitan counties, we find a more generous allocation of time. Second Reading took place on 16 and 17 November 1971. There was a lengthy Committee stage; the Bill did not come back on Report until 13 April 1972; and it did not complete Report and Third Reading until 21 July 1972. Debate on the Floor of the House totalled 67 hours, covering seven days, including two all-night sittings. That is a much more generous allocation of time than the two days which have been allotted for this Local Government Bill.

I also endorse the view put forward by the Opposition, and I think accepted by Conservative Members, that the conduct of the Committee thus far produces no evidence of undue delay on the part of the Opposition. Those of us who have had experience of other local government measures have enjoyed the contributions of the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans). So far we have been disappointed in Committee because the hon. Member has substantially restricted his contributions. That is a great loss to the Committee and to us all. Indeed, as other hon. Members have pointed out, the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge has been eclipsed by some of the speeches from the Government Front Bench. I do not criticise the fact that Ministers have made lengthy contributions. This legislation is complex, and Ministers are right to seek to explain it in detail. They are right to react to our criticisms, because the Bill requires that sort of examination.

So far there have been no concessions from the Government. No amendments have been accepted and no concessions have been even faintly suggested. This timetable is unappealing because, as well as getting no concessions, even the Opposition's argument will be cut short, despite the fact that, day after day and night after night, we have been able to refer to an overwhelming body of expert opinion which demonstrates that the Government's case is not supported by those who work in and are most intimately associated with the services concerned. We have not had from the Government any serious, persuasive evidence of expert opinion in support of what they are proposing.

This Bill will have a tremendous impact on many institutions and organisations in the metropolitan areas. It will also have a tremendous impact on millions of people in our seven greatest conurbations. Its effects will be felt for many years to come. It needs the most rigorous and careful scrutiny. It should not be railroaded through the House by sheer force of numbers. Therefore, my hon. Friends and I will vote against the timetable motion tonight.

8.8 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I am one of the most junior Members of the House of Commons, although I am as proud to be an hon. Member as anybody else. I have always believed in the traditions of the House and its historial precedents. The speeches that opened this debate followed the traditions of the House and there are many precedents for them. I suspect that those speeches could relate to all of the other measures that have had a timetable motion, whether it be by Labour or Conservative Governments.

It may be presumptuous of a fairly new Member to suggest, with great respect and in all sincerity, that there must be a better way to conduct our business. I do not pretend to know what is going on in the Business Sub-Committee or in the higher echelons of Government, but a way should be found for the House to conduct its

[Mr. John Powley]

business without us going through a ritual for controversial measures, and most of them are controversial. We have a fairly heated debate on Second Reading, and the Bill is referred to a Standing Committee. The first 100 to 130 hours of the Committee are taken up by speeches from the Opposition Members in support of amendments, while the Government Benches rightly resist those amendments until the Government, duty bound to get legislation through, because that is what the Government are about, decide that a timetable motion must be sought. We come to the appointed day and there are ritual speeches in the House, and the Government, again rightly—I shall be supporting the motion—get the timetable motion. That is put into force and the Bill goes through Committee to the Report stage, Third Reading and then to the other place. That process could be applied to almost every controversial measure that has had to be guillotined. There must be a better way.

Mr. Dykes: My hon. Friend is saying things that will strike a chord in the hearts and minds of many hon. Members. Does he agree that there is another central problem of our parliamentary system? It is an increasing problem that causes increasing dismay and despair in the public. Governments can legislate too easily on the basis of a minority popular vote and get that legislation too easily through the House. There is not sufficient examination, and that problem will not be solved even by the latest proposals of the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Powley: I do not accept that this is a minority measure. I think that it has a great deal of widespread support, but I suspect that my hon. Friend and I are agreed that there must be a better way.

We have rightly found—again this is a bit of a ritual—that there is traditional obstruction to the Bill. That is what Oppositions are for. We recognise that, and if roles were reversed we would be doing the same. However, I suspect that never before have the Opposition taken their case to the lengths we have seen in respect of this measure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) said, we have witnessed the spectacle of GLC officials giving Opposition Members their briefs. I have not seen that before, although it may have happened.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the first Standing Committee on which I sat, on the Petroleum Revenue Tax Bill, was dominated by Government spokesmen reading Treasury briefs and Opposition spokesmen reading oil company briefs? There is nothing wrong with briefs.

Mr. Powley: I shall not dispute that, nor that it has happened before, but whether it has happened to this extent, I cannot say.

Briefs have been prepared for the Opposition, and Opposition Members have used them with their traditional eloquence. Although I served on the Rates Bill Standing Committee, I have never experienced as much lobbying through my postbag as I have on this subject. There has been tremendous correspondence by those opposed to the measure. I suspect that those opposing the Bill have given a number of misleading facts and figures about the Bill. My correspondence shows that the public have the wrong end of the stick on a number of issues. Only this weekend, I received a hand-written letter from someone within the GLC area about the ILEA proposals. The correspondent was under the impression that education was being taken over solely by an appointed body of officials. We all know that that is not the case. I wonder where such misleading information arose.

I was interested to note that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) volunteered that any of his officials would be pleased to give Conservative Members any information that they desired. In one of the metropolitan countries, I was talking to an official of one of the councils. He told me—this is not secondhand information—that he had been prohibited from speaking to hon. Members about the abolition of the metropolitan councils.

Mr. Cowans: Which council?

Mr. Powley: I shall not give the name of the gentleman, nor the authority for which he worked, but he assured me that he had been prohibited from speaking to Members of Parliament. I found that sad, and I suspect that that action would not receive the support of Opposition Members.

It has been said that this policy was a last-minute addition to the Conservative party's manifesto. I do not know when it was written into the Conservative party manifesto because I was not privileged to have such information, but those of us who have been involved in local government for a considerable time—there are Opposition Members with a longer service than mine of 12 or 14 years—have been unhappy. I was unhappy with the GLC and metropolitan county councils arrangement when it was set up, and I became increasingly unhappy with it as the years went by. Finally, in the three or four years before the 1983 general election it became patently obvious that there were a number of abuses in local government, and that the GLC and metropolitan county councils should be abolished. Many of us were suggesting that well before the Conservative party manifesto was written in 1983, or whenever it was written. The Conservative party has had this policy for a long time.

I also support the motion because, the longer this issue drags on, undoubtedly the more waste there will be and the more irresponsible actions will be committed by the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. I can give an example of the irresponsible behaviour. It is clear that this is the Government's policy, and one would have thought that under such a premise there would not have been any recruitment of staff. I do not read *The Guardian*, but somebody showed it to me because he was appalled at what was happening. In the public appointments section of the issue of 30 January 1985——

Mr. Tony Banks: Tell us what is in *The Sun*.

Mr. Powley: I do not read *The Sun* either. I am only kidding the House that I can actually read. I was shown the public appointments section of *The Guardian* in which the GLC, in January 1985, knowing that it was the Government's policy to abolish it, was advertising for an officer for "The Women's Committee—A Voice for Women in London", for a "Grants Monitoring Adviser", for "Equalities Officers", and for a part-time research assistant in the "Police Committee Support Unit". If anyone is interested, that latter post carries a salary of £12,000 to £14,700 a year.

The GLC was also advertising for an officer for the "Ethnic Minorities Unit", for a "Race Relations Adviser", for an "Outreach and Liaison Worker for Youth", and for a "Joint Deputy Head of Grants Division". Those posts were advertised by the GLC at salaries of £13,000 and more a year, when we all know that in one way or another the GLC will be abolished—and good riddance to it.

The House of Lords may make some amendments to the Bill—I hope that there will be none—but we all know that at the end of the day the GLC will be abolished, as will the metropolitan counties. In those circumstances, no responsible organisation should be appointing officers at large salaries. The longer we leave it, the more abuses there will be. More staff will be appointed and more redundancy payments will be needed.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I am finding it difficult to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. The logic of his argument is that there is no point in having debates in this House on any measures whatever because the Government will use their large majority to secure whatever they want. The logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument is that we should abolish not only the GLC and the metropolitan counties but this place, too.

Mr. Powley: That is not the logic of my argument. My argument is that there is no need at the present time for the authorities to make additional staff appointments. They already have more than sufficient staff to do their work. The local authorities are deliberately attempting to appoint as many staff as they possibly can in the time left at their disposal. That is irresponsible behaviour.

I suggest that the House should approve the motion, because the country cannot afford the GLC or the six metropolitan counties.

8.22 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I should like to comment on some of the general arguments just made by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley).

The hon. Gentleman put the worrying argument for all of us who believe in democracy and local government—it was brought up on many occasions by Conservative Members in the Standing Committee and it is the essence of Conservative party propaganda — that because Conservatives disagree with certain aspects of GLC and metropolitan counties' policy, and as those policies cannot be overturned through the ballot box, it is necessary to use the Conservative party's parliamentary majority to abolish a tier of local government. That is an argument which the hon. Gentleman has used——

Mr. Powley *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman has used that argument in regard to policy but not in regard to the structure of local government.

It is very worrying that throughout the debates so far Conservative Members have been very keen to talk about policy—there are genuine disagreements about policy, and that is the essence of democracy—but they have not been prepared to talk about the structure of local government. The hon. Gentleman fell into that trap in his speech.

Mr. Powley: If I remember my words correctly, I said that I was unhappy with the GLC and the six metropolitan counties when they were first set up, and that I became increasingly concerned about their activities as the years went by. I am not arguing that the GLC and the six metropolitan counties should be abolished because of their present policies. I said that I had misgivings about them when they were originally set up. If the hon. Gentleman reads the *Official Report* tomorrow, he will see that that is what I said.

Mr. Fatchett: The evidence which the hon. Gentleman produced to support his assumption was in relation not to structure but to policy. I believe that the *Official Report* will show that I am correct in that respect.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there must be a better way to process the legislation. That better way is not through the passing of a timetable motion or the use of the Government's large majority, but through a proper preparation for the legislation.

We strongly object to the timetable motion because the Government have not prepared the ground for a major change in local government structure. The Government are afraid of having any sort of independent inquiry such as a Royal Commission or a Select Committee. There should have been a report from a Royal Commission or a Select Committee so that we could study the arguments and conclusions. Instead of proceeding in that way, the Government rushed into legislation without getting the professional advice of local government officers or of professional bodies. They have proceeded without the support of the electorate in the areas covered by the GLC and the metropolitan counties. I suspect that if this legislation were put to a referendum in the GLC area it would be heavily defeated, and that the same would happen in the metropolitan counties. All the available evidence supports that contention.

I repeat that there should have been proper preparation before legislation was introduced. There should have been an independent inquiry, together with some test of opinion in the metropolitan counties and the GLC. The only conclusion that one can possibly draw is that the Government avoided those avenues of approach because they were afraid of independent opinion and afraid of the ballot box.

Mr. Powley *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who made a lengthy speech.

If the Government were not afraid, we would not be discussing a timetable motion tonight. Only a small part of the Bill has been debated in Standing Committee. The Bill has in no way been subject to public scrutiny or to any sort of democratic accountability. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there should have been a better way. It should have been through proper preparation rather than by introducing a timetable motion at this early stage.

The proceedings of the Committee have been very important in exposing the threadbare nature of the Government's argument. The threadbare nature of their argument has been shown in three areas.

Mr. Boyes: Does my hon. Friend find it surprising that the Secretary of State for the Environment has taken no part whatever in the work of the Committee? Does he find it surprising that he has played no part in the debate this evening, not even staying to listen to the arguments? Does my hon. Friend think that it is because the right hon. Gentleman does not understand what the Bill is about that

[Mr. Boyes]

he does not support it, or is it that he has no satisfactory argument against the points that we have raised repeatedly in Committee?

Mr. Fatchett: I am not surprised that the Secretary of State has taken no part in this debate or in the proceedings in Committee. If I were responsible for the legislation, I would also do my best to avoid any debate on it. My hon. Friend shows yet again that he has great faith in human nature. His hope that the Secretary of State would want to be present and put his argument is sincere but, I suspect, sadly misplaced in this context.

The Committee has exposed the Government on three major points. I shall run through them briefly, because yet again they argue for more time, debate and investigation of the clauses in Committee.

The Government told us that they estimate that £50 million will be saved by abolishing the six metropolitan counties. A similar figure has been given for the GLC. When we have asked written parliamentary questions and raised this issue in Committee, the Minister has been unable to provide us with any detailed breakdown of that figure. If the Government have a figure, they have a responsibility to the House and to the ratepayers in the areas involved to tell us how they arrived at it. The Government cannot say that they have a figure of £50 million for the metropolitan counties and yet be unable to tell us the figure for West Yorkshire and the other five metropolitan counties. The only possible conclusion is that the Government do not have figures, and that they have pulled that figure of £50 million out of a hat in much the same way as they pulled the legislation out of a hat in the first place.

The same argument can be made about jobs. The Government say that there will be job losses. In Committee we have asked in which areas those jobs will be lost and what services will be involved, yet the Government have again given us no answers. We can only conclude once again that the Government do not have any hard evidence to support the assertions in the financial memorandum to the Bill. Therefore, on the grounds of cost and jobs alone, the Government's case is threadbare and falls apart.

Another worry was expressed in Committee which I think also concerned Conservative Members. On occasion, Conservative Members have made very telling and useful interventions, asking whether the Minister can guarantee that certain services will be maintained in West Yorkshire, the other metropolitan counties or perhaps even in the Greater London area. Of course, they do not obtain any such guarantees from the Minister, because he cannot give them. I suspect that the reason is that he is not prepared to say, at this stage, that rate support grant will be available for the services when they are devolved to joint boards or committees, to the London boroughs and to the metropolitan districts. The Government cannot show that we shall not lose in terms of quality of service as a result of the Bill. Indeed, the fact that the Minister cannot give his hon. Friends any assurances leads only to the conclusion that he exects to make savings, not from abolishing a tier of local government or from a structural change, but from reducing services and the quality of services available to ratepayers in those areas.

Dr. Hampson: Surely the hon. Gentleman is not saying that the cities and towns of West Yorkshire are incapable of operating without the West Yorkshire metropolitan county. Since he places such faith in grand commissions and inquiries, I should tell him that Redcliffe-Maud, which sat for six years, specifically said that West Yorkshire would be best served by five separate authorities and not by a metropolitan county. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that there is no logic in a small town such as Wakefield running its own education when cities such as Bristol, Leicester and Nottingham cannot do so.

Mr. Fatchett: If the hon. Gentleman had read the report of our debates in Committee he would have been interested in the comments of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler). Bradford metropolitan district council is considering taking legal action on the rate support grant settlement which the Government have given it and against that background the hon. Gentleman asked for certain assurances. The Government could not give those assurances because they are not in a position to say that the necessary RSG will in future by devolved to the districts. Again, the only conclusion is that the Government can reach that figure for savings only by reducing the number and quality of services available to ratepayers and the public in the metropolitan areas.

We need more debate on the Bill in Committee, because it poses constitutional issues and is directly relevant to every one of the 13 million people living in the metropolitan counties. If we are not allowed to scrutinise and question the Bill in greater detail, the House will probably vote for a reduction in services and in the number of jobs in those areas without even being given the necessary information by the Government.

This is a threadbare Bill, and it is an insult to the House to push through such a Bill on a timetable motion, because we have not been provided with the necessary information, and the Committee has not been provided with it either. The Bill is also an insult to all those elected members in the metropolitan areas and the GLC and to all those who work for those councils. If the Government had a case to make they would have made it in Committee and in the House, and they would have published the available evidence. They have not done so and have gone to the last resort of any Government defeated in argument and used their majority to stifle debate and to push through a Bill which has nothing to do with local government but much to do with the Prime Minister's vanity and, as someone has said, with the 10 years in which the Conservative party has been hijacked from the Right. That is what the Bill is about, and it has nothing to do with local government.

8.35 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): During many hours in Committee we often heard the argument that the Bill does not have sufficient support, has not received careful examination, and so on. That argument is nonsense. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) commented on the absence of an inquiry. During the past 20 years there have been a multitude of inquiries into local government. Consequently, we have had an opportunity to see the results of some of the experiments that have followed them. The results of those experiments demonstrate all too clearly that the metropolitan counties

and the GLC lead to duplication and extravagance that can and should be avoided. In the light of that experience, the Bill was rightly introduced.

Mr. Nellist: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the Bill is so worthy as to justify his presence here tonight, why did he not make such speeches in Committee? Why is it that 10 out of 19 Tory Back Benchers in Committee have not said a single word about the implications for jobs or for ratepayers' services and so on? Why has the hon. Gentleman been so silent for the past four or five weeks?

Mr. Wood: I have listened to the wealth of argument put forward by Conservative Members and to the paucity of argument by the Opposition. Frankly, I found that the Opposition's repetition did not go anywhere towards presenting a case. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) has said, there is a need to examine the detail of the Bill, but the Committee has been going through an absurd ritual——

Mr. Tony Banks: It is called democracy.

Mr. Wood: If only democracy were being served by the Opposition's actions and if only we were examining the minutiae of the Bill and considering the arguments in order to see how best to make the Bill effective. That is not what we have been doing. On every clause the Opposition have been reiterating a series of particular contentions.

Mr. Dykes: Surely my right hon. Friend must be aware that several Conservative Members have repeatedly tabled very thoughtful amendments which are designed not only to improve the Bill but to provide for a successor structure. Those amendments will be tabled again at later stages in Committee and perhaps in the other place. The Bill is intrinsically far too controversial for people to accept because there has not been examination by any expert outside body beforehand. That was offered by the then Conservative leader of the GLC in 1976, but it was rejected at that stage by the party, which said that no such inquiry was necessary because the GLC was the jewel in the crown and it had been created in 1963 by the then Conservative Government.

Mr. Wood: Some of the more lucid arguments and constructive suggestions in Committee were put forward by my hon. Friends. I regret that the arguments have tended to be somewhat repetitious. They have concentrated on the belief that the residuary body should be elected, and points following from that, but our argument has been expressed with more lucidity than the Opposition's.

One of the Opposition's arguments is that big is beautiful. They say that the metropolitan counties and the GLC are better than boroughs and districts. An argument that has been repeated time and again is that districts and boroughs cannot and will not co-operate and that on the borders between the local authorities chaos will reign. It is said, for example, that roads and cycle tracks will not meet. Already throughout the country there are a multitude of boundaries between local authorities. Of course, some accommodation has to be and is made between the different authorities every day of the week.

Mr. Fatchett: With the exception of the metropolitan areas, under the Bill there will be two-tier local government in the shire counties and shire districts.

Mr. Wood: The hon. Gentleman is right. The shire counties have much smaller districts than the metropolitan and GLC areas. The districts in the shire counties do not cover education and various other aspects of local government which can adequately be covered by the metropolitan districts and London boroughs.

Dr. Hampson: The Redcliffe-Maud report specifically prefers a variation, only it says that the shire counties should be single-tier and the metropolitan counties two-tier.

Mr. Wood: That is right. There is no reason why different areas of the country should not be administered in modified ways.

A further argument that has been expressed repeatedly is that money available to the metropolitan counties and to the GLC will not be available to the lower tiers. We want less money to be spent, but for it to be spent more effectively when it is. I am sure that the lower tier authorities will be as able as the met counties and the GLC to provide necessary services.

I have been involved with a lower tier authority and I found it objectionable that only metropolitan authorities and the GLC are regarded as having the expertise to carry out a variety of tasks. The truth is that lower tier authorities can combine to gain the expertise when that is necessary.

The Opposition have used the same arguments again and again in discussions on one clause after another. If we do not constrain the debate, they will use the same arguments ad nauseam in future hours in Committee. We should resist that. We should also resist the hope expressed by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) that we should sit for hour after hour in the Committee for the next few weeks. There is no need to sit in Committee night after night, week after week, to examine the Bill. The Bill can be examined well in the time proposed in the motion. We might then avoid some unnecessary repetition and get on with the task of preparing for more effective local government, administered by the districts and boroughs, instead of accepting the duplication and waste caused by the metropolitan counties and the GLC.

8.44 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) paid me the compliment of saying that I wanted to delve into detail on the Bill. I should be prepared to sit day and night, week after week to put the case for Tyne and Wear, the other met counties and the GLC. Our case is overwhelming.

An important emphasis has been made tonight which I have suspected for some time. I regret that the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) is not here, because he provided the key to the Government's attitude towards local democracy, and, I believe, to democracy itself. He said that there was no point in appointing people to positions in the metropolitan counties or the GLC because, since the Government have a majority, the decision has already been made, despite the fact that the Committee is still sitting, and that the Bill has to return to the House and be considered in another place. The Government's assumption is that the Bill will be passed, and that it will be implemented. The democratic process will become meaningless because of the diktat of No. 10.

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

I am pleased that the hon. Member put on record what many of us have accused Government Members of in the past few months.

Mr. Wood: By giving the Bill a Second Reading the House accepted the principle of abolishing the GLC and the metropolitan counties. The Committee is considering the details of that Bill, not the principle. It is irresponsible to appoint further people to those bodies when their time, according to the principle agreed by the House, is limited.

Mr. Boyes: We dug a hole and the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) has fallen into it. The principle of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) is that if one is in a hole one should stop digging. Earlier today we dug a hole and several Government Members were chucked into it. The hon. Member for Stevenage is now burying himself in that hole.

My constituency is in the Tyne and Wear area. My constituents believe that the principle behind the Bill is a wicked act of political vindictiveness. Discussions in Committee have done nothing to allay my fears. It will be clear to the people whom I represent that Government Members do not want to hear the arguments. They do not want to know about the problems in the Tyne and Wear area. I warn the Minister that he will hear in Committee about the unemployment problems in the area.

The Government are acting in an underhand manner. They cancelled elections to a body which has not yet been abolished. That is without precedent. The Secretary of State has tried to disclaim our accusation that it is without precedent, but he has not been able to produce an example in local government of elections to a body being cancelled before Parliament has agreed to the abolition of that body. I believe that democracy is about people and people expressing their wishes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) referred to inquiries and opinion polls. An opinion poll about the abolition proposals conducted in the Prime Minister's constituency showed that the overwhelming majority were not in favour. It would be better to judge people's opinions through the ballot box, which is what the Opposition would have done.

Mr. Fatchett: Why did the Prime Minister not do that?

Mr. Boyes: The right hon. Lady does not believe in the ballot box. Indeed, there was an opportunity to hold an election this year, when the question of abolition would have been a major issue and the people could have made their decision. Surely such an election would have been a godsend to the Government—they would have had their answer through the ballot box.

I have always believed that those whom the people elect are accountable for their actions. If the electorate is not happy with what they do, it can replace them. If the people of Tyne and Wear had not been happy with the services being provided, undoubtedly they would have expressed that through the ballot box. But they did not have an opportunity to do so because the Government are not interested in the democratic process.

Not only have the Government cancelled the elections, they are now trying to cancel the discussions. We have dealt with only 17 clauses, but we are to be allowed only 40 minutes for each of the remaining clauses. That is not sufficient to deal with six metropolitan counties and the GLC and hear the arguments of the Opposition and the Government on issues of vital importance to those whom each and every one of us represent in this House. If that is not a negation of democracy. I do not know what is.

I am worried that we appear to be moving down the road towards dictatorship from No. 10—No. 10 decides and the Conservative troops, like little lackeys, do as they are told. When democracy is being threatened and destroyed, there is danger that this House will go down the same road.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend has correctly referred to the sad retreat from democracy, where the Government are not prepared even to debate the issues. He said that there would be only 40 minutes discussion on each of the remaining clauses, which means 5 minutes discussion for each of the great county areas such as the Tyne and Wear and my area of Greater Manchester.

When the Under-Secretary spoke for an hour in Committee last Thursday, he mentioned Greater Manchester not once. That was despite repeated questions. If, during such lengthy and important debates, Ministers are not prepared to answer substantive questions, what chance is there to obtain answers when the debate is cut to 40 minutes?

Mr. Boyes: I agree with my hon. Friend, who made an important intervention. From a different viewpoint he has illustrated the way in which our questions have been treated in Committee——

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Contemptuously.

Mr. Boyes: I agree with my hon. Friend—indeed the word "contemptuous" would apply equally to this evening's debate. The Leader of the House made a flippant speech on a most serious issue. The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) made a long filibuster. Conservative Members accuse us of filibustering, but the House has had an opportunity tonight to decide which side of the House is taking the proposals seriously.

Conservative Members do not have the support of Conservatives in my area. When the Tyne and Wear county council debated the issue of elections, one clause in the resolution called on the Government to

"hold an immediate comprehensive and impartial inquiry before any re-organisation of local government takes place and this County Council pledges to abide by the findings of such an inquiry."

That clause was passed by 59 votes to one—and the vote against was not from a Conservative member. That shows that the vast majority of Tyne and Wear Conservatives are worried for democracy.

The *Financial Times* on 28 October quotes the leader of the Conservative group on the Tyne and Wear county council as saying that the Tyne and Wear county council could be run on much more streamlined lines and confine itself to broad strategic functions. That is something that the hon. Member for Stevenage has not understood. He has sat in Committee hour after hour and has obviously not listened to a word that has been said. Not one Opposition Member has said that district and borough councillors are any less able than county councillors. We have never said that district and borough council officers are any less able than county officers. We have said that there are certain aspects of the county councils' strategic functions that are essential. Even the leader of the Tyne and Wear Conservative group has recognised that.

The Local Councils Association for Yorkshire and Cleveland has made its views clear in a letter. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is not present. He is always telling us about the attitude in Cleveland. Mr. Ian Strong, the secretary of the association, said in the letter:

"This Association representing 430 member Parish and Town Councils in North, South and West Yorkshire and Cleveland is very much opposed to the present legislation to abolish the Metropolitan County Councils. In this it is strongly supported by the National Association of Local Councils who represent 8000 Parish and Town Councils.

The Association feels that the legislation is ill-conceived and unlikely to achieve any of the objects declared by the Government."

The evidence against the proposals is overwhelming.

I have said time and again in Committee that it is important that the Tyne and Wear authority is not demolished. One of the losses to Tyne and Wear will be section 137 and the twopenny rate. I have not received any answers to my questions on that point, but I ask Conservative Members to reflect on it. The £2 million involved for Tyne and Wear is used to protect jobs and to create further jobs in a region that consistently has the highest level of unemployment. Even if the grant is phased out over a period of time, will the Government allow the borough councils to raise an additional twopenny rate to enable Tyne and Wear to counter the massive levels of unemployment that it is facing?

Perhaps I may give some figures to illustrate my remarks. Anyone who reads the Committee debates will know that I have quoted many figures during the past few weeks. Since 1979, 85,000 jobs have been lost in the Tyne and Wear area, and there have been nearly 65,000 redundancies. More than 100,000 people are without work in the area, and the figure has doubled during the past five years. Unemployment at 20 per cent. is the third highest in mainland Britain. We believe that it is essential to have a strategic authority to help to counter the Government's monetarist policies, although it is extremely difficult to do so. We are running backwards, but at least we are trying to protect some jobs. We must have a strategic authority for economic development, job creation and the fight against unemployment.

Before I conclude, I wish to ask some questions that I hope will be answered tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and other hon. Members have talked about costs. I have asked Ministers several times, but have never received an answer, for their estimate of the cost savings or losses to be made from the abolition to Tyne and Wear metropolitan council. What will be the cost advantages? I am prepared to listen carefully to what Ministers say, but the only evidence that I have, from reports carried out by independent consultants, is that it will cost the ratepayers of Tyne and Wear money if the council is abolished. I am talking not only about direct costs, but about the tremendous social costs. I cannot understand how the Government arrived at a figure of £50 million. I should have thought that the way to discover the cost of abolition of the six metropolitan counties would be to discover the cost of abolition of each one and then to add them together. But the Minister has no figures that he can substantiate. It is about time that the Government instituted a proper independent inquiry.

What are the manpower implications of abolition? Will there be fewer or more people working? We have said all along that abolition will lead to massive unemployment. Is that true? Again, the Government have not determined what the manpower implications will be.

What will happen to the effectiveness of services? We believe that our councillors should be answerable to the electorate for the services that they provide, but we know that only 20 per cent. of the services provided by the metropolitan counties will be transferred to the boroughs. Therefore, 80 per cent. of services will be determined by the most centralised Government in western Europe—probably the most centralised in Western capitalism. The Government want less and less accountability whereas the Opposition—the true democrats—want more and more accountability.

May I emphasise my point with the independent voice of Peter Hall, the respected professor of geography at the university of Reading. He says:

"First, most of Europe is tending to move in the opposite direction to us: in the direction of greater autonomy and greater accountability for top-level metropolitan—regional authorities . . . There is overwhelming evidence that most of our neighbours have found it necessary to create metropolitan planning authorities for their capital city regions and for some other big urban areas . . . What they"—

the Government—

"should not be discussing at all, unless our European neighbours have collectively taken leave of their senses, is the need for some form of co-ordinated metropolitan government for our great urban areas. The issue is not whether, but how."

We want to argue the issue, and we are prepared to sit there day and night to do so. We want to argue the Bill line by line, but the Government, being barren of argument, want to curtail discussion by using this timetable motion.

9.3 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): It is useful to follow the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) because the existence of Tyne and Wear metropolitan council makes nonsense of the argument on which the Opposition rest their case—the importance of having inquiries or commissions before this sort of thing is done. No inquiry or commission recommended the creation of something called the Tyne and Wear metropolitan council. Since the creation of the councils by a Conservative Government in the 1970s, I have believed strongly—I put forward my views on it when I was a parliamentary private secretary at the Department of the Environment — that we created bodies which did not have a valid range of functions or a valid use of resources.

I have obtained from the Library a background paper on local government inquiries. It states that there were reports on local government in the conurbations in 1947. The exercise was repeated in 1956 and a commission was set up in 1958 which reported in 1961. The Labour Government of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, as he now is, set up the Redcliffe-Maud commission in 1966, which reported in 1972. That was followed by the Layfield inquiry. Unfortunately, the commissions and inquiries never agree. Indeed, they have not often agreed within themselves, and the Redcliffe-Maud commission was a notable example. Nor was there a consensus after it had reported. There is no unanimity merely because of an inquiry. The Government usually change a good proportion of the proposals that are contained in the reports.

Nobody could have crawled over the area of local government with greater thoroughness, in more depth or for a longer period than the Redcliffe-Maud commission.

[Dr. Keith Hampson]

In the end, it proposed establishing only three metropolitan counties, with different functions from those of the present metropolitan counties. The commission proposed Greater Manchester, which for some strange reason it called SELNEC, Merseyside and Greater Birmingham. The Labour Government, including the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), considered the proposals and, in effect, said, "No, we do not agree with this." To the three proposed metropolitan counties they added West Yorkshire and South Hampshire. They said that they wanted that level of authority to be the primary tier in local government and they wanted the metropolitan counties to have responsibility for education. The Redcliffe-Maud commission did not want that to happen.

Labour Members call for commissions of inquiry but they seem not to have read the Redcliffe-Maud report. It was not proposed in the Redcliffe-Maud report that responsibility for education should go to the metropolitan counties. However, the Labour Government in 1969-70 proposed that it should. The succeeding Tory Government changed the proposals once again and added South Yorkshire and, for some unknown reason, Tyne and Wear. They removed South Hampshire from the proposals and changed the powers of the metropolitan counties. They ended up without education and housing responsibilities. Indeed, they ended up with very little. Only a quarter of the resources which are spent to the benefit of the people, the customers, is spent by the metropolitan counties. That is to be contrasted with the shire counties' 80 per cent., and the GLC spends only one sixth. The metropolitan counties do not have a valid range of functions.

We have heard many arguments about whether it is more or less democratic to have joint boards composed of district councillors to run transport. Are joint boards more democratic than passenger transport executives? No one in my constituency thinks that the passenger transport executive is especially democratic. Equally, no one knows how to get at or control it. That probably applies also to the police authority. The substance in the argument for democracy is marginal.

Why should Wakefield, which is so far from Otley, decide which streets in Otley should have double yellow lines, which should have no yellow lines and which should have single yellow lines? Leeds could be responsible for most functions of that sort with joint boards of district councillors responsible for the other functions.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Greater Manchester area was called SELNEC because the initials represent South East Lancashire and North East Cheshire. It is a term that I do not like, but it is much better than "joint board". All historical precedent and all considered judgment led to the conclusion that there should be an authority covering the Greater Manchester area. Only the Government have failed to learn from the experience and reports of the early 1970s or from the debates that ensued. Reports do not provide definitive answers, but they engage the nation in debate, and it is to be hoped that that allows the Government of the day to legislate with some credibility. Unfortunately, the present Government have proved unable to do so.

Dr. Hampson: I think that the most recent exercise was a cock-up. Should a town such as Wakefield, or a small part of Greater Manchester such as Tameside, have authority for education, when education is not in the control of Bristol, Leicester or Nottingham, for example?

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney as Secretary of State proposed "organic change." He recognised that certain things were not right. He did not embark on a great debate or set up a commission of inquiry before he submitted his proposals. The system that should be in place is certainly not the one that we have now. Therefore, the case for abolition is overwhelming. I am not aware of the position taken by the Labour party in Tyne and Wear, but until the Government announced their proposals the Labour party in every other metropolitan county was against the continuation of the metropolitan counties. All the Labour-controlled metropolitan districts knew only too well of the irritation of dealing with the metropolitan counties and they did not believe that they should continue, just as Mr. Livingstone took the view that the GLC should not exist.

We are not having just a ritualistic dance. This sort of debate is a farce. The Committee stage of this type of legislation cannot continue in the way that it has during the time I have been a Member. We have all played this game. We have all run on through the night debating smaller and smaller points line after line. I spent 85 hours in Committee debating the Education Bill.

The House must change its procedures. I believe that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) recommended in *The Times* that, from Second Reading onwards, all Bills should be timetabled. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is present. I hope that he will confirm that point. I would like other Opposition Members to agree that we cannot continue with this type of debate, using hackneyed arguments time and again. I should like the Opposition to agree that we shall change our way of running this business.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Dr. Hampson: I have finished.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thought that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) was giving way.

Dr. Hampson: That was my last point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the Front Benchers wish the winding-up to start at 9.40 pm. A number of hon. Members want to take part in the debate. I hope that hon. Members will have consideration for the claims of others.

9.11 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Leader of the House treated hon. Members to a light-hearted trek through the timetabling motion. He suggested that a large number of people outside are waiting to throw their caps into the air when the GLC and metropolitan county councils are abolished. If the right hon. Gentleman peers out of the House and looks over to county hall on the other side of the river, he will see that valid statistic showing that 74 per cent. of Londoners are opposed to the GLC's abolition. Whatever the Government's support in the House, there is not the same support outside in the big, wide world.

The guillotine motion is symptomatic of the Government's approach to the issue of the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. No one has said that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has misled the House in telling us that the

abolition pledge was written into the 1983 Tory election manifesto personally by the Prime Minister and against the advice of the Conservative party policy committee. That pledge was certainly written in without the Prime Minister showing the courtesy of consulting the Conservative party GLC members. They were as surprised by that manifesto pledge as was the Conservative party policy committee.

The White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" attracted, as far as we know, more than 2,500 submissions, the overwhelming majority of which were totally opposed to the Government's proposals. Yet the Government have steadfastly refused to put those submissions in the Library. The Government have said, "If you want to find out what people have said, write to them to find out." How on earth can hon. Members do a proper job if they are denied access to the information sent in by a large number of organisations?

We have had the measures to abolish the GLC and metropolitan county council elections, and now we have the guillotine when only 16 of the 98 clauses have been debated. The Opposition have not filibustered in Committee. We make no apology for debating in some detail and at some length the intricate proposals raised in the Bill. We must be clear that the Bill was based on the Prime Minister's party political spite. It will now be bulldozed through the House using what can be described only as the "zombie" vote of Members of Parliament. Most Conservative Members cannot even be bothered to equate themselves with the arguments involved in the abolition. Most of them absent themselves from the Chamber, probably because they cannot take the sight of the Secretary of State being butchered more than he has already been in the short Session until now.

The Secretary of State has been staggering around like some sort of punch-drunk fighter. To bring some relief to the right hon. Gentleman, the Government have brought in the Minister for Local Government, who has scarcely done much better than the Secretary of State. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who knows the Minister for Local Government quite well, tells me that the Minister has aged 10 years since he has been in charge of the Bill. I do not know whether that is true, but I believe that all the Environment Ministers who are now associated with the Bill are likely to find themselves politically dead—never mind aged about 10 years—as Conservative Members of Parliament realise the electoral consequences of the Government's actions and realise that they will lose council seats and, at the next general election, parliamentary seats. That does not worry me; it encourages me greatly to persuade the Government to carry on with their crazy, suicidal course. However, it worries right hon. and hon. Conservative Members, particularly the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who at least has some foresight and can understand what is going on and what problems the Conservative party will face in future elections.

The Opposition have tried to point out the implications of the Government's proposals for London and the metropolitan areas. We have heard nothing about the savings that the Government hope will accrue, about the level of likely redundancies, or about the joint boards and quangos. We have not reached any of those clauses, and now we shall be prevented from giving those important matters the consideration that they deserve.

The Minister commented a little while ago that "inquiries do not allay controversy." That comment was made in the context of Redcliffe-Maud and the Royal Commission, but the Minister must know that Royal Commissions and inquiries at least give some intellectual justification for the case that is being put by the Government. It does not mean that the Opposition will go away. Even if the proposal had been based upon the recommendations of a Royal Commission, there is no doubt that many Opposition Members would have opposed the Government. That is the Opposition's duty, but at least the Government's intellectual position would have been considerably stronger.

I am trying to throw the Minister a lifeline, because when the compromise comes, and it will, and he knows it, perhaps in another place, that is the type of argument that he should be using. If the Government's proposals were based upon the recommendations of a Royal Commission or an inquiry, there would be a degree of intellectual justification for them even though there would still be disagreement, but there is no intellectual justification for what the Government are putting forward.

It is no good Conservative Members "rubbishing" the great weight of information that has come to the Committee saying that the Government's proposals are wrong. How many authorities can the Government quote in defence of their proposals? How many independent bodies can the Government quote to say that they have it right? The only people on whom the Government have been so far able to rely have been a number of local authority Conservative leaders; and they would support the Government, would they not? No one from outside who has any standing, objectivity or impartiality has supported the Government. How can Conservative Members persist in arguing that the Government's case is proper, just and right in defiance of all opinion — electoral, professional and academic — coming from outside? It is nonsense. The Government know that. Ministers are in many ways prejudicing their political futures by supporting the Bill. It should be thrown out, as should this timetable motion.

9.17 pm

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): The Committee has sat through over 100 hours of repetitious speeches. Most of the speeches that we have heard from Opposition members of the Committee have been Second Reading speeches. One or two of them this evening have been Queen's Speech speeches because they have become so general and have ranged so widely and so often off the point of the Bill.

On a number of occasions we have listened word for word to the same speech from different members of the Committee, and even from the same members. This evening the debate has been dropped even lower by the speech by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who has reduced the debate to a political jibe without any substance. To be fair to him, he has been one of the members of the Committee whose argument has been more detailed. He has had plenty of people to help him write his speeches. There has been a galaxy of 27 of them. On occasions he has been effective in putting over his point of view, but alas not this evening.

Progress in Committee has been resisted by Opposition Members who have made speeches for the sake of making them or for the sake of the local press.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): What is the hon. Gentleman's speech about?

Dr. Twinn: My speech is about what I thought the debate was about — the progress of the Bill in Committee and whether we should have a timetable motion. It is not a speech in which I shall make cheap political jibes or go over the principle of the Bill, which was voted on at Second Reading.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) suggested that there should be a timetable for all Bills.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is more courteous than his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson).

I believe in timetables for all Bills, but with the important proviso that the time taken should be under the control, not of the Government, but of a Committee appointed by the House and that there should be provision for the Standing Committee to seek more time if that became necessary.

Dr. Twinn: I read the hon. Gentleman's article, which has much to commend it. I go along with him. However, it would be a pity if, for the sake of being a purist in these matters, we allowed the Bill to drift on in the aimless way in which it has been progressing. We can make a start, albeit in a small way, with this timetable motion. It is not perfect, and it is controlled by the Government, but let us hope that in future timetables will be controlled by a Committee of the House and that we can have sensible debates on all Bills. I would welcome that.

It has been suggested that there has been no thought or discussion about the proposals in the Bill. That is an astounding statement. One expects Opposition Members to state that view as a political point, but the astounding aspect is that they appear to say it with a sincerity which I can hardly believe they feel.

There have been countless debates in the past 20 years about the nature of local government. Virtually every possible combination of authorities has been proposed and discussed over the years. The House and the country have had plenty of time to consider the best form of local government. When the commitment to abolish the GLC and the metropolitan counties appeared in our election manifesto, the electorate had the good sense to see that it was a good idea. It was certainly extremely popular in Edmonton.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: In all these many debates over the years, where were joint boards at the strategic level first suggested, outside the White Paper and the Bill?

Dr. Twinn: I shall not be tempted down that path, because other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Joint boards are expedients, but I believe that the rest of the proposals are worth those expedients. Politics are partly about compromise and pragmatism.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is not one of the great advantages of joint boards the fact that every metropolitan district will be represented on those boards? At present there is no guarantee that each district will be represented on a county council committee.

Dr. Twinn: My hon. Friend is right. The Bill brings democracy down to a smaller geographical and electoral area and will be widely welcomed for that.

I am not surprised that the GLC is able to quote the figure that it got from somewhere of 74 per cent. of Londoners supporting the council. If I spent millions of pounds on advertising, I would expect that sort of support. Otherwise, I would not spend the money. I am not surprised that there is some small support in the opinion polls. However, when the GLC and the metropolitan counties have gone, there will be widespread support for the new authorities and the old councils will not be missed.

In fact, in London we have had electoral tests of the popularity of the GLC's proposals. In my seat in Edmonton, we had a GLC by-election, when the turnout halved. The arguments were ravaged by the electorate, who did not turn up. It was a spurious and cynical move on behalf of the GLC to use taxpayers' money for a test of its own opinion, and I am only pleased that it failed.

I hope that hon. Members will support the timetable motion so that my constituents in Edmonton have a chance to be rid of the GLC and so that they can have elections and a local authority in Enfield which is at a closer level, where they will appreciate it and be able to influence it.

9.24 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Today's debate has been characterised by being less lighthearted than many of the Committee sittings. We have also heard for the first time from some Tory Members who said nothing in Committee but who seem happy to come to the Chamber and say why its deliberations should be shortened.

The context of my arguments against the guillotine motion is narrow. In the explanatory and financial memorandum of the Bill, the Secretary of State says that the aim of the Bill is to save about £100 million by the abolition of the metropolitan counties and estimates a reduction in public service manpower in those areas by about 7,100. Setting aside the argument that the Bill will deny 18 million people the right to vote, that first point alone justifies continuing the debate, but not at the level that the Leader of the House proposes in his guillotine motion of 40 minutes per clause over the next three and a half weeks. Not only have the central claims on manpower and services not been proven by the Government, but on many occasions when I have put questions to Ministers about the so-called savings from manpower changes or changes in specific services, I have been told to wait until debates on later clauses in the Bill in the expectation that those debates would be of a similar character to those on the first 16 clauses, with 56 hours of debate.

The Bill proposes that responsibility for services be returned to the district councils, for example in the west midlands. Last year the Secretary of State said that most of the services would go back to the districts, but we now know that fewer than 20 per cent. will. We have yet to debate some of them fully in the Bill. One fact that has not yet come out of the debate, which of itself would justify extending the time for debate, is that the services that are presently provided by the West Midlands county council, according to the Secretary of State's grant-related expenditure assessment, are supposed to cost £270 million this year. However, the target for the county council is set at £254 million. Therefore, through abolition the right hon. Gentleman expects the same services to be carried out by district bodies, joint boards, residuary bodies, and so on, yet he has already cut the amount of money that will go towards those services by £16 million. How will we have answers to questions on whether it is the same service costing the ratepayer more or the same amount of money

paid by the ratepayer for a substantially lower service unless we are allowed more than a paltry 40 minutes for each clause remaining in the Bill?

On many occasions in Committee we have asked what financial savings will be made on each service area. We have had no real answers from the Government. We have asked what manpower savings there will be in each service area, and we have had no real figures from the Government. In at least three service areas—I played a part in the debates on each one of them—the Secretary of State has acknowledged that there will be no savings. Those three areas are waste disposal, probation and archives. He has acknowledged that costs will rise in two service areas — coroners and trading standards. Each time he says such things he also reflects on the fact that we shall go into those matters in detail on later clauses. However, the fact remains that the six clauses designed to deal with the so-called savings from staff transfers are likely to occupy about 280 minutes if the motion is passed. Over 150,000 people work for the metropolitan county councils and the GLC. The Government will dispose of about 534 jobs a minute in the later debates in Committee. People's lives and jobs are worth more consideration than that.

There is not time to go into detail, so I shall give just a few brief examples. As reported at column 862, when I asked the Minister in Committee about the waste disposal arrangements he said that the answers would be given later in the debate. I asked about the cost involved for district councils in setting up several different waste disposal plants and I pointed out that splitting waste disposal among seven authorities in the west midlands would mean at least 9,000 extra pieces of paper relating to the transport of hazardous waste across district boundaries, but the Minister had not costed it and had no facts or figures to give. We need to go into those details.

We also asked how the Minister arrived at the figure of 7,100 lost jobs. Did he take the cuts planned for each service and aggregate them across the county councils or did he set targets for each council and then add them all together? Again, we received no answers. When I asked about planning, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State specifically said, as reported at column 293, that he would reply to my points later in the debate. On 22 January I asked about environment and land reclamation and the impact on jobs. I was told to come back to that when we reached part VI of the Bill. Ministers have constantly said that we shall come to these things later, but if the guillotine motion goes through there will be no time for the answers to be given.

Perhaps those Tory Members for whom one job is insufficient to tax their energies or support their lifestyles and who therefore need between two and 13 jobs can afford to be callous when discussing the jobs of thousands of metropolitan county council employees, but in my area one third of a million people are on the dole, there are 30 people chasing every vacancy and in one ward unemployment is more than 32 per cent. In those circumstances, there will be no jobs for the hundreds or thousands made redundant by the Bill. Yet the Government dismiss those people and their future at 40 minutes per clause. The Bill is not about saving money and improving services. It is about abolishing Labour councils because the Tories cannot defeat us at the ballot box. That needs to be exposed in full debate in Committee. The jobs of 7,100 workers deserve more than execution by the guillotine.

9.32 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Every time the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) speaks in the Committee he makes the same speech about job losses, a speech which should be made in an unemployment debate, not in a debate about the future of local government.

The whole House agrees that this is an important measure. It was set out clearly in the Conservative manifesto. Indeed, the leader of the GLC, Mr. Ken Livingstone, at one stage supported the idea. The Bill is absolutely right. It will lead to less government and to more, not less, accountability because local people will be involved. I know from experience as a member of a London borough council that on planning matters one always has to wait for the GLC's comments, which turn out not to be worth listening to, so we proceed to deal with the matter locally.

The Bill will also lead ultimately to reduced expenditure. That is vital if we are to provide the assistance that we genuinely wish to give to industry. The Opposition say that jobs will be lost as a result of the Bill, but jobs have already been lost as a result of high rates caused by an unnecessary tier of government. So far the Committee has dealt with 16 clauses out of 98, during 19 sittings covering 1,200 columns of the *Official Report*. We have had to endure sitting until 5 o'clock in the morning. I know that Opposition Members feel strongly about the Bill. However, they know the procedures of the House. They know that they are responsible for making progress. During every debate on every specific clause, the whole team is wheeled out to repeat the same old arguments.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East says that there will be only 40 minutes to debate each clause. I have no sympathy for the hon. Gentleman. If the Opposition had speeded up consideration of the clauses, we could have been well on our way through the Bill. We could have considered the ILEA, the police and transport—major subjects that the Opposition have prevented us from debating.

I share the view of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and my hon. Friends that we are going through a ritual. There is the indignation of the Opposition and the self-justification of the Government. I should like to quote from a speech by Robert Mellish, the former right hon. Member for Bermondsey — a source I would not normally quote. During the debate on the timetable motion on the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill, he said:

"Oppositions must be allowed to oppose, but Oppositions must be denied the complete freedom to do exactly what they want by filibustering, for example, in their attempts to stop Bills. Governments must have the right to govern and Oppositions must have the right to oppose. That is what democracy is all about. But when Oppositions have had their fun and games, the Government must be free to move in."—[*Official Report*, 20 July 1976; Vol. 915, c. 1554.]

I wholeheartedly endorse what Mr. Mellish said then, which was that each Bill should have a timetable motion at the start. I hope that the procedures of the House will soon be changed.

9.37 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I am horrified not just by the fact that the Government are guillotining the Bill but

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

by the manner in which they are doing it. They could have brought in a guillotine—I would still have opposed it—that allowed more time for debate than 40 minutes a clause. Each clause that remains to be debated covers a major service. We shall have 40 minutes in which to debate the police. On Merseyside, the rate capping legislation will deprive the police service of £14·4 million. Proposals in the Bill do not help. There will be a police authority controlled by magistrates and nominees of the districts. There will be no directly elected representatives to account for the police service.

We were just beginning to convince Conservative Members in Committee that the Bill gives more power not to the districts, but to quangos, joint boards and ministerial reserve powers. However, the present debate proves that we have not yet convinced them. They keep repeating the myths. We need more time in which to convince them.

The arts have still to be debated. We need answers on each metropolitan county council area, and on GLC matters. What will happen to specific areas of the arts? On Merseyside, what will happen to Croxted hall, Speke hall and the Philharmonic hall? The people of the area want to know.

The voluntary bodies are still bombarding us with questions that the Minister has not answered about the future of the voluntary sector. Government Members do nothing but reiterate their prejudices against blacks and women. They attack the voluntary sector to which authorities such as Merseyside county council and the GLC have given grants.

The whole question of costs has yet to be fully discussed. There is a clause on redundancy payments. The Government say that the Bill will save money. However, there is a clause on compensation for loss of office and diminution of emoluments. It appears that the Government mean to pension everyone off and that the pensions will cost more than it costs to run the Merseyside county council.

There are the financial arrangements for the future, the block grant situation and the fact that the joint bodies and quangos will be rate capped before their lives begin. We also have to debate transport and such questions as the future of the bus pass on Merseyside. The Government appear to want to return to the voucher system operated in Tory Sefton before the Labour council gave a bus pass to the elderly of Merseyside.

We have not yet debated the clause on airports. We have to debate the future of Manchester and Speke airports. I suggest that if Merseyside county council is abolished, Speke airport will be closed. How will that affect jobs on Merseyside?

We need time for the Government to make their own case. So far, they have failed to do so. We have continually pressed the Government for clear evidence about costs and have asked them what expert support exists for their proposals, but no such evidence has been forthcoming. We have also asked about the financial saving in each service area. Instead of producing evidence of such saving, the Government have admitted that there will be no savings among the services that we have so far debated. In at least three areas — waste disposal, probation services and archives — Ministers have admitted that there will be no savings. In two others—the coroners service and the trading standards service—they have actually acknowledged that costs will rise. We therefore need time to debate these matters.

The Government have made no case for their proposals. We have debated each clause fully because so far each has covered a major service area. The same can be said of the remaining 56 hours. We shall need that time to debate the remaining clauses and schedules, to put our case for each service area and to get some answers from the Government.

9.40 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will forgive me if I do not reply to their speeches in detail in the 10 minutes available to me. However, I wish to make two general observations.

First, the first few Conservative Members who spoke seemed more concerned with the contents of the Strangers Gallery than with the contents of the Bill. We then had a series of repetitious speeches complaining about repetition in Committee, but, as the Leader of the House made clear, there has been no repetition in Committee and no attempts to filibuster.

If ever a Bill needed proper Committee scrutiny, this one certainly does. It was never based on any proper inquiry into the proposals. The proposals have not been subjected to any thorough public examination, and they will now not receive thorough parliamentary scrutiny.

Far from being involved in repetition, the Committee has expeditiously discussed a number of important matters, such as technical services, strategic planning, conservation, highways, traffic management, economic development, waste disposal, trading standards, judicial services, support for the arts, promotion of equal opportunities and support for black and ethnic minority communities.

During our deliberations the Committee has clearly demonstrated that the Government have no identified support for their proposals outside the Conservative party. They have been unable to identify any service area in which financial and manpower savings will result from abolition; nor have they identified an area which will be more effectively managed as a result of the Bill. That is the reality of what the Committee has been doing, and the Opposition demand the right and the opportunity to continue to discuss these issues.

I agree with a number of hon. Members who have said that as presently organised the House of Commons cannot possibly deal with Bills such as this. This is a mammoth piece of legislation containing 98 clauses and 17 schedules. It was obvious from the beginning that it would be the subject of a timetable motion. Indeed, I have no doubt in my own mind that in planning its introduction and passage through the House the Government intended to have a guillotine at this stage of its parliamentary consideration.

That decision means that a number of major policy issues in the seven authorities concerned—education, the police and fire services, transport, airports, museums, art galleries, the South Bank, and so on — will be desperately short of time for proper consideration. For example, part IV sets up 19 new joint boards. Clause 40 enables the Secretary of State, without inquiry, to break up police, fire or transport authorities. Clauses 41 to 45 transfer the London and metropolitan museums and the

South Bank to Government appointees. One can go on listing major policies in the Bill which will not be given anything like adequate consideration.

It seems from the timetable that the Committee will have between 50 and 60 hours to deal with the remaining 82 clauses and nine schedules dealing with the policies which I have set out. No Committee can, in that time, deal properly and adequately with the issues involved, and I defy any Conservative Members, particularly those serving on the Committee who have sat throughout its proceedings without uttering a word, to say that in the remaining time the Committee will have the opportunity to scrutinise the Bill as it needs and deserves to be examined.

We are here predictably. I share the view, expressed in particular by Conservative Members, that the House of Commons should reform the way in which it examines legislation, particularly legislation such as this. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), among others, asked about the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). My hon. Friend and I share identical views on this subject, and they are that the present procedures are demonstrably inadequate, but so are the arrangements whereby only the Government have any real say about the timetable of legislation. We feel—and the House should address itself to this—that we should reform our procedures so that Bills can be timetabled, but not on the basis of a decision made by the Executive, whichever party is forming the Executive.

The Opposition are said to have the power to delay and have been using it in this instance, as on previous examinations of Government legislation. That is not true. It is clearly the case that the Government can override, as they are doing with this timetable motion, even the limited power of Opposition parties simply to delay progress on a Bill. It is also increasingly seen outside the House, by members of the authorities concerned, by the officers serving those authorities and by the general public that our procedures are not just inadequate but frankly barmy. I do not think that those who observe our proceedings in Committee think it sensible, leads to good legislation or good government, for close on 50 hon. Members to be sitting up all day and night two days a week considering legislation.

I guess that it is no accident that the Secretary of State decided to opt out of this procedure, and in some senses I do not blame him. It cannot be sensible for a Cabinet Minister to be kept out of bed day and night for two days and nights a week and thus not be able to attend effectively to the affairs of state. The right hon. Gentleman does a pretty bad job of it when he gets to bed, so if he were kept up two nights a week, goodness knows what difficulties he would be getting into.

The reality is that reform of the House of Commons would be far more in the interests of the taxpayers than will the Government's proposed reforms of local councils. Taxpayers — and, indeed, ratepayers — would get far more benefit, a far better deal and far better legislation from the reform of Parliament, and the way that this kind of legislation is dealt with, than they will from any plans to abolish the metropolitan counties or the Greater London council. It is clear that those authorities so order and conduct their business that they are able to operate in a far more sane, sensible and logical way than we are able to here. That is the reality. In consequence, they give their ratepayers a better deal.

There is no case for the guillotine — at least in its present form—nor was there ever any case for the Bill. In the absence of the reforms that I have mentioned, I have no hesitation in urging everyone to oppose the motion.

9.50 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): One of the words that have been used a great deal this evening has been the word "ritual". The noises made against the measure by the Opposition have been ritualistic. They have expressed shock and horror at our attempting to curtail the debate, because they have said that they wanted to improve the Bill. They have never had that intention. Their whole purpose has been to delay and destroy the Bill and to overturn the convincing vote on Second Reading, when the House accepted the principle of the Bill and the Government had a majority of 135.

The word "ritual" has been used to describe the way that we conduct ourselves in examining legislation in Standing Committee. I have been involved in three guillotined measures in the past three years. *[Interruption.]* I am not as expert as some, as I shall show later. They have all been very controversial Bills—the first two Telecommunications Bills and this Bill.

As one of the prime players, it seems to me that this is how a ritual develops. First, the Government publish the Bill, and then some Opposition spokesman says that they will fight it line by line and clause by clause. That pleases their supporters in the country. But it immediately impales the Opposition on a hook, because it is not then possible for them to come to any sort of reasonable arrangement about the length of debate. They feel—I understand it—that they would be letting down their supporters in the country if they made such a deal.

The failure of such an arrangement means that the Government are also impaled on a hook, because they then have to make a reasonable amount of time available for the measure to be debated—and so it goes on. The House knows the result — very late sittings. A tradition has been established that a timetable motion cannot be moved until a Committee has sat for 100 hours. This time the figure is about 105 hours. It is a sort of new parliamentary virility symbol.

I listened carefully to the words of the Leader of the House this afternoon. He said that he was not persuaded of a need to change the procedures of the House and that he would prefer voluntary arrangements to prevail. I agree that for the great bulk of parliamentary business we would all welcome the idea that reasonable arrangements should prevail, but in regard to very controversial Bills it is expecting too much to think that that will occur. If the Leader of the House is not willing to consider a more fundamental change, perhaps he could lower the level of the virility symbol that is required before guillotine motions are moved from 100 hours to, say, 50 hours. I believe that that was the figure once agreed upon by a former Leader of the House, Mr. Chuter Ede.

I readily agree that the Bill has not been delayed as a result of filibustering upstairs. Indeed, the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans) has hardly ever got into second gear. But that did not prevent him from accusing the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of filibustering when he introduced an amendment in 12 seconds flat. Upstairs in Committee we have seen a sort of filibuster by amendment. About 600 amendments have been tabled. I would not mind that if those amendments were designed

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

to improve the Bill in any detail, but instead they have all provided opportunities for Second Reading speeches to be made on the same principle.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I am sorry, but I cannot give way.

In Committee there has really only been one debate and that has been on the question of whether the boroughs and districts can fulfil the duties, or whether we need county-wide authorities. The amendments have been directed to that. If we had not introduced this guillotine motion, the debate would have been very prolonged. One night, when I had little else to do, I calculated how much longer our debates would have taken—incidentally, I was gambling that we might just pass this motion—if the Committee took as long on the next lot of clauses and schedules as it had taken on the first grouping. I discovered that we would have come out of the Committee on 1 August. I see that the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) think that that is a good idea.

If it took us as long to debate the rest of the Bill as it took us to debate clause 2—a three-line clause that took us an hour a line to debate—we would not have come out of Committee until 1993.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I have even better news for the Opposition. If it took as long to debate the rest of the Bill as it took us to debate clause 8—when it took us 10 hours to debate only six lines—the Bill would not have emerged from Committee until the end of the century.

The guillotine motion contains one of the most generous allocations of time for more than 15 years. So far, we have had 118 hours in Committee and, if one includes the time spent on Second Reading, we have spent 133½ hours debating the Bill. After the guillotine motion is passed, another 72 hours will be provided. There will be 14 hours on Report and Third Reading. Thus, in all, 220 hours will have been provided. No Bill has had such a long debate since the Housing Finance Bill in 1971.

That debate will allow the House and the Committee to examine in considerable detail the various matters that we have not yet touched upon. My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that we had not yet debated ILEA, the police authorities, the fire authorities, the passenger transport authorities, our policy on airports or the future of the South Bank. But our failure to reach those parts of the Bill is due entirely to the tactics developed and used by the Opposition.

As I have made clear to the Opposition Front Bench, we have been willing to make progress. But instead there have been prolonged debates—all on the basic principle of the Bill. There has been a series of Second Reading speeches. That cannot be the right or appropriate way to deal with legislation.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I hope that the Bill will be debated exhaustively. I am sure that Opposition Members will be able to debate it now in a more measured way and will not have to sit up until 1 am, 3 am or 5 am. The only people to gain from a delay are the authorities. They are seeking to subvert Parliament's intention as clearly expressed on Second Reading, because if they can delay the Bill, the whole process of legislation and of devolution will come to an end. That is why we must speed the Bill on its way to the House of Lords. We want it on the statute book in the summer so that the process of abolition can continue in the following nine months.

The other word that has been used tonight is democracy. It has been said that the Bill is not democratic. I remember a former Labour Leader of the House standing at this Dispatch Box and moving five guillotine motions in one day. The tumbrils were queuing up at the scaffold as the Bills were wheeled on and guillotined. I am not prepared to take lectures on democracy from a Labour party that will not even have one man one vote for the selection of its Members of Parliament. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will support the motion.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes, 276 Noes, 195.

Division No. 97] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigg-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*

Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William

O'Neill, Martin	Skinner, Dennis
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Park, George	Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Parry, Robert	Snape, Peter
Patchett, Terry	Soley, Clive
Pavitt, Laurie	Spearing, Nigel
Pendry, Tom	Steel, Rt Hon David
Penhaligon, David	Stott, Roger
Pike, Peter	Strang, Gavin
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*	Straw, Jack
Prescott, John	Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Radice, Giles	Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Redmond, M.	Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*	Tinn, James
Richardson, Ms Jo	Torney, Tom
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*	Wainwright, R.
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*	Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Rogers, Allan	Wareing, Robert
Rooker, J. W.	Welsh, Michael
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*	White, James
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*	Williams, Rt Hon A.
Rowlands, Ted	Winnick, David
Ryman, John	Woodall, Alec
Sedgemore, Brian	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Sheerman, Barry	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.	
Shore, Rt Hon Peter	Tellers for the Noes:
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*	Mr. Frank Haynes and
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*	Mr. Sean Hughes.
Silkin, Rt Hon J.	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1. The Standing Committee to which the Bill (except Clause 1) is allocated shall report the Bill (except Clause 1) to the House on or before 7th March 1985.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 45 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who moves, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be moved to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill (or such of its provisions as were committed or re-committed to that Committee) to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be moved in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on first allotted day

7.—(1) On the first allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is moved by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution

of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion moved in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Re-committal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of re-committal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Local Government Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Health and Safety

10.13 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (S.I., 1984, No. 1902), dated 4th December 1984, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th December, be annulled.

This important regulation deals with major issues in many parts of the country. However, before I comment on it, I wish to say at the outset that we received two statutory instruments from the Vote Office — one printed in December and the other printed in January. Some corrections have been made to the statutory instrument, one of which extends the period during which organisations must co-operate with the regulation. The Department has been especially sloppy in that respect. This should not have been allowed to happen and I want to hear from the Minister why it did. Was there pressure from the industry to extend the period after which the regulations will become applicable? One of our major criticisms of the regulations is that they do not go far enough in meeting our anxieties.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene at such an early stage. The copy of the regulations that was signed and laid before Parliament contained no errors. However, there was a misprint in the explanatory memorandum and the memorandum has been reprinted for the convenience of the House. It contains the same date as the consultative document which, no doubt, the hon. Gentleman will have read. No doubt he will forgive us for any attempt to move the final date of implementation backwards.

Mr. Prescott: Yes. I notice that an extra six months is allowed before it is necessary to comply with the regulations. The change to which the Minister has referred means that there will be four and a half years before it is necessary to comply with the regulations, instead of four years. That will not go down very well in many areas where there is extreme concern about the concentration of hazardous materials. Many incidents are still fresh in our minds. The terrible Bhopal tragedy is especially clear in our minds. As I come from Humberside, I recall the night of the explosion at Flixborough. Most of those living on the north or the south bank of the Humber heard that terrible and tragic explosion. Much of the plant was blown across the river on to the north bank. The Flixborough disaster led to the establishment of committees to consider the regulations that were required for explosive chemicals.

Since the Flixborough disaster of 1974, there have been fires and explosions at Barking, Stalybridge, Manchester and Sheffield. There is the controversy in Livingston about whether Union Carbide should be allowed to develop a plant in that area. I am sure that every hon. Member will be increasingly concerned, as will their constituents, about the growing problems arising from the concentration of hazardous materials and substances.

The regulations before us stem from the terrible accident and tragedy at Seveso in Italy, which led the Community to develop regulations. The delay in the implementation of the regulations arising from the Seveso incident has caused delay in action being taken in Britain. More than three reports have come from the advisory committee since the Flixborough explosion in 1974.

I am sure that the House will welcome any regulations that seek to improve safety and to reduce the repetition of the tragic incidents to which I have referred. Any extra-statutory controls that are envisaged in the regulations requiring notification, safety plans, on and off-site emergency plans and the provision of information for local authorities, however limited, are to be welcomed. However, these improvements represent a step forward and two steps backwards. The Opposition's criticisms of the regulations are considerable. We are in considerable doubt whether they should be given full support. I am eager to hear what the Minister has to say in their defence.

First, the regulations are limited in application. They do not apply to all the areas of concern where incidents are likely to occur. Secondly, the requirement on manufacturers to provide information does not go far enough. Thirdly, the resources required for the implementation of the regulations will not be met adequately.

After the Flixborough incident, a study was undertaken of the advisory bodies to ascertain how many plants should be covered by the controls as envisaged. The first report, which appeared in the mid-1970s, showed that 5,000 such places should be subject to some form of control. It was an identification of all the areas of concern. In 1982, the regulations which were introduced identified 1,600 plants and areas of concern. The regulations before us identify only 250 such plants, which is only 5 per cent. of the 5,000 which were identified in 1976. That is a tremendous climb-down from the areas which were first identified following the concern about the Flixborough incident which itself would not have been covered by these regulations.

Under the regulations, the Health and Safety Executive has identified large inventory plants and it believes that 250 should be required to co-operate with the regulations by providing safety plans and taking other action. The Health and Safety Executive designates small inventory areas — those plants and areas where the chemical concentrations are less than the minimum criteria laid down in the legislation. There are more than 1,000 of them.

I understand that there is some controversy in one regard. The EEC Commission believes that these regulations should apply to all large and small plants. The Opposition agree, because most of the explosions have occurred in small plant areas. Those areas will not be covered by these regulations if the large inventory areas interpretation is taken into account. Do the Government intend to make it clear to the Health and Safety Executive that these requirements should apply to the 1,250 areas as a whole and not just to the 250 plants of particular concern?

We criticise also the measures relating to accountability and information. The regulations require safety plans to be provided by 1989, but that is a long way off. This is not satisfactory. Our criticisms relate also to other aspects of the regulations. First, the requirements to provide information to the different authorities — county and district — differ. I believe that that will lead to confusion. The authorities have complained about that aspect. Secondly, there is no requirement to report to the safety committee at the plant—to the shop stewards and

the workers — about dangerous chemicals and areas. Thirdly, the on-site manufacturer can prepare a plan, but, under these regulations, he is required only to consult the person whom he thinks is appropriate. The regulations do not specifically make it clear that, if the manufacturer cannot agree with the local authority about the actions he wishes to take in his plant, he cannot just go to someone whom he thinks is appropriate and fulfil his obligations under the regulations. That is not satisfactory.

Fourthly, the information to be given to the public is not required to be given directly to the public, and that is unsatisfactory. The information may be given to the local authority and will be given to the Health and Safety Executive but the executive is not under an obligation, according to the legislation, to give confidential information to the public. Complaints have been made that these regulations do not enable such essential information to be made available to anyone who inquires.

In the February 1985 edition of *Health and Safety at Work* Alex Crawford states in the editorial:

"those liable to be affected by a major accident have no right, under these new regulations, to challenge the manufacturer's description of the nature of the hazard to which he is exposing them, the safety measures he proposes, nor the behaviour he lays down for them to adopt in the event of a major accident."

The same editorial contains a complaint by a consultant who said that the secrecy surrounding this information should not be allowed.

Members of Parliament are asking for information on the plants in their areas that will be identified under the regulations as containing hazardous materials. I have acquired a Health and Safety Executive document which makes it clear that, under the old 1982 regulations, 42 plants were designated in my area of Humberside—one of the most dangerous areas for chemical plants in the United Kingdom — as places to be identified to the authorities as possible dangerous locations. Under the new regulations only 12 of those 42 plants have to be identified. That is the scale of the reduction in the requirements. Are Members of Parliament and the public entitled to know whether the areas in which they live are designated as dangerous?

The Health and Safety Executive cannot make that information available, therefore the Government should change the health and safety legislation so that people may obtain it, and allow Members of Parliament to have access to it. In the Humberside region 12 plants can be identified as needing consideration. One of them is the Ciba-Geigy chemical plant in Grimsby, which is the only plant using the same chemicals as those at Bhopal. The House can imagine how worried are the people living in that area, especially as the Health and Safety Executive has removed the only health and safety inspector form that plant.

My final criticism of the regulations relates to the resources available for their implementation. The Health and Safety Executive, which provides the factory inspectors, will have its work load increased fivefold by the requirements of the legislation. In 1979, 964 inspectors were employed by the Health and Safety Executive. The Labour Government's plans provided for that number to increase to 1,150. By 1984, the number had fallen to 824 —a 16 per cent. fall. The greatest drop has been in the number of field inspectors. There has been a 19 per cent., fall from 644 inspectors to 537. They are the people who should check what manufacturers are saying and whether there is a threat to surrounding communities. Their number has been reduced because of the Government's cut in resources to the Health and Safety Executive.

When the Government have to decide between tax cuts or factory inspectors, they should opt for the latter so as to assure people living around the plants.

There is considerable criticism of the resources available and the accountability provided under the regulations. We hope that the Minister will say whether he is satisfied with the regulations, whether he intends to introduce further changes under the planning regulations and whether the Government can improve the position and reduce the growing anxiety felt in areas such as Barking, Sheffield and Livingston. The public will begin to demand action. I predict that explosions and other incidents will occur in plants that are not covered by the regulations. For the House to vote on regulations that may improve the position in 250 plants but ignore a further 1,000 plants and warehouses is to ignore the types of places where explosions and fires have taken place.

The measure is perhaps motivated by the best of intentions within the EEC, but its implementation is conditioned by a lack of adequate resources. It omits hazardous areas from the full effects of the controls and leaves the Opposition in serious doubt as to whether to support the regulations. We shall listen carefully to what assurances the Minister can give us.

10.27 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I listened to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) with great interest. He spoke forcefully. He was somewhat critical of the regulations introduced by the Government on this important subject. I sense that he was critical of the fact that we were dealing with the issue late at night. Many hon. Members are worried that we are dealing with the subject of major hazards and possible major disasters late at night. We have recently seen the horrific disaster at Bhopal. It should never have happened. The process was well known. We are considering something which has been delivered to us by the Commission in Brussels.

This country has always been interested in preventing major industrial disasters and hazards, whether in the factory, through explosion, fire, or the dispersal of toxic and dangerous substances from a factory to affect the surrounding community.

I should declare an interest. I have a long-standing interest as a director of a chemical company and I am an adviser to the principal distributor in this country of liquefied petroleum gas, which is a hazardous product. I am also chairman of the all-party group on the chemical industry which has, appropriately, shown an all-party interest in the problems of an industry which deals in danger and hazards.

Our industry has a remarkably fine record. The Flixborough disaster happened at a weekend and the BBC rang me at home before contacting any Government spokesmen. I suppose that I was asked for an immediate comment because of my long interest in the industry.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said that the regulations were not demanding enough. That is a matter for debate, but they set out a great deal with which manufacturers must comply. I am pleased that a comprehensive guide to the regulations has been

[Mr. David Crouch]

issued by the Government and the Health and Safety Executive to help manufacturers to comply with the regulations.

The guide takes us through the regulations. That is helpful, because regulations are often written for Parliament and sometimes have to be interpreted subsequently by lawyers. The guide will help employers and employees in the industry to understand the regulations.

Regulation 7 sets out the safety case and requires manufacturers to ensure that the production, handling and storage of hazardous products ore safe. Manufacturers also have to identify any potential danger and confirm that they have provided appropriate safety controls at all stages, not only for those working in a plant, but for those in the immediate vicinity who could be put in danger if anything went wrong.

Regulation 8 is equally important, because it requires the Government and the HSE to ensure that safety measures are kept up to date. They also have to ensure that manufacturers are kept informed of the latest developments and information on products and manufacturing processes.

Regulation 9 gives the HSE the Dickensian opportunity of being able to ask for more if necessary. That is belt and braces, but, heaven knows, we should be asking for belt and braces when considering any major hazards in industry, whether inside or outside the factory. It is right that the regulations should be tough in that regard.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the hon. Gentleman confident that the regulations will dispel the real anxieties felt by communities within which such plants are situated? The people of Livingston, despite the high unemployment in the area, have rejected overwhelmingly Union Carbide's plans to set up a plant there. They have made their objections felt by way of the Livingston development corporation, which, in turn, has said that those developments will go no further.

Mr. Crouch: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I shall develop a matter that he touched on — whether people outside the professional area of knowledge have a right to say that they are concerned. I believe that they have a right. That is why Parliament has that right this evening. That is why there is a continuing obligation on the Government and the Health and Safety Executive to continue that right of investigation and query. Through local authorities and Members of Parliament in the Chamber itself, the public must constantly inquire as to the wisdom of allowing an operation to continue in any place. We must be sure; we cannot take risks. I should like to refer to how I believe risks have sometimes been created by mistake on the part of not only manufacturers but local authorities.

Therefore, I can say, "So far, so good" about the three regulations that I have described. I accept them. We can be satisfied that we have satisfied Brussels, but that is not enough. Regulations, rules and codes of practice are fine in writing; fine for the lawyers, insurance agents and assessors after the event. They know where they stand. They are fine for the local authorities that will know whether they have made a mistake in controlling something. They are fine even for the manufacturers who will know whether they have abided by the regulations when there is a disaster or an accident. But are they good enough for us in Parliament? Are they good enough for the public outside? Are they good enough for the press as they watch for what might happen after any major accident and consider whether we could have been wiser?

I say to the Minister and the whole House that it is not so much what is written in these detailed regulations that matters, but it is how the regulations are operated and implemented that counts. We know in the chemical industry that all the fine rules about safety are only as good as the way in which they are operated—accurately and absolutely correctly. We know that danger exists in industry sometimes through human error, human laxity or carelessness. We must ensure that we do not allow laxity or carelessness to occur.

There is mention in the regulations of local authorities at both county and district level. They all have a responsibility to ensure that the manufacturing and storage operations that take place within their areas are satisfactory to them. Responsibility is laid on them. One responsibility is to ensure that in their planning they do not allow the wrong type of development to occur around the manufacture of certain products. That has happened in the past. There was housing development close to the border of Flixborough. That was obviously a mistake. We have had such problems. In Bhopal, for example, we saw how a great number of people were allowed to live right up to the factory perimeter, which was a tragic mistake in planning. Therefore, the local authority, as well as the manufacturer, has responsibility for observing the codes and regulations.

In a quite different area of activity, local authorities have allowed housing development up to the perimeter of major airports such as Heathrow. That must not continue. The danger is not so much the real risk of aircraft crashing as the noise and pollution caused by so much aircraft activity. There is also the cost of double glazing to diminish the effect of what is really an industrial activity. The local authority has a responsibility not to permit domestic housing development right up to the perimeter of industrial operations where there is any question of a hazard of the type described in the regulations.

I promised to be brief and this is my last word. I believe that these are good regulations. They satisfy Brussels, but for the House to be satisfied we must be sure that the Department and the Health and Safety Executive will be constantly vigilant to ensure that they are operated at the highest level of efficiency.

10.41 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Like the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), I must declare an interest as an official of the all-party group on the chemical industry. I also spent 20 years with ICI at the sharp end of industrial production in the chemical industry, so I know of the risks involved, whether the substance be toxic or non-toxic, inflammable or non-inflammable, explosive or non-explosive.

The regulations go as far as one can expect in the circumstances. The existing regulations have been built up over the years, and I assure the House that they are applied with as strict a discipline as they would be in the Armed Forces. That discipline is instilled into every employee of ICI and other large companies. If a person fails to accept that discipline, he will not last in the chemical industry.

He will do no good for himself or for the employer. With the current scale of industrial production in this country and chemical manufacture in Europe, it is essential to keep a sense of balance and to remember the human factor. We shall never entirely eliminate the risk of explosion or poisoning by chemical waste.

What disturbs me about the present regulations and also the proposed regulations is the somewhat blasé approach to cost. It costs the chemical industry a great deal of money to train people to the present high standards. That training continues relentlessly virtually every day of the year and it applies to all ranks, from the humble process worker to senior management. As I have said, anyone who does not accept that strict principle should not be in the chemical industry. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that the proposed regulations will be implemented without the necessary skills of inspection to ensure that they are effective and are carried out to the required standards. A financial commitment is to be imposed on an industry some sections of which are not making vast profits, on the Health and Safety Executive and on the local authorities.

How can we expect the local authorities to monitor the implementation of the regulations when the number of people employed in local authorities is being cut? I am thinking in particular of the fire services. The fire services are stretched to the limit now, and there are moves to cut them further. Yet it is the fire service in the main that will have to take the first emergency action if there is an incident. I know that the fire service is trained to the limit, in co-operation with the companies, to deal with any emergency at a plant. The House should not underestimate the superb quality of the training process or the skill of the fire officers in knowing how to react in an emergency.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): That point is of real importance and relevant to south Yorkshire, where there was recently a serious fire in consequence of which many firemen are still unwell and large quantities of asbestos were blown over my constituency and that of Rotherham.

If an industrial establishment is inadequately supervised and inspected in the first place, the hazards facing the fire service will be even greater.

Mr. Garrett: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend. I pay tribute to the south Yorkshire fire services, which in the past have been to the fore in co-operating with chemical plants in the area in joint training exercises.

I hope that the Minister will accept that, before the regulations are implemented, there must be adequate education of all parties involved to ensure that they fully understand them.

The large companies that run chemical plants tend to spend a great deal of money on education, and to get results. The same is true of medium-sized companies. However, I have some reservations about companies lower down the scale, especially where the storage of hazardous substances is concerned. I would not wish to stifle initiative or to frustrate the wish of any entrepreneur to establish a business in chemical manufacture or distribution. I believe, however, that the small operator in this sector of the industry should be given some financial encouragement to train his staff or to enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge of how to act in an emergency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is no longer in his place. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry. I see that my hon. Friend has merely shifted his position, as it were, somewhat to the right. My hon. Friend expressed some concern about the shop stewards. The trade unions in the larger companies of which I have knowledge, through the shop stewards, are fully informed about, and fully participate in, all training matters and in the exercises and emergency drills that take place almost every day.

The regulations are an improvement. When they are implemented, let us make sure that the three main parties concerned are determined that they will work and that the training and education takes place. If we do so, the British people will retain their confidence in the chemical industry.

10.49 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): I wish to make five brief points. First, these regulations have been commended to Parliament by the Health and Safety Commission, which includes not only representatives of British industry through the CBI but also the TUC and local authorities.

Secondly, these regulations are not, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) seemed to imply, limited to only 250 sites. They relate to many more sites because they require the manufacturers of certain dangerous, explosive, flammable or toxic substances to provide evidence at any time that they have identified hazards, have taken adequate precautions to minimise their occurrence and have plans to reduce the consequences of any accidents. Therefore, the activating factor is not the site but the manufacture of certain dangerous substances. It is right that under the regulations certain sites with large inventories of dangerous substances have higher duties placed upon them, but to suggest that they relate to only 250 sites is to mislead the House.

Mr. Prescott: Of course not. This is a hand-out.

Mr. Baldry: It is not a hand-out. The hon. Gentleman and I both read the same magazines because we study this subject assiduously. If he turns to page 9 of this month's *Health and Safety at Work*, magazine, he will see that I am exactly right.

Thirdly, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) that no amount of regulation, however strict, will ever surpass self-regulation. It is clear that at all times those involved in the manufacture of chemicals have the highest possible self-regulation, both at company level and, as the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) said, among individual workers.

Fourthly, one must find a balance. It is inevitable that if further regulations are imposed on industry, a cost will have to be borne. There will be additional paperwork, and extra expenses will have to be met for emergency planning. Resources will consequently be diverted from other more productive activity, and at the end of the day the additional costs will be borne by the consumer. That is perfectly proper, but a balance must be found between that and the danger which one seeks to minimise or control. These regulations balance the sensible needs of good practice in industry in relation to on-site emergency plans, close liaison with the local emergency authority and emergency services, the control of major hazards and regular consultation with the local authority both on planning applications for new products and generally.

Fifthly, it may be suggested that these regulations should be taken in isolation. That is not so. These

[Mr. Baldry]

regulations and the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations, together with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act itself, constitute a substantial code of law for the control of major hazard installations. Recent amendments to planning law have also meant that development projects involving a dangerous substance now require planning permission.

Further regulations — the Dangerous Substances (Notification and Marking of Premises) Regulations — are now under consideration. Taken as a whole they will ensure that any factory with more than 25 tonnes of a dangerous substance will have to notify that fact to the Health and Safety Executive. They afford substantial protection, and it is misleading to suggest that the regulations we are now discussing must be taken in isolation.

I notice that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is now back in his place. If he looks at page 9 of this month's edition of *Health and Safety at Work*, he will see that it confirms my point that these regulations apply to considerably more than 250 sites.

10.54 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): The regulations have the wrong title. They should be called "The Enormous Hazards Regulations" as there are no regulations for major hazards. The vast majority of hazardous plants in urban areas will not be affected by them.

Considerable disquiet is being expressed by the emergency services at the small amount of legislation to deal with these potentially dangerous hazards. The fire in Sheffield has already been mentioned, and this is an example of what can be considered as a hazard to the community in and around Sheffield. On the 14 December last year, a fire broke out in the National Carriers depot in Brightside lane, where 70 tonnes of chemcials were stored. It took 26 appliances and over 400 firemen to put the fire out. Over £10 million worth of damage was done. The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) talked about the cost of these regulations, but the cost of the damage done in that fire, which lasted for six days, must also be taken into consideration.

I received a letter from the chief fire officer, and I shall quote it to show that the professional people are extremely concerned about the problems that they face with the lack of regulations. He says:

"The main causes for the amount of damage by the fire and the hazards to personnel undertaking necessary fire fighting operations are readily identified as follows.

1. *(a)* A delay in detection of the fire and subsequent call to the Fire Service occurred which allowed an uncontrolled fire to develop for at least 30 minutes.

(b) The fire separation between the various units within the building could not be assessed and could be regarded as nothing better than providing physical division between occupancies with the exception only of a single wall beyond which the fire was prevented from spreading.

(c) The undivided area between the roof lining and the structural roof which allowed ready passage of flames throughout the roofed area which caused its early collapse."

His next point is extremely important. He said:

"The building and the stored contents have not caused any existing legislation to be transgressed which suggests that fires and the problems created by them are considered reasonable."

He then set out a number of details that should be legislated on.

Similarly, the Sheffield council department of land and planning said:

"This building complied with the requirements of the Building Regulations and many of the elements of the structure stood up well to a fire of this severity. However, the rapid spread of flames created a situation which could only be controlled with great difficulty. An additional complicating factor was that chemicals were stored throughout the building in various areas."

There were about 70 tonnes of chemicals. These regulations would not have been effective in the case of that fire. It continues:

"In addition high risk chemicals should be stored in specially protected areas using materials with a fire resistance of at least two hours. External signs should be provided stating the nature of the chemicals stored in each area. These recommendations would allow for easier access to the source of the fire, contain the spread of flame, and provide time for the Fire Service to tackle the outbreak."

The effects of the fire have not yet been fully assessed, and we are still waiting for two further reports. The immediate effect was the closure of 31 schools in the area, because of the spread of asbestos, which was carried five miles downwind of the fire. The flakes of asbestos were in the main hand-sized, but in many cases were three to four times that size.

Great problems were experienced by the firemen because of the difficulty of identifying the stored materials. There was no inventory available to the fire service.

So far 100 firemen have been taken ill, and about 60 are still ill today. They have suffered from sore throats, headaches, chest pains and breathing difficulties. Doctors have already told two of the firemen that the mucus lining of their lungs has been stripped away.

Injuries have also been sustained by the public unit and planning staff. The principal building surveyor suffered from blisters on his arms and face. The senior building supervisor complained of chest pains and is now away from work with bronchial pneumonia. Those were the effects on the people involved in the fire.

With regard to the effects on the community, I quote from an article in the *Morning Telegraph* of 8 February:

"The number of patients visiting the doctor's surgery with throat and chest complaints increased by 50 per cent. after the £10 million warehouse fire at the nearby Brightside lane. The doctor who has his surgery in Upwell Street, off Brightside lane, reported up to 30 people at each of his surgeries compared to a normal maximum of 20. He said the visits lasted for a three-week period after the fire and patients said that the complaints were caused by the December fire in which chemicals stored at the warehouse were swept around the area in a massive smoke cloud. The effects of the fire have caused widespread concern, with people reporting cases of sickness, headaches and vomiting".

I do not know what is the definition of a major hazard. But in the light of case involving £10 million worth of damage, with 65 people still ill, and with 50 per cent. more people in the surrounding community reporting sick than would normally be expected in the period, I wonder what a major hazard is supposed to be. It is clear that the regulations now before the House would not have affected that situation.

Often the storage of chemicals in urban areas cannot be avoided, but where they are stored in densely populated areas, as in Sheffield, surely some precautions must be introduced. The regulations before the House would not cover those circumstances. I have spoken to the chief fire officer and the planning department in Sheffield about them. They have scrutinised the regulations and their

professional advice is that the regulations would not affect such a warehouse as the one that I have mentioned. I hope that the Minister will clear up the matter, in view of what is being said by the chief fire officer and the planning department. The regulations do not, according to them, cover such a building as the National Carriers' warehouse in Sheffield, where the damage occurred.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Would my hon. Friend agree that what emerges from the regulations is a glaring anomaly in primary legislation? Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, planning permission is not needed when a warehouse that stores, for example, milk powder, is used for the storage of hazardous chemicals.

Mr. Caborn: That is absolutely clear. It is confirmed by the land and planning officer in Sheffield and by the chief fire officer and the other services.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, the regulations will cover only about 250 establishments, and many places within areas of high density population where dangerous chemicals are being stored will not be covered. On 6 February I asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he had any information

"on the number of people downwind whose health was affected by asbestos or chemicals—or in any other way as a result of the fire on 14 December at a warehouse in Sheffield."

The Minister replied:

"This Department does not hold this information." —[*Official Report*, 6 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. *586*.]

Thus, the Department apparently has no information about the biggest fire to occur in south Yorkshire for many years.

The Government have missed an opportunity to introduce legislation which could have allayed the genuine fears about the storage not only of chemicals but of other dangerous substances. The fire service can have difficulties in dealing with the cocktail of chemicals that are involved in a fire. That problem is not easy to resolve, but it would have been nice, and it would have removed some of the anxiety, if the Government had at least consulted those affected. If they had taken their advice, they might have proposed a much more all-embracing piece of legislation than that before us. I hope that the Opposition Front Bench will seriously consider voting against the regulations, because unless we do so, we shall not do justice to our people.

11.5 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Until 1983 I was a health and safety at work officer and company secretary to BP Minerals, and I had to deal at first hand with the sort of problems that have been outlined in this interesting debate. It is unusual for me to thank the European Assembly for any directive, but these regulations appear to be helpful and accordingly I welcome them.

My own interest is with liquefied petroleum gas. In 1984, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State took part in a debate with me about the installation with regard to the Trocadero Shell service station in my constituency. Since then there have been additional fears, with a calor gas explosion at Desford, where several people lost their lives, and a leakage at Stoney Stanton. Therefore, the problem does not seem to be going away, and that is a matter of great concern to me.

Regulation 5 provides an excellent way of reporting exactly what has happened. Regulation 5(2) provides an ideal way of reporting on a major accident, and no one can be critical of that. Obviously any industrial installation will worry people. Consequently, the regulations, and particularly regulation 4, must be helpful. We know that industrial installations always involve risks. Things can go wrong with them. The wrong people may have been consulted prior to installation. But these regulations will encourage people to consult fully beforehand.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, the regulations will apply to more than 250 sites. For example, it must always be ensured that the site location is safe. Is it ideal, is it warranted, and is there a risk of a serious chemical leakage? Of course the storage of any hazardous substances must be a matter of concern, and the question of whether it is a serious danger to the surrounding community must be answered. Indeed, under these regulations it will be answered. The plans will have to be carefully drawn up. We shall have to ensure that the operation is both viable and safe. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that that is the purpose of the regulations. Regulation 5 itemises what to do after an emergency, and that is very important and useful.

I pay tribute to the role of the Health and Safety Executive, which works hard to protect the community. One hon. Member doubted whether the local authorities would be able to handle conducting the executive if rate capping were introduced in parts of the country. That is an important matter. Allegations that rate capping will affect the Health and Safety Executive and its co-operation with local authorities is nonsense. We are talking about a priority and about hundreds of thousands of people in local communities. Scare tactics are unacceptable.

Mr. Garrett: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is referring to my speech or that by my hon. Friend on the Front Bench.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am referring to the speech by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn).

Mr. Garrett: In that case, my hon. Friend can answer for himself.

Mr. Bruinvels: I noticed that the hon. Gentleman was not doing that. The idea in the local authorities' plan about how such emergencies should be handled is helpful. I am reminded of the way in which the police operate at county level. The emergency rooms are always prepared, with telephone numbers and routing, to deal with an emergency. Close co-operation should be established with the police.

Dr. Godman: The people of Livingston have demonstrated definitively that we are dealing with a more critical public following Flixborough and the dreadful events there. The fears expressed in rejecting Union Carbide's plans to set up a plant are genuine. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that such fears will be dispelled by the implementation of the regulations.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am grateful for that intervention. If the hon. Gentleman had been here during my Adjournment debate on petroleum gas, he would have heard what I highlighted then. Serious anxiety existed at that time and the public need reassurance. The Flixborough experience was another anxiety and these regulations will quell, to an extent, those natural worries. I should not like to live beside the site decided for my constituency because of the

[Mr. Bruinvels]

element of risk. That is of great concern to me. The guidelines will cut out that risk—at long last. I hope that Opposition Members will join us in welcoming the regulations.

Local authorities must always be prepared. That is important. They must always consider the possibility of a major accident. I pray that accidents will not continue to happen, but that risk is always on the horizon.

Self-regulation is suggested as an alternative. All local authorities and local industrial concerns must do their utmost to protect the community, not only employees. They must protect people who have no choice but to live near an industrial site.

Canvey island is one of the most risky sites, but people choose to live there. They need protection and I am certain that they will be protected. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act has been honoured under the regulations—and will continue to be honoured. We need an active public education. The police, local authorities and fire services performed well in the Leicestershire incident, as they do throughout the country whenever a major explosion occurs. All the local services must co-operate. That is the best way.

It is up to hon. Members to inform their constituents when they visit local installations that the regulations will help. The guidance notes should be respected. They will make the installations and the local communities safer places in which to live. For that reason I have no hesitation in supporting the regulations.

11.15 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): All accidents are frightening, and few more than those involving chemicals. We have only to glance through the regulations to see chemicals listed which most of us cannot even pronounce, let alone understand their uses or what may happen if they were subjected to heat or major pressure changes. I sometimes feel that the House is at its least adequate when discussing such technical matters. It is obvious that few of us know enough about the subject to make valid comments.

We are all floundering to find a solution to the problem, and we sometimes come near to mistaking bureaucracy for safety. If there is an accident, we do not need acres and acres of paper—we require someone with the relevant knowledge to be available within minutes. He will be the most valuable person in a disaster. That is the weakness of the regulations.

On the whole, the regulations apply to the larger installations. We know that if there was an accident on such a site in the United Kingdom the company involved could produce someone with the relevant knowledge. It probably employs a number of suitably qualified people. However, on the smaller sites where the amount stored is much less—perhaps a site in one of our villages or towns—I fear that there is a real hazard. Indeed, that has been shown during the past three or four years. In such a case not only will the paper not be produced, but the person with the knowledge will not be produced either.

Mr. Crouch: The hon. Gentleman's point about flying by the seat of one's pants is not really an answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) about a real disaster. A detailed professional statement about quantities of chemicals could be kept in certain areas.

Mr. Penhaligon: I accept that, and would welcome any regulations on that line. Whether the figures quoted are correct is beyond my competence to say. I saw the hon. Gentleman nod when I said that what we really need is someone with the relevant knowledge. The greatest service that the Government could offer to encourage confidence in our communities would be to ensure that within the Government there are a considerable number of independent people who have the knowledge, and are seen to have the knowledge. It is true that the Government cannot employ the number of chemists and experts employed by industry. However, anything that reduces the number of inspectors or their qualifications — which must be high to deal with some of the problems—would erode confidence, and confidence is as important as any other factor.

Does the Minister really believe that the regulations cover the small storage sites, and are the Government willing to invest enough in the Health and Safety Executive to produce sufficient people in every area of the country to know what to do when an accident occurs? There is no substitute for that skill when a disaster happens.

11.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I recognise that it was impossible for all those who wished to speak in this debate to do so, and I am sure that the hon. Members for Gower (Mr. Wardell), for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) and for Barking (Ms. Richardson) would have contributed well to the debate.

In the light of today's tragedy in Germany, when 18 members of the band of RAF Germany died in a road accident caused by a spillage of aviation fuel, we must recognise that there are constant dangers around, not only on site but on roads. The House will wish to join me in expressing heartfelt sympathy to the families and colleagues of those who died.

As a matter of public interest, I should say that we take seriously the matter of safety on roads, taking the advice of the Health and Safety Commission. For example, the transport of dangerous substances in bulk by road is controlled by the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981, which deal with such matters as the design and construction of vehicles, labelling, driver training, information to be carried and parking. Other regulations are in the pipeline, and I hope that the Health and Safety Commission will accept the recommendations of the advisory committee. It has set up a sub-committee on dangerous substances to study and report on such matters.

We are looking at a hierarchy of controls and trying to ensure that hazards and risks are reduced. I greatly welcome the comments of those hon. Members who have direct experience, including the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who spoke with expertise not only of the industry but of the Health and Safety Executive. In considering the positive benefits from present arrangements on health and safety at work, in which the regulations will play a part, I place much emphasis on the close involvement of the Factory Inspectorate and other Health and Safety Executive inspectorates in giving guidance and advice to industry. There is a great fund of expertise in the Factory

Inspectorate; and 95 per cent. of inspectors' time when visiting factories is spent giving advice, information and guidance to employers. They should be seen as people whose expertise is of immense advantage to industry in ensuring that processes are safe and without risk to health.

I do not wish to fall out with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"]—because I suspect that I shall be having debates with him for several years, I hope with me remaining on the Government side of the House, and him remaining on the other side. But whatever our position in the House, we share a concern which has been well expressed today. If I cannot answer every point in detail, I shall write to hon. Members and ensure that the information they requested is passed on.

I shall spend no more than a moment on the July versus January point and the December edition. I have written to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East about it, and I draw his attention to the *Official Journal* of the European Communities of 5 August 1982, which gives the date of 8 July 1989. That date has been around for three years, and I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept that there was no intent——

Mr. Prescott: It is just that the Department was sloppy.

Mr. Bottomley: As the Minister responsible, I accept the blame, but it may have been the fault of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

The hon. Gentleman talked about disclosure of information. The Health and Safety Commission is to issue a discussion document in March on the possible changes in the law on disclosure information, in response to a direct request from Ministers to review the law in this area. The hon. Gentleman seemed to imply that the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazardouss Regulations overtake and replace the Notification of Installations Handling Hazards Substances Regulations, which were introduced a few years ago, because there was doubt about whether the European Community would introduce its directive in time. They do not replace those regulations; they add to them.

Perhaps this could be a general answer to hon. Members who asked whether the CIMAH regulations cover small plants. The answer is that, in general, they do not. The regulations are designed to cover the most hazardous sites, where the consequences of disaster would be the worst. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) was right to say—he corrected the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East on this—that the CIMAH regulations are not a substitute for the other regulations in place, which may have been the flavour of what the hon. Gentleman said——

Mr. Prescott: They are not safety plans.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will realise that these regulations cover only the 250 most dangerous sites, and that the other 1,600 sites will be covered by the NIHHS regulations as a second tier of sites. Other sites are covered by the normal Health and Safety at Work etc. Act provisions.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): How do the Government define a dangerous site? At the Anchor Chemicals plant in Manchester, only the expertise of the fire brigade averted a disaster. Under the Minister's criteria, that is a small site.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman raises a serious matter. I shall deal later with how the regulations and their implementation will be reviewed. We must always learn from disasters, accidents and incidents, whether at Manchester or Sheffield. No one is claiming that the regulations are the end of everything. However, it is important to recognise that they have come through from the Health and Safety Commission, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury has reminded the House, is a tripartite body which has the advice—I take up a point made by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon)—of advisory groups which bring together expertise. The regulations have, as far as possible, benefited from the advice of those who are the greatest experts. We have tried to put them in a form that will be understood by those who come new to an industry and by those who are confronted by circumstances that endanger those at work and their neighbours. That is the way in which the regulations have come before the House for consideration and, I hope, for approval. The role of safety committees is laid down in health and safety at work legislation and there is no need to add to that in the regulations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) spoke with direct expertise of matters underlying the regulations. The circular issued by the Department of the Environment gave guidance to local authorities on the need to consult the Health and Safety Executive about developments near hazardous sites.

The hon. Member for Wallsend has direct experience from ICI. He asked for a sense of balance and reinforced the importance of the human factor.

Under the regulations, local authorities will be able to charge for the work that they undertake in developing off-site plans. This will be a major new responsibility for the authorities. The Health and Safety Executive will give high priority to their work in that area. Industry may be under pressure in terms of cost, but it is its responsibility to achieve safety and I am sure that it will discharge it. The role of trade unions is a valuable one, through safety representatives, and it is well known that the Government, like their predecessors, devote considerable resources to this matter.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury for reinforcing the point that the regulations are not to be taken in isolation. He advanced a vivid argument in saying that no amount of imposed regulations will surpass self-regulation. I hope that both forms of regulation will work together.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) spoke about the fire at Sheffield and experience in the area. I hope that he will forgive me if I respond to his comments by writing to him. We are determined to learn lessons from the fire. I am sure that the Home Office and the fire service will pay serious attention to the remarks of the chief fire officer.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield Hillsborough): When the inquiry takes place, is there any possibility of testing the long-term hazards of such a fire? It is obvious that some firemen have been exposed to asbestos and it is more than likely that some in the area will die from asbestosis. An inquiry into the long-term hazards needs to be undertaken.

Mr. Bottomley: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hardy: And to all south Yorkshire Members?

Mr. Bottomley: To all south Yorkshire Members, if I can. Many issues have been raised that are not covered directly by the regulations. In trying to reply to the debate I have had to omit some of the points that I wanted to make overall.

The hon. Member for Truro, with his usual robust good sense, made sure that we would not try to substitute bureaucracy for safety. The guide to the regulations and the consultation paper show that our aim is to create greater safety by getting individuals to anticipate the worst thing that may happen to them, to look for the safety approach and to try to ensure that it does not happen. Nothing is perfect——

Dr. Godman: As in Livingston.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has intervened twice on Livingston, but I do not think that it is for me to say much about the issue that concerns him, especially given the recent news about Livingston and the proposed plant.

I am pleased that the House has had the opportunity to debate these important regulations, which in my view and that of the Health and Safety Commission, as well as that of the Community, mark a major step forward in the development of a comprehensive system in Britain for the control of hazards at industrial plants. It is an important subject and recent events have concentrated our minds on the terrible hazards that exist.

We have in the regulations and in the wider system of controls of which they are a part of a powerful armoury of weapons to ensure not only that the consequences of an incident are as small as possible but that the chances of an incident occurring are minimised. For many reasons, the world, including the Third world, needs the products of the chemical industry. Without those products our quality of life and expectation of life would be much less. Without such products we would have less clean water and vastly reduced food supplies, and we would be at the mercy of the many illnesses and diseases which can be controlled by the use of pharmaceuticals. It is important to realise that there is a need for the chemical industry and that we cannot just wish away many of that industry's developments, although we can do our best to eliminate avoidable risks and, when there is a disaster, to ensure that the consequences are reduced as much as possible.

This has been a good debate. It has been illuminated by the many shared objectives. I hope that we shall be able to ensure that the chemical sites make good neighbours. The CIMAH regulations help towards meeting that objective.

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 4 (Prayers against Statutory Instruments, &c. (negative procedure)).*

The House divided: Ayes 40, Noes 140.

Division No. 98] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Boyes, Roland
Caborn, Richard
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cowans, Harry
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Flannery, Martin
Foulkes, George
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Hardy, Peter
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Nellist, David
Parry, Robert
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Gareth Wardell.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gummer, John Selwyn
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jackson, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*

Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Teachers (Scotland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I make no apology for prefacing my speech with a criticism of the Secretary of State for failing to take this opportunity to make a statement to Parliament on an issue of such gravity to Scotland.

I do not doubt the Under-Secretary's ability to put the Government's case, but it is a tradition that the Secretary of State replies to Adjournment debates on issues of major national significance. I hope that the Under-Secretary will explain the reasons for the Secretary of State's absence, so that we can judge whether he has treated the teachers, Scotland and Parliament with contempt.

The crisis in Scotland's schools is the outcome of years of frustration in the teaching profession at the Government's educational policies. Successive years of cuts in spending on Scotland's schools are now having a serious effect on the quality of education. Falling school rolls should have enabled us to improve the range of opportunities for our children. Instead, we have had the three blackest years in Scottish education.

National and local spokespersons for the Conservative party may convince some people with their propaganda that we cannot afford a decent state education system, but teachers and others know that the Government found thousands of millions of pounds for the Falklands campaign, are finding thousands of millions of pounds in their struggle against the National Union of Mineworkers, and plan to spend over £10,000 million on a new nuclear weapons system. It is a question of priorities; if the Government wanted to do so, they could find the £100 million or so that is needed for Scotland's schools.

The vast majority of our teachers are dedicated to their work. They want the best for our children. It is no use the Government harping on about pupil-teacher ratios. Even the Under-Secretary's predecessor acknowledged that making cuts in teacher numbers proportionate to falling rolls would necessitate a decline in standards. I say, "Even the hon. Gentleman's predecessor" because the hon. Member for Edinburgh, North, as he was then, now Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher), used to make speeches that attracted the headlines, "Lothian a disgrace". When one read the report, one found that Lothian was a disgrace because it was spending more per pupil than any other authority in Scotland. It had the best pupil-teacher ratio. Things have changed with a vengeance in Lothian. We are suffering a massive cut in education opportunities in our schools as a consequence of the policies of the Lothian regional council. The position throughout Scotland is severe as a result of the lack of resources, especially a lack of the additional resources that are required for the new standard grade curricula.

Teachers' salaries have now fallen well behind the standards set by the Houghton committee. Any objective comparison of the movement of teachers' earnings with average earnings in general or the average earnings of non-manual workers puts that beyond dispute. To compare teachers with other public sector groups that have suffered under the Government or to take as the base year for comparison the position immediately prior to the Clegg committee award is specious, and Ministers know it.

[Mr. Gavin Strang]

Perhaps the main reason for the teachers' anger is the deterioration in their conditions of work. Last November, the Secretary of State received the Scottish joint negotiating committee working party report on teachers' workload. Let me quote some of the important conclusions in that report. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) scoffs, but the report was agreed by both teaching union and management representatives. I should like to quote some of the conclusions which, I emphasise, the Secretary of State received last November. The first conclusion that I should like to quote is:

"a significant change in the nature and extent of teachers' work content and workload has taken place and continues to take place".

The second conclusion that I should like to quote is:

"the changes are fundamental, progressive and . . . once complete, they will result in a higher level of workload than before".

Another conclusion is:

"the effect of these changes, in circumstances of limited resources in terms of teaching staff, support staff, equipment and materials, has been to place increasing demands upon the personal contribution, personal commitment and personal time of teaching staff".

And another conclusion is:

"the cumulative effect of the changes, pressures of work and lack of recognition is undermining the morale of the teaching workforce".

In preparation for today's debate, I visited Portobello secondary, the largest secondary school in my constituency. I was very impressed by the stance taken by the teachers, but I was particularly impressed by the enormity of the additional hours of work that teachers have had to cope with to prepare the new curricula for the standard grade courses.

In view of the teachers' concern about the deterioration in their conditions of work as documented by the working party report, it was disgraceful that the Secretary of State put forward a proposal in December that the Scottish joint negotiating committee should carry out an internal pay and conditions review with a remit to reduce rather than improve conditions of service. I hope that Ministers are under no illusions about the depth of feeling among our teachers in Scotland at this time. Surely the result of the most recent ballot by the Educational Institute for Scotland, when there was an overwhelming vote in favour of boycotting documentation and procedures connected with the Scottish Certificate of Education examinations in 1985, made some impact on Ministers.

Like most hon. Members here today, I attended last week's meeting of teachers' representatives from all over Scotland. These people were not EIS activists but teachers from parts of Scotland where there is no tradition of militancy and certainly none in the teaching profession. The reality is that thousands of teachers who would hardly have contemplated this kind of action a few years ago are now doing so because they believe that the Government are influenced only by this type of action. Year in and year out their representatives have campaigned and made representations but the Government have totally failed to respond.

Teachers are concerned about their salaries and conditions of work, but they are also frustrated at the lack of resources and the conditions now prevailing in the schools. I hope that the Government realise that their present stance will not succeed. They will not be able to ride this out on the basis of what is currently on the table. It is not a matter of the leadership of the EIS or the other unions out in front leading their members into action. It is the opposite. The leaders are responding to massive and still growing pressure for action to halt the attack on Scotland's teaching profession and on standards in our schools. The anger and despair among teachers is probably more widespread now than ever before. Individuals for whom industrial action was anathema a few years ago are now convinced that it is the only way to influence the Government.

The halting of curriculum development for third-year pupils following courses for the new standard grade certificate is now seriously damaging their future prospects. I hope that the Minister will comment on that, because although there has been a great deal of publicity about the action in Ministers' constituencies the most serious aspect of the industrial action is the threat to pupils who have embarked on phase 1 of the new certificate. Most schools have run out of materials and there is no authentication of new materials. Those pupils are in a no man's land, not knowing whether they are to press ahead with the new curriculum to be assessed for examination in the fourth year or whether they are to revert to O-levels.

It is not just a matter of the damage to children's education. There is widespread anxiety among pupils and parents that the grade and qualification that they will obtain will be seriously impaired as a result of the present situation. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members seem to regard that as some kind of indictment of the teachers' case, but it is nothing of the kind. It is a reflection of the strength of feeling of professional teachers who have been driven to this action.

The Secretary of State has always known that his suggestion of an internal review with a remit to reduce teachers' conditions of service is utterly unacceptable. The teachers' request for an independent pay review has overwhelming support, and it is fair and reasonable. It is high time that the Government made a positive response.

11.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) for making it clear that he intended no personal criticism of me in his opening remarks, but I found his comments about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State both spurious and bogus. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] This Adjournment debate is being handled in entirely the normal way. I assure the House that my right hon. Friend is deeply concerned, as is the whole House, about the situation in Scottish education. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State personally met the unions and the management side before he reached a decision on the request for a review. That is why, immediately there was a request from the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee, he agreed to another meeting. That meeting took place on 28 January.

I note that the hon. Members for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) and Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who represent the Scottish Opposition on education matters, are in their places. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East has referred purely to pay. It is important to clarify the

position. Opposition Members originally signed an early-day motion on pay and conditions of service. The teacher unions have never asked for an independent review of pay and conditions of service.

Mr. Strang: It is true that the title of the debate refers to the teachers' claim for an independent pay review, but I made it obvious in my speech that I was talking about pay and conditions.

Mr. Stewart: That is an important point. I understand that that view is shared by the Opposition Front Bench. The point is crucial at this stage of the negotiations with the SJNC.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Minister is seeking to make clear the Government's position on pay and conditions. The Secretary of State has said to the teacher unions that he is prepared to discuss conditions provided that the outcome, in terms of pay, is within the Government's economic policy. In other words, the Secretary of State will make teachers' conditions worse, in exchange for a pay increase of, say, 3 per cent. That is simply not acceptable.

Mr. Stewart: No, that is not the position at all. We are not insisting on any absolute conditions, as I hope to make clear.

As always, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East made a calm speech. However, it is important to distinguish between two key issues—sympathy with the desire of teachers for better pay, and the attitude of hon. Gentlemen towards the current action by teachers.

I can, of course, understand the first concern. I am myself the son of a teacher. However, it is a distortion of reality to reserve sympathy for teachers prepared to take extreme action rather than for their victims. The action is unprecedented in a number of important respects, notably in relation to examinations and certainly in the fact that sustained action has been taken against the education of pupils who happen to live in the constituencies represented by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and by my hon. Friends who are members of the Government. On a sustained basis, such action is unprecedented in the history of the trade union movement in Britain or elsewhere.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: Not only is it immensely damaging, but it has the most serious implications, because it is action that can in theory be repeated at will by the teachers or by any other trade union.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East raised a number of general questions about expenditure on education. That is not strictly the subject of the debate. However, expenditure per pupil in Scotland, in money terms and in real terms, is higher than ever before. It is also true that pupil-teacher ratios are better than ever before.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart) *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: Let me set out the current position of the respective parties. The teachers believe they have a grievance which they want to be resolved only by an independent pay review. My right hon. Friend did not turn down that request out of hand. On the contrary, he made the reasonable and constructive suggestion that the Scottish joint negotiating committee for teaching staff in school education should itself carry out a review of pay and conditions of service together.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: This body, set up by Parliament, was established in 1982 with the statutory responsibility for precisely those areas.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I have already given way twice—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members, during an Adjournment debate, to heckle the Minister in the way that some hon. Members are doing now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It is very clear that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. It is clear that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Stewart: I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, already given way twice.

The Scottish joint negotiating committee has both teachers and employers among its members. It therefore has the necessary experience and expertise to undertake a review. There is no case for passing the responsibility for making recommendations to a body with no responsibility for implementing them.

The SJNC was established recently by Parliament, and its remit covered both pay and conditions of service, but so far it has not conducted the kind of review which is now suggested.

My right hon. Friend and I met both sides of the Committee on 28 January at their request. At that meeting we stressed that we would be prepared to consider a pay and conditions of service package on its merits. If it were sufficiently attractive, we agreed to undertake the very difficult task of re-ordering our existing spending priorities to provide additional finance. We would, of course, expect education authorities to make their contribution, too, and I do not pretend for a moment that any such re-ordering of priorities would be other than extremely difficult.

At that meeting the management side accepted the good faith of the Government's intentions and agreed that a review of the kind that we suggested represented a reasonable way forward. It appreciated, I think, that a guarantee in advance that the outcome would be funded in full was not feasible. Obviously, my right hon. Friend could not give such an undertaking before he knew what any package contained.

Subsequently, I was heartened—as I hope all hon. Members were—by the news that the teachers' side was willing to consider the proposals for a review of pay and conditions of service outlined by the management side at the last SJNC meeting on Thursday. I hope that that expression is widely shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that at the further meeting this Friday the teachers' side will come back with a constructive response from its membershipa to what the management side proposed. I am sure that it offers an acceptable way forward.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East mentioned the teachers' perception of the heavy demands made by the job, and no one has ever sought to deny these perceptions,

[Mr. Stewart]

although the report to which he referred had an absence of quantification of burdens. Nobody denies the pressures that effective and worthwhile curriculum development can bring, at least in the critical stages. Equally, I hope that nobody denies the facts of a 32½ hour working week and 12 weeks' holiday a year, which represents some acknowledgement of the strains of the job.

This brings me to the real stumbling block between the parties—conditions of service. Recently, and here I am answering specifically the point put to me by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East, certain duties which were always regarded as part and parcel of a teacher's job have come to be regarded more as optional extras than indispensable elements. The Government want to achieve much greater clarity of definition about the work of the modern teacher. For example, parents have a right to know whether attendance at parents' evenings is purely voluntary or a firm commitment.

We are not insisting on any absolute conditions. We have simply pointed out the main uncertainties, which we think should be clarified, and the points which need to be covered. I am convinced that we need to move as quickly as possible to a state of affairs where all parties know exactly what is expected of them. That must be in everybody's interest—parents, pupils and, not least, the teachers themselves. It is surely a reasonable expectation of an established negotiating body that these areas should be clarified in conjunction with any consideration of pay.

I hope that I have demonstrated to the House that the Government have responded in a genuinely constructive way. Against that background, it saddens me to see how the trade unions are exacting a savage penalty from pupils who have committed no conceivable offence.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister referred to pupils who are innocent in this dispute. My son is one of them—he is affected on three days a week at the Kyle academy. The Minister knows that I have written to the Secretary of State suggesting a possible way forward, but I have had no reply. Is it not about time that the Secretary of State looked at possible ways of conciliation in this dispute, because there are ways in which the dispute can be resolved? The Secretary of State should not be digging in as he is, and seeing the teachers unions digging in on the other side. As there are ways forward, will the Secretary of State and the Minister seriously consider them?

Mr. Stewart: We have suggested a way forward. I have read the hon. Gentleman's letter, and he will shortly receive a reply to it from my right hon. Friend.

Let us look at some of the actions which the EIS is taking, which go way beyond its response in previous disputes. The action in the constituencies of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are members of the Government is not the action of a professional body. I hope that there will be an early return to professional pride and scruples before the damage inflicted on these pupils is irretrievable. That kind of action, apart from being damaging, is completely pointless.

I was asked about the attack on the standard grade examinations for 14 to 16 year-olds—an attack which strikes at our attempts, fully supported by the education profession, to provide better and more relevant teaching which will help positively to equip youngsters of all abilities for adult life. It is particularly damaging for those pupils who are now being taught the four phase 1 standard grade subjects — English, mathematics, science and social and vocational skills. We have made it clear that those courses should continue. I have asked the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to make a careful assessment of the situation and to advise us urgently on what further measures might be taken to ensure satisfactory provision for third-year pupils who are being affected by the action.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East referred to the threatened disruption of examination procedures — for example, the withholding of the forms putting candidates forward for SCE examinations or the orders of merit which provide a ranking of candidates' expected abilities. The absence of the orders of merit is particularly unfair; without them candidates who do not perform to their true ability for compassionate, health or other reasons may not have enough evidence for an appeal against their mark. I am happy to be able to report to the House that on the latest figures there is evidence that many teachers are showing a sense of personal responsibility by not boycotting the examination procedures. I am told that by today about 80 per cent.—120,000 out of 150,000—of the forms for putting candidates forward for the exams had come to the board, and that two thirds of the marks for modern languages oral examinations had been received by the Scottish Examination Board.

The board is also discussing with the Scottish Universities Council on Entrance what account universities can take of lower performance than expected by candidates for entrance.

My message to hon. Members in all parts of the House is to think long and hard about the fundamental issues at stake in the dispute. I hope that all hon. Members will use their influence to press teachers in their own constituency to give the management side proposals within the SJNC a fair chance. I do not ask Labour Members necessarily to support the Government, but these proposals from the management side represent a reasonable way forward. I hope that we get a package to consider and that we shall get it as soon as possible. We shall consider it on its merits in the interests of everyone concerned with Scottish education.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LLOYDS BANK (MERGER) BILL *(By Order)*

NATIONAL BANK OF NEW ZEALAND LIMITED BILL *(By Order)*

Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Civil Defence

1. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has had any meetings with the Royal College of Nursing to discuss civil defence matters; and what progress was made.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): A preliminary draft of revised guidance to health authorities on civil defence planning was sent to the Royal College of Nursing last July. The college made a number of helpful comments which were discussed at a recent meeting between officials and representatives of the college.

Mr. Bowden: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. When does he intend to publish the revised civil defence plans HD 771?

Mr. Patten: We are still discussing with the Royal College of Nursing and the British Medical Association the detailed provisions of the guidance. We hope to publish it as soon as it is available.

Mr. Meadowcroft: How far will it differentiate between attempting to pretend that there is a possibility of civil defence in a nuclear disaster as opposed to the proper need for civil defence in a non-nuclear disaster?

Mr. Patten: It will be a realistic document and we are having realistic discussions with both bodies.

Mr. Stern: In view of the extremely varied capability of the Soviet bloc in terms of biological and chemical weapons, has my right hon. Friend considered the need for isolation fever units in various parts of the country in relation to civil defence matters and whether these should be expanded, or at least maintained?

Mr. Patten: The Government are firmly committed to civil preparedness in time of emergency in warfare, whether conventional or nuclear. The National Health Service must play its part in that civil preparedness and we keep the need for facilities such as those to which my hon. Friend refers constantly under review.

Limited List Prescribing

2. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received on his proposals to limit the prescription of certain drugs.

6. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further representations he has received regarding the Government's proposals to limit the list of drugs available on National Health Service prescriptions.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): I am now considering the results of the consultation, following my announcement in the House in November, together with the advice of the group of independent experts consulted by my Chief Medical Officer. I hope to make a statement on the final list shortly.

Mr. Fisher: Do not all those representations, including those by the experts, tell the Secretary of State that he is creating two National Health Services, one for those who can pay and one for those who cannot? Is he not saying to people who have confidence in the drugs that they are using and who find that those drugs suit them and work for them that he knows best and that he will prescribe different drugs for those who cannot afford to pay? Will he now take away his prescription for those people and reconsider his proposals?

Mr. Fowler: No, I will not do that. Nor have we any intention of introducing a two-tier system. I have a responsibility to provide proper and sufficient drugs, and that responsibility I shall fulfil. That is why if we find a branded drug that cannot be replaced it will remain, but I ask the House to await my statement on the subject.

Mr. Yeo: Will my right hon. Friend condemn the tactics that appear to have been used by certain sections of the medical profession in attempting to frighten some of their patients — especially elderly patients — into believing that certain essential preparations will no longer be available under the NHS?

Mr. Fowler: The tactics employed in that campaign both by the profession and at times by the association that purports to represent the industry reflect no credit on either body. My frank advice to both would be to cool it and to await the statement. They will then find that many of the fears that they have raised are groundless.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is the Secretary of State not aware that there is much genuine concern, especially among older patients, that they will be denied the drugs to which they have hitherto had access? Does he not realise that he could have avoided all this trouble if he had gone through the normal processes of adequate consultation before announcing the change?

Mr. Fowler: With great respect, we have been consulting since November——

Mr. Fisher: Nonsense. Not with the BMA.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) says "Not with the BMA". That is because the BMA has decided that it does not wish to consult. That is therefore a somewhat ridiculous statement, even from the hon. Gentleman's point of view.

I put it to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) that the Labour party has a policy of indiscriminate generic substitution.

Mr. Fisher: Rubbish.

Mr. Fowler: That was certainly the policy until a few weeks ago. If there has been another change, I am sure that the House would be pleased to hear what the policy is now. On this whole subject the Opposition have no credibility whatsoever.

Mrs. Jill Knight: Will my right hon. Friend note that many hon. Members join the Royal College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Physicians and the pharmacists in their full support for producing a limited list and putting an end to the enormous waste of drugs in the NHS? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the money saved will be spent elsewhere in the NHS?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I can give that assurance. Until now, I had always assumed that it was common ground between both sides of the House that we wanted to reduce the NHS drugs bill. Opposition Members talk about it, but they do not come forward with any proposals.

Mr. Donald Stewart: The agreement with the BMA that generic drugs should be used in place of the same drugs bearing expensive branded names is regarded as sensible. At the same time, however, will the Secretary of State adhere to the principle that doctors must be free to prescribe what they think is best for the patient?

Mr. Fowler: In my statement, I shall consider such points. The Government stand firmly by the principle and the approach that I have already set out, but, clearly, I do not want to close the door on any reasonable suggestions —and suggestions have been made, both by doctors and by hon. Members, that we will wish to consider.

Sir John Wells: Homoeopathic medicine provides, at one-tenth or one-thousandth of the cost, remedies that are for the most part wholly satisfactory to the patients. Will my right hon. Friend take that on board, and also the fact that the BMA thoroughly dislikes it?

Mr. Fowler: I have no proposals for a limited list in homoeopathic medicine. I know that my hon. Friend intends to give me a teach-in on the subject, to which I look forward with eagerness.

Mr. Madden: In the light of recent events, was it wise for the advisers on this issue to be requested to sign the Official Secrets Act? Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to publish the advice and representations that he receives? If the overwhelming message that he has received by the end of the consultation process is that this is an undesirable attempt to introduce a two-tier NHS, will he undertake to withdraw the proposals altogether?

Mr. Fowler: No. We shall act on the advice that we are given. That is the whole purpose of setting up a team of independent outside experts to advise me. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to await my statement.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, because of the confusion and anxiety that has been caused, there is a strong feeling that the limited list ought to be for consultation? Will he introduce it as a list for consultation before bringing forward a statutory instrument?

Mr. Fowler: I am aware that my hon. Friend has a close knowledge of these matters. I made an announcement to the House in November on how we were proceeding and I invited consultations and representations then. At some stage the House must reach a decision. The history of limiting the cost of drugs in the NHS during the past 10 or 20 years has been one of Governments evading action and simply using words. The Government intend to take action. I hope that that action will be reasonable and carry the support of my hon. Friend. The time has come for decisions.

Mr. Kennedy: Why does the Secretary of State not adopt the approach laid down in the Greenfield report, which would allow generic substitution with medical consent? Will he consider extending membership of the Acheson committee, which is advising him inter-departmentally, to take on board people in the medical profession who have shown a willingness to try to improve or move towards the generic system which both sides of the House want?

Mr. Fowler: I am not sure that both sides of the House want the type of indiscriminate generic substitution that the Greenfield committee suggested. The industry would regard such a proposal as damaging to its interests, as it would affect research-based jobs. The hon. Gentleman and his party must take that on board. With regard to the independent committee, the hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension. Members of the committee are not what he regards as an inter-departmental committee of civil servants but doctors, pharmacists and people from universities. They are from outside government. Their examination has finished and I do not intend to extend it.

Mr. Galley: Although much of the debate has rightly concentrated on the unscrupulous activities of a minority of doctors, does my right hon. Friend share my anxiety about the effect on pharmacists? Is he able to give us some assurances about compensation for stock losses?

Mr. Fowler: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter. Pharmacists and their stocks will be considered in the statement. I understand, however, that many pharmacists broadly support the Government's action.

Mr. Meacher: As the Secretary of State's bungling of the issue has been so ham-fisted as to turn off the British Medical Association and the Government's standing medical advisory committee, will he now at least have the grace to recognise that a limited list is acceptable only if doctors agree that it covers the full range of clinical needs——

Mr. John Patten: What is Labour's policy?

Mr. Meacher: This is our policy. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the limited list is acceptable only if it includes generic substitutes whenever possible, if it applies in the private sector as well as in the NHS, if it is not implemented over-rigidly and if it is subject to regular review by a qualified, representative and independent body that represents all of the relevant interests? Does he or does he not accept those criteria?

Mr. Fowler: No, I do not accept those criteria. First, because the Labour party's policy—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the Government's policy?"] With respect, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) asked me to comment on the policy that he has just put forward. That policy would do immense damage to the industry and

would be opposed by the research-based industry. No Government want that. Secondly, if the hon. Gentleman believes so firmly in this policy why, when in government, did his party do absolutely nothing about the drugs bill? Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman is utterly inaccurate about the advisory committee. Three of the royal colleges support our policy. The Government are acting, and all the Opposition are good for is words and hot air.

Wrightington Hospital, Lancashire (Children's Ward)

3. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make a definitive statement on the future of the children's ward at Wrightington hospital, Lancashire.

Mr. John Patten: We have not been able to agree to the region's proposal for closure. A decision will not be made until we are satisfied that any revised proposals bring clear benefits to patients.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome assurance that the children's rheumatological unit will not be broken up at Wrightington hospital. Will he give a further assurance that if the feasibility study into transferring that unit to, for example, the Royal Preston hospital is not a success, the obvious answer will be to retain a ward with a small number of beds at Wrightington hospital? Does he recognise how urgent the matter is, bearing in mind the time that it has taken to reach a decision, and the fact that people do not know what the future holds?

Mr. Patten: For the avoidance of doubt, I should not want my hon. Friend to think that I had said anything other than what I have just said, which will be recorded in *Hansard*. That is the extent of my assurances. The regional health authority, the district health authority and the Department will consider carefully all proposals for the welfare of the children who are now being cared for in that ward in that hospital.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Will my hon. Friend recall that the interest in the future of the Wrightington ward is wider than the area immediately around Wrightington and the north-west because its distinction attracts children from other parts of the country? Will he bear in mind that it is undesirable to break up the successful team there, which is producing good, positive results?

Mr. Patten: I am aware of the excellent care that that ward has given to one of my hon. Friend's constituents. I shall certainly bear in mind everything that he has to say when making the difficult decisions that need to be taken about the future welfare of the children cared for there.

Cystic-fibrosis (Manchester)

4. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of treatment for cysticfibrosis sufferers at the Royal Manchester children's hospital.

Mr. John Patten: Salford health authority is considering improving services for cystic-fibrosis sufferers and other patients at the Royal Manchester children's hospital by altering the present ward arrangements. I am aware of the hon. Member's concern. If the health authority decides to press ahead with those proposals, it will consult locally.

Mr. Carter-Jones: I express gratitude to the Minister for his reply, but will he say how wide-ranging the consultations will be? In view of the national importance of the hospital, will he give a firm assurance that the decison will be made on medical grounds, not on the basis of administrative expediency?

Mr. Patten: The decision will be taken on medical grounds and in the best interests of the patients at present being served in the hospital. Consultation will be according to the well laid down pattern for consultation, with the local community and the community health council.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that parents of children and staff in the affected ward at that hospital are worried about a possible break-up of the specialist teams and their skills, which have been built up for the treatment of cystic-fibrosis? Is he further aware that as it is a regional service — my constituents, for example, use it — the decision should not be in the hands of Salford district, but should more properly be shared equitably throughout the region?

Mr. Patten: Obviously, the regional health authority is considering the region-wide implications of proposals such as this which may be made in that hospital. We have been assured by the district health authority, which so far has made only possible proposals, that the treatment will simply be carried out in different parts of the hospital, and at the same level and largely by exactly the same staff as previously.

Mr. Sumberg: Is my hon. Friend aware that the matter causes widespread anxiety in all parts of Greater Manchester, including my constituency? Will he give an undertaking that if these proposals are implemented they will be kept under constant review, and that if they do not work, the decision can be reversed?

Mr. Patten: We would not permit any decision to alter the use of the ward, or to transfer patients from one ward to another, if we did not think that it was in the best interests of the young patients who are being helped in that ward.

Mr. Terry Lewis: The change that Salford health authority is considering is that a seven-day ward should be reduced to a five-day care ward. That is based on experience in recent months of similar changes in a surgical ward. However, the treatment of children with cystic-fibrosis is wholly different from the treatment of children in surgical wards. Many Opposition Members are desperately keen for the regional health authority to have a say in this and to make sure that any changes will be for the benefit of the children — [HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] Although the yobbos on the Conservative Benches may not like it, it has been said.

Mr. Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health has written to the regional health authority about this matter following a meeting that he had shortly before Christmas with interested local Members of Parliament.

NHS (Expenditure Plans)

5. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much, in real terms, the Government's spending plans for the National Health Service in the next three years have increased since 1979, and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Expenditure on the NHS is planned to increase on average by 1 per cent. a year in real terms during the next three years. By the end of the period expenditure on the NHS would be about 24 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79.

Mrs. Roe: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Have the Government made any real cuts in capital expenditure on the National Health Service?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that capital expenditure is about 16 per cent. higher than it was under the Labour Government. The only Government who have cut the capital programme of the NHS and delayed new hospital building were the Labour Government in 1976.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is it not dangerous to rely on national figures in the face of obvious shortages of staff and resources at local level? How much of the increase is taken up by the justifiable reduction in nurses' hours of work?

Mr. Clarke: The increase in nursing staff must reflect in part the changes in nurses' hours, but there has still been an absolute increase in the number of nurses. We also have increased demands on the budget. Nevertheless, the increased expenditure is real and is shown best by the way in which we now treat 650,000 more inpatients each year than the figure that was achieved during the last year of the Labour Government.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that his admirable pursuit of value for money in the Health Service will not lead him to put at risk the section of the population which receives blood transfusions? I understand that the output of the National Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree is inadequate fully to supply heat-treated factor VIII, which guards against the AIDS virus. Will he allow imported products to bypass the usual licensing procedures so that such supplies can be made available immediately, and so that we need not wait until April, when the Elstree laboratory will be able to supply them all?

Mr. Clarke: We are investing more than £30 million in Elstree to make Britain self-sufficient in blood products as quickly as possible. Some imported heat-treated factor VIII is already coming into the country, and Elstree is about to start manufacturing that product. We must ensure that no infected factor VIII is given to haemophiliacs, and we shall spare no expense and effort to do so.

Mr. Meacher: Is it not true that, as a percentage of gross national product, the NHS has had less spent on it this year than was spent on it five years ago? If the NHS is properly funded, why is it that this year more premature babies are being turned away from intensive care, that the death rate has increased because of a lack of renal dialysis for kidney patients, that there are growing delays for patients awaiting heart surgery, that there is lack of provision for drug addicts and for hypothermia, that geriatric wards are being closed and that there is a breakdown of the emergency bed service in London? Does that suggest an improving service?

Mr. Clarke: The proportion of gross national product spent on the Health Service has increased from 4·8 to 5·6 per cent. under this Government. It is unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman should have listed the parts of the service where we all know that more needs to be done, and that he should make such selective quotations in an attempt to denigrate the achievements of a service which remains one of the best in the world and which is being improved by the Government.

Elderly Persons (Severe Weather)

7. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that old and needy people are able to keep warm during the current severe weather conditions.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): We have both increased benefit rates in real terms for the least well-off—those on supplementary benefit—and extended entitlement to regular weekly additional help with heating costs, which now goes automatically to all supplementary pensioner householders over 65. In recent weeks we have also publicised the arrangements whereby one-off payments may be available to some supplementary beneficiaries in areas where the weather has been judged to be exceptionally severe.

Mr. Hardy: Is it not regrettable that at this time of very bitter weather Ministers are reported to be more concerned with preparations to reduce the cost of heating allowances than with meeting need? How many old people have died of cold this winter, and how many does the Minister think are currently at high risk?

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that Ministers are making a serious effort to improve the working of the supplementary benefit system as a whole, not least the effectiveness of the help that is given to all those who need our help. As to the rest of the hon. Gentleman's question, the concern that he feels about the effects of this severe weather is shared by all of us. We have been working closely with the Health Education Council and with Age Concern to make sure that all possible steps are taken to help old people.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: Does my hon. Friend recall that quite recently he described the extra heating allowance scheme as "weird"? Is not the scheme a farce? Does my hon. Friend also agree that, because of the appalling weather conditions from which we are now suffering, particularly in the south in areas like Brighton, many pensioners need heating to be on for 24 hours a day on account of the old buildings in which they live? Will he please look sympathetically at how this group can be helped when the bills start to arrive in March?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support of my view that there is something strange about this regulation and that we need to look further at it in the context of the review. As to his wider point, I must emphasise that one of our aims has been greatly to extend heating additions to include all pensioners who are in receipt of supplementary benefit. There are now far more pensioners in receipt of regular help of this kind than there were when this Government came to office.

Mr. Fatchett: Is not the reality of the matter that, despite the bad weather of this winter, old people suffer every winter from having to make the choice between heating and other provisions in terms of their budget? Is it not about time that instead of shedding crocodile tears the Government came forward with a real system? Will the Minister go to his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and say, "If the Government have money to give away in tax cuts to the rich, would it not be more sensible to make that money available to old-age pensioners so that they can look forward to other winters without this hardship and without these difficult conditions?"

Mr. Newton: Both I and my predecessors have already been to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to such effect that the amount spent on heating additions has risen from little over £100 million in 1979 to around £400 million. This represents a real increase of £140 million and has been directed at exactly the problem that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. McCrindle: Whatever the charitable reasons that may have led to the introduction of the severe weather payments, will my hon. Friend accept it from me that there are many old people who simply do not understand why they are not entitled to these payments when the weather appears to be just as severe for them as it is for their friends who live perhaps a few miles away and who are receiving these payments? Would not the best course be to scrap this well-intentioned idea and to merge any additional assistance during severe weather into heating allowances generally?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his suggestion. Obviously we shall take it into account when looking at this provision.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that the exceptionally severe weather payments that he has been making are a farce because the benefits are too paltry, the trigger points are too low and the system is far too slow to operate? Is he also aware that each week this winter during the miners' strike the Central Electricity Generating Board has been paying out £40 million on expensive oil in place of coal and that the expenditure of that sum for one week, if it had been devoted to pensioners, would have fully protected them from extra fuel costs in this bitter weather?

Mr. Newton: I really think that it is time the hon. Gentleman stopped harping on about the miners' strike in this context. The purpose of the CEGB has been to make sure that old people can have some heat when the miners have been seeking to deny it to them.

Social Security Reviews

8. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the social security reviews presently being conducted by his Department.

11. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the result of his departmental review on the supplementary benefit system.

Mr. Fowler: I expect to announce the Government's conclusions on the review and proposals for change in the course of the next few months.

Mr. Nellist: When will the Secretary of State lift his perhaps justified secrecy about these reviews and confirm to working people that he has refused to include in them proposals to abolish the £10 Christmas bonus, the £30 death grant, the £25 maternity grant, other woefully inadequate housing and supplementary benefits and the ending of the right to supplementary benefit for 234,000 16 to 17-year-olds? On Thursday 28 February, will the right hon. Gentleman meet a delegation representing upwards of 5,000 youngsters who on that day will be outside this House demonstrating against his proposal to end supplementary benefit to unemployed teenagers?

Mr. Fowler: Before the hon. Gentleman brings a delegation to see me, it would probably be a better idea if he discovered what the proposals are. As he does not know, it would seem slightly premature to have the sort of demonstration that he wants. It is obvious that the hon. Gentleman is in one of his more reasonable moods, and I must tell him that there is no point in having a review if we reject options in advance. We are looking at all options in social security, and I have no intention whatsoever of confirming or denying the kind of rumours that are around at present, however wild they may be.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Secretary of State accept that in principle I and my hon. Friends wholeheartedly agree that a review is very much needed? However, is he aware that the constitution of the reviews has been very much Government-orientated, in that they do not contain very many independent experts, and that the time scale is extremely short? Will he assure us that the consultation process will allow adequate time for people to respond and that he will publish all the evidence, or at least summaries of it, which he receives in private, as distinct from public hearings, so that we can all consider the matter properly before legislation is introduced?

Mr. Fowler: There will, of course, be a period of time for consultation between the publication of the review and the time any legislation is introduced. As to outsiders, I must point out that the supplementary benefit review which the Labour Government carried out in 1978 was done entirely by departmental officials. We did not take that view, but felt that we should include outsiders. One has only to look at the pensions review to see how many independent outsiders were involved in that. What applied to that review applies to all the other reviews as well.

Mr. Nicholls: As the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) suggested that the pensioners' Christmas bonus might be abolished, will my right hon. Friend remind the House that that bonus was abolished for two years, and on both occasions by a Labour Government?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There were two years in the 1970s when the Christmas bonus was abolished by Mrs. Barbara Castle when she was Secretary of State for Social Services. The only party which abolished the Christmas bonus was the Labour party.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider what he said about the time scale? Does he realise that on 19 March he is the supremo of two of the major spending Departments? Therefore, his reviews should be published before the Budget, otherwise we shall be discussing a very nebulous approach to expenditure for the coming year.

Mr. Fowler: I doubt whether I shall be able to satisfy the hon. Gentleman on bringing out the proposals before the Budget. A moment ago I was urged to bring them out later rather than earlier. I hope that the proposals will be produced within the rough time scale of the Budget considerations, because I think that the hon. Gentleman has a fair point about the connection between the two.

Mr. John Townend: Will my right hon. Friend reassure Conservative Members that if the reviews, when published, show areas in which savings can be made, that cash will be used to reduce public expenditure rather than to increase benefits?

Mr. Fowler: If there are savings in any area, the Government will have the alternative of putting the money into other benefits or reducing public expenditure and raising tax thresholds. I must stress that the aim of these reviews is basically to make the best use of available resources and to channel such resources to people who most need them.

Mrs. Beckett: May we yet again press the Minister to publish the reviews themselves, because only by comparing the evidence he has received with the conclusions and proposals of the Government can we properly judge what the process of review has been? What assurance can the House or the country have that, even if we believe that the Government are not attempting to destroy the welfare state through these reviews, they will not do so by the inadvertent incompetence that is the hallmark of this Administration?

Mr. Fowler: On the last point, the hon. Lady will just have to wait and judge the proposals as they come. In regard to publication, the hon. Lady, with her knowledge of the review process, will know that all the proposals to be put forward will be Government proposals. There is no question of publishing separate review reports. Clearly, different issues are contained from those in the housing benefit review, which is under independent chairmanship and which the House will want to see.

Cold Climate Allowance

9. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Social Service how many representations he has received concerning cold climate allowance for Scotland and the North of England.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): Since the beginning of last year we have received about 80 letters on the subject of a cold climate allowance, including 11 from right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister recognise that the recent decision to give additional heating allowances to areas in the south of England because of cold weather was greeted with shock and outrage in the north of England and Scotland, where the weather is traditionally colder? Will he recognise that in the same week that one area in the south-west of England recorded a temperature of 55 deg F and got a cold climate allowance, Aviemore in Scotland, with a temperature of -6 deg F, did not? Does this not mean that the criteria should be reviewed and that cold weather areas should have a permanent allowance to take account of the higher costs of heating?

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman's question shows a misunderstanding of two issues — the cold climate allowance and extra help for budgetary requirements when there are exceptional weather conditions. He should be aware that Governments of both complexions have rejected the concept of a cold climate allowance for several reasons, which he should understand. Various factors have an effect on supplementary benefit spending. Expenditure on heating is only one of those factors.

With regard to exceptional payments, the criteria have been established and are available in the Library. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said, these are under review as part of the general review of the supplementary benefit system.

Mr. McQuarrie: Surely my hon. Friend will accept that, despite what has been said in answer to previous questions, the cold climate allowance, as presently enforced, adversely affects parts of Scotland, particularly in Grampian and my region of Banff and Buchan, because of the severe weather they have to suffer. Can my hon. Friend give an undertaking that that point will be taken account of in the review, and that the needs of the north of Scotland will be carefully considered?

Mr. Whitney: I confirm that the exceptionally severe weather payments will be the subject of review. Again, my hon. Friend is confusing the concept of the cold climate allowance with budgetary help under exceptional conditions for variations of climate. In regard to the criteria, I remind the House that it is possible for payments to be made in Glasgow when average temperatures are higher than average temperatures obtaining, for example, in Birmingham and Suffolk.

Mr. James Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that people in Scotland and in the north of England are convinced that the decision to pay the allowance in the south of England was political? Was the decision taken because the people in Scotland and the north of England have consistently returned Labour Members of Parliament? Is the Minister prepared to make a statement on proper lines?

Mr. Whitney: As the hon. Gentleman should understand, that is an outrageous suggestion. I refer him to the regulations setting out these criteria, which are available in the Library if he would take the trouble to go and read them.

Health Authorities (Chairmen)

12. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what account he takes of the political affiliations of regional health authority and district health authority chairmen when they are appointed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Chairmen of health authorities are appointed for their personal qualities and not to represent particular interests. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] We often do not know the political affiliations of chairmen and potential chairmen and we do not give undue weight to those affiliations when we know them.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The reaction of the House shows the cynicism with which we greet the right hon. and learned Gentleman's comments. Is he not aware that the current edition of the *Hospital and Health Service Review* says in its editorial that we all know that political appointments are made? Would it not be an idea to link

the operation of the Health Service and the health authorites with the inquiry into local government practices that was announced yesterday?

Mr. Clarke: I said that we do not give undue weight to political affiliations when we know them, because I know that the House would not accept that we do not pay regard to them. However, that is a minor factor in making appointments and we try to pick the best people. I think that we have a much better record of objectivity than our predecessors in the Labour Government.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Blair** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleages and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Blair: Now that Clive Ponting has been acquitted, and a jury of ordinary men and women has reasserted the value of parliamentary democracy over ministerial deceit, will the Prime Minister give an assurance that this is the last time that we shall see a person in fear of his liberty for preferring to tell the truth on behalf of the people to telling lies on behalf of the Government?

The Prime Minister: Mr. Ponting was accused and duly acquitted by a court of law. That is a fundamental part of our constitution. It is not a variation from our democracy, but an example of it.

Mr. Onslow: While my right hon. Friend must be right to resist pressure for hasty reform of the Official Secrets Act on the basis of a single verdict, does she not agree that it is essential that Ministers and civil servants should be able to work together within an accepted framework of mutual confidence and trust? Will she give some consideration to setting up a special committee of experienced and responsible Privy Councillors to review the matter and report back to the House as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is absolutely vital that there should be trust and confidence between Ministers and civil servants. I note that a former Prime Minister said in 1976:

"there must be absolute confidence that papers and discussions that take place are kept within the circle to whom they are given."
—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1976; Vol. 913, c. 739.]

I, then in opposition, supported him.

I shall consider what my hon. Friend said about the Official Secrets Act, but I remind him that the Franks committee considered the Official Secrets Act, and that on the committee there were three Privy Councillors, the person who was later to be a Labour Home Secretary, and a number of other people. Later there was a White Paper upon that Act and later, in our time, there was a proposed Bill brought before the other place, which did not find favour in Parliament.

Mr. Kinnock: Confidence and trust between civil servants and Ministers is essential, but so is confidence and trust between the Government and the House of Commons, and that is what is at stake here. Yesterday, a vetted jury unanimously concluded that Mr. Clive Ponting had not broken the law by exposing the attempts of Ministers to mislead Parliament and the public deliberately. Did the Prime Minister know about the proposed deception of Parliament, and if she did, did she endorse it? If she did not know about it, will she now condemn it in the strongest possible terms? What was her involvement in the decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting?

The Prime Minister: To take the last point first, as the right hon. Gentleman knows full well, Ministers have absolutely no role in deciding whether to prosecute. That is the duty of the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions. Ministers had no role whatsoever in the prosecution.

With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's first point, may I make it quite clear that we have put a full account on record. I must make it clear that Ministers in power have always taken, and I hope will always take, the view that information that would have some security value to those who threaten our people or our territory is not released. Our first regard in considering whether to release intelligence information is the safety of Her Majesty's armed forces.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Lady says now, and she has said to me before, that she was not involved in the decision to prosecute. Frankly, I do not believe the right hon. Lady—

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is in order.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Lady's domineering style of government forbids belief that she was not involved in an issue as important as this. Mr. Ponting testified on oath that his superiors had told him that it would be the end of the matter if he resigned from the Civil Service. Since prosecuting counsel in the trial said that it was not suggested that the disclosures damaged national security, will the Prime Minister tell us what issues of national security were at stake in the Ponting affair? What reasons, other than the Government's political convenience, motivated the prosecution of Clive Ponting?

The Prime Minister: I told the right hon. Gentleman, and I must ask him explicitly to accept what I said—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—that I was not involved in the decision to prosecute a particular person. The right hon. Gentleman knows that that is correct. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to accept that point, otherwise he is making a very grave accusation. Before I answer the second part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, I ask him to accept my word.

Mr. Kinnock: We have not had in writing nor have we had on any previous occasion or now an adequate explanation for the prosecution of Clive Ponting, in view of the fact that even prosecuting counsel said that no question of national security was involved in the decision to prosecute Clive Ponting. Until we get an adequate explanation, my words stand.

The Prime Minister: No. Mr. Speaker. I have said explicitly and before the whole House, to which I am answerable that I was not involved in the decision to prosecute Clive Ponting. I ask the right hon. Gentlman to accept that explicitly.

Sir Peter Blaker: Has my right hon. Friend's attention been drawn to the fact that Mr. Ponting said in court that there was a good military case for attacking the Belgrano and that he had seen nothing to support the contention that the ship was sunk to end a Peruvian peace plan? Does that not mean that the contention that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) wished to prove when he started his line of questioning was wrong?

The Prime Minister: The Belgrano was sunk for the protection of our armed forces, our naval forces, the Hermes and the Invincible. May I make it clear to everyone that, so long as this Government are in power, the protection of our armed forces will be our prime consideration, whatever the Opposition say. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition: will he or will he not accept my assurance? May I tell him that I was on holiday when the decision was taken?

Mr. David Steel: Has the Prime Minister noted the determination of the jury to distinguish clearly between loyalty to a Government and the security of the state? Will she therefore welcome, indeed rejoice at, this reaffirmation of basic democratic values by a cross-section of the British people and will she demand higher standards from her Ministers?

The Prime Minister: I accept the decision of the court —of course I do; I always have—but I stress that two things are vital. The first is that Ministers are able fully to trust civil servants. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman agrees with that and does not in any way endorse or condone the breach of trust that occurred.

Secondly, I wholly and utterly insist that there are some things in security and intelligence which, for the safety of our forces or the safety of the state, the Government must keep secret. To put it in specific terms:

"The Government has concluded that information relating to security and intelligence matters is deserving of the highest protection whether or not it is classified. This is pre-eminently an area where the gradual accumulation of small items of information apparently trivial in themselves could eventually create a risk for the safety of an individual or constitute a serious threat to the interests of the nation as a whole."

That was the view of the last Labour Government when they were in power, set out in a White Paper brought before this House by the then Home Secretary in 1978. It is something that we endorse.

I again ask the right hon. Gentleman: will he accept the assurance I have given that I had nothing to do with the prosecution of Clive Ponting? If not, he is the smaller a man because of his refusal.

Q2. **Mr. Ward** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ward: May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the announcement by the National Union of Teachers this lunch-time that it intends to call a series of strikes? Does she not find this a strange way for teachers to carry out their duties and responsibilities to the young people of this country?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Children are in the care of teachers and it is a tragedy if teachers do anything to jeopardise the future of children in order to go on strike. But I must say that I do not believe that many teachers will go on strike. I think that they will prefer to look after their charges.

Mr. Dalyell: Who was it who altered Sir John Fieldhouse's official commander-in-chief's report without Sir John Fieldhouse's knowledge?

The Prime Minister: I understand from Admiral Fieldhouse that during the drafting of his dispatch at Northwood he queried the date in the sentence on the detection of the Belgrano but agreed that it should be left as 2 May in order to protect sensitive operational and intelligence information. The second of May was therefore the date in the dispatch that Admiral Fieldhouse submitted to the Ministry of Defence. It was not altered by officials there.

Q3. **Sir John Farr** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 12 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Farr: In view of the rising costs of Trident, will my right hon. Friend consider whether there are new ways of ensuring that a far greater domestic content is included in the contract? Given the increasing cost of purchases from America, an additional input from the British end would be very helpful to British industry.

The Prime Minister: A very considerable part of the Trident order has been placed in Britain as, indeed, all the submarine orders have been. I shall see whether we can achieve anything more, but the whole Trident programme will give us far more deterrence than any other programme on which we could spend that same amount of money.

Dr. Owen: The Prime Minister is a Member of the House and is aware of the convention that when the record of the House is printed it is accurate. When that record has been shown to be inaccurate and statements have been made to the House that have subsequently been shown to be untrue, they have been corrected. Why has the Prime Minister not come to the House today to correct the many mistaken statements that have been made by her and her Ministers, the most recent of which was on 21 February 1984, and is reported in column 695 of *Hansard*. She said that all the facts had been revealed and went on to say:

"All the facts are there. They support the Government's case."—[*Official Report*, 21 February, 1984; Vol. 54 c. 695.]

All the facts were not revealed. They do not support the Government's case. There are misleading statements on the record, and the Prime Minister owes it to the House to put the record straight.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman wrote a very long letter to me in the autumn. I answered his allegations fully in my letter to him of 8 October. He replied to that, and I answered again on 16 November. I have also answered very extensive letters from other right hon. and hon. Members, and I believe — although I speak from memory — that some of them have been reproduced in *Hansard*.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the private notice question and then points of order.

Later——

Mr. Speaker: There is a point of order, but it must relate to the subject of Question Time, social services, or Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I must seek your guidance and possibly even your protection. I am well aware, as a new Member, that I am unable to accuse any member of the Government of telling lies. Am I able to accuse any member of the Government of being unable to tell the difference?

Mr. Speaker: That is just the sort of point of order that I had hoped would not be made.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition invited you to look into the recent habit of the Prime Minister of reading lengthy statements during Question Time. I happen to have done a little research into this and it confirms what my right hon. Friend asserted last Thursday. I wonder whether you have had an opportunity to do so, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I have no responsibility for how questions are answered, or for the questions that are put to the Prime Minister or to any other hon. Member. That is entirely a matter for those concerned.

RAF Bandsmen (Accident)

3.31 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the accident that occurred yesterday in Germany to the 1st Battalion RAF Bandsmen and the subsequent death of many of the bandsmen involved.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): Yesterday afternoon on the E6 autobahn near Langenbruck in Germany a coach——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is this true or false?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a foolish question. This is a very serious matter.

Mr. Heseltine: Yesterday afternoon, on the E6 autobahn near Langenbruck in Germany, a coach carrying the band of RAF Germany collided with an oil tanker. *[Interruption.]* It is with the greatest regret that I have to inform the House that in the fire which immediately ensued, the band's Director of Music, Squadron Leader C. R. Tomsett, 17 bandsmen and the civilian driver of the coach died. *[Interruption.]* A further two bandsmen are very seriously ill and the condition of three others is giving cause for concern. All next of kin have now been informed and arrangements have been made to fly those next of kin who wish, to Ingolstadt, where the injured are in hospital.

Following this tragic accident, an investigation into its cause has been put in hand jointly by the RAF police and the German civil police. In addition, an RAF board of inquiry has been convened but will await the outcome of the police investigations before completing its own assessment of the accident. I know that the whole House will wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families of all those so tragically killed and injured in this terrible accident.

Mr. McNamara: We on this side of the House join in the sympathy expressed by the Minister to all the families of the people bereaved and of the injured, and in particular to the RAF as a service, because this band was well-known, respected and loved by people within and without the service.

May I ask the Secretary of State two questions? When does he expect the preliminary inquiry to be completed, and will it be published? Secondly, will he also publish the report of the RAF board of inquiry when it has completed its investigation? Finally, will he convey to the German civil authorities the thanks of the House and of the British people for the splendid and quick way in which they came to the aid of those who were tragically harmed in this accident?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I will certainly ensure that his views are passed on to the appropriate people.

I do not have a date by which to expect the report of the German civil police inquiry, but I am sure that it will proceed with dispatch, and I will ensure that the House is kept as fully informed as I can.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the Secretary of State please take this opportunity to convey the deepest regrets and condolences of my right hon. and hon. Friends to the families of those concerned?

Mr. Heseltine: Yes, of course I will do so.

University Hospital of Wales

3.36 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement in view of a large number of wild allegations that have been published on the subject of the defects at the University Hospital of Wales, known as the Heath hospital.

The hospital was planned in the 1950s by the board of governors of the United Cardiff Hospitals. Messrs S. W. Milburn and Partners were appointed architects and Messrs W. S. Atkins and Partners engineers in 1961. F. G. Minter and Sons Ltd. were appointed principal contractors for the main works in 1966.

The hospital was constructed between 1966 and 1972. Some faults, mainly arising from work carried out in the period 1966 to 1969, began to become apparent in December 1973 and in 1974. In the meantime, the hospital had been handed over to the Welsh Hospital Board in October 1970 and became the responsibility of the new South Glamorgan area health authority on reorganisation in 1974. The rights and liabilities of the Welsh Hospital Board passed to the Welsh Health Technical Services Organisation at the same time. The architect signed the final certificate in November 1975.

The issue of this certificate was an event of crucial significance, as it precluded claims against the contractors in contract or in tort in respect of defects patent at the time. At that stage, WHTSO took no specific steps to protect its legal position and that of the taxpayer. Counsel notes that the AHA and WHTSO had become much concerned with the state of the concrete by 1976. In February 1977, a general property survey by the South Glamorgan health authority also led to concern at the condition of the mosaic cladding. WHTSO commissioned Ove Arup and Partners to carry out a survey. While that report was awaited, the only legal action that was in hand was the defence by WHTSO of a claim by F. G. Minter Ltd. and subcontractors Drake and Scull Ltd., who were seeking to recover finance charges under the terms of their building agreements. Consideration was given to the inclusion of the mosaic defects as a counter-claim against Minters' finance charges claim, but counsel advised in July 1977 that such a counter-claim could not be sustained. Under the traditional conventions, which have been strictly observed, I have no means of knowing what consideration my predecessors gave to the problem of the Heath, but I have been informed that no other legal action was taken before 1979 to protect the interests of the taxpayer.

Ove Arup's first report was received in November 1978, and having reported defects in the concrete during the course of its mosaic study it was further commissioned to carry out remedial and survey work on the concrete. The full extent of the mosaic defects having now been clearly identified, WHTSO commissioned Bickerdike Allen Partners in January 1979 to advise, and they reported in April 1979.

That report identified for the first time a possible claim against the architects. The first reference to counsel was on 12 July 1979 when, among other matters, the question of limitations was considered. Following that meeting with counsel, Bickerdike Allen prepared a further report that was received in November 1979 and was concerned with responsibilities and liabilities. Meanwhile, counsel had been instructed in October to settle a draft writ and statement of claim against the Milburn partnership, and in the instruction to counsel the need for urgency was emphasised. Counsel settled notices of arbitration and an endorsement for the writ by telex on 17 December 1979 and the writ issued the same day.

Allegations have been made that the writ was out of time. The limitation period for a claim in contract was and is 12 years and the writ was clearly in time in that respect. The limitation period for a claim in negligence was and is six years. At the time of issue of the writ, that six-year period was regarded as running from the date when damage was discovered or was reasonably discoverable by the plaintiff, and on that basis the writ was in time for the claim in negligence also. The Pirelli decision of December 1982 moved the commencement of the six-year period back in time to the date of occurrence of damage, regardless of the date of discovery, and on that basis the claim in negligence would have failed if it had been pursued.

I turn now to the outcome of the legal action, details of which were given on 6 February in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist). I shall deal with the allegation that there has been some kind of cover-up and the suggestion that in settling the action at about £300,000 the taxpayer has been negligently left with a liability for work costing £4 million—or, as is further alleged, as much as £8 million. The total cost of remedial works is about £4 million, of which about £2·8 million is attributable to structural defects other than the mosaic cladding. The Department's accounting officer reported to the PAC as long ago as 14 November 1983 counsel's advice that legal action about that should not be pursued. He had previously been cross-examined in some detail about this matter by the PAC on 17 March 1982.

The settlement that was finally reached on the mosaics will be published in the summary accounts of health authorities to be laid before the House of Commons as a paper. It was always the position that the Department's accounting officer would provide the PAC with any further information that it requires. There has therefore been no cover-up; nor, indeed could there have been. But in view of the outrageous and serious allegations that have been made on this subject, I have made available to the House the fullest possible information.

I turn now to the relationship between the Secretary of State and WHTSO—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an important statement for those in Wales.

Mr. Edwards: I have been pressed by the Opposition to make a statement in reply to serious allegations.

The WHTSO is a special health authority established under the Health Service Acts. It is entitled in the conduct of litigation to act as a principal. It is not required to seek my approval to settlements of legal actions in which it may be engaged. It is normal for health authorities to engage in litigation and to reach settlements without reference to Ministers. But given the public and parliamentary interest in this case and the particular terms of the non-disclosure clause, I think that it would have been better had I personally been informed, particularly since one of my officials was a member of the WHTSO board. I regret that this was not done; and I am sure that, in these exceptional circumstances, I was right immediately to arrange that the fullest information should be given to Parliament.

[Mr. Edwards]

I will deal with the suggestion that the cost of putting right the defects at the University Hospital of Wales may amount to as much as £8 million. As the House was told in answer to a parliamentary question on 1 February, the total cost of the remedial work is expected to amount to as little as under £4 million. The fullest possible information has, again, been given to the PAC. I regret that the hon. Member for Pontypool, who has been responsible for most of the wilder allegations, did not at any time check the facts with my Department.

I have had to answer this afternoon for events involving a hospital conceived in the 1940s, planned in the 1950s and built largely in the 1960s, before I entered the House. I have had to report on the absence of any protective legal measures during the whole period of the last Labour Government, on the outcome of complex legal actions that were initiated very soon after we came to office and on measures to repair damage that will be a burden on the health service for several years to come. I shall accept such responsibility as is mine. I trust that others will accept theirs.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman referred to the hon. Member for Pontypool. There is no such Member, and to that extent his statement was inaccurate. He was, in fact, referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse).

Is it not a fact that the right hon. Gentleman has been forced to make this statement because of the tenacious campaign of my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen and because a *South Wales Echo* journalist, Mr. Tindle, made a prudent inquiry?

Is it not a fact that the Welsh health technical services organisation, WHTSO, struck a secret deal with the architects and engineers responsible for major defects at Wales's premier hospital, and that a settlement was reached last February? Amazingly, the terms of the settlement were to remain confidential between the parties and their legal advisers. The settlement sum was derisory. The cost of repairs is prohibitive.

Is it not a fact that a board member of the technical services organisation happens to be one of the right hon. Gentleman's right-hand men—*[Interruption.]*—and that that senior civil servant, an assistant secretary, was a signatory to the secret deal? In relation to one of the Secretary of State's most senior advisers, could it be possible that before, and since, the secret deal, at least over a period of 11 months, the matter was not mentioned once? This technical organisation is supposed to give value for money, one of the right hon. Gentleman's objectives.

May we be told when, in his crucial first six months in office—crucial from the legal point of view—the right hon. Gentleman met the technical services organisation and discussed the hospital's problems? If he did not meet his technical advisers, why did he not do so, considering that an important issue was being dealt with? It affected the capital building programme of Wales's hospital network.

Will the right hon. Gentleman publish the findings of his internal inquiry into the technical services organisation? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that his Permanent Secretary has stated that the technical services organisation is a special health authority answerable in the same terms as any other health authority?

The right hon. Gentleman told me that £4 million was the cost of remedial works. Has he omitted to include the cost—£1·8 million at 1981 prices—of restoring the flat roofs?

The right hon. Gentleman yesterday mentioned Bangor. Has he issued writs against the construction company that built the nurses' home, which has major problems? Is the IDC construction company the company that built the nurses' home? What is the scale of moneys that the right hon. Gentleman seeks as compensation?

Fundamentally, this issue spotlights the right hon. Gentleman's ministerial responsibility and his control over his Department. We think that he has failed abjectly. Why have we had to drag the information out of him? Is it not a sad spectacle to see the right hon. Gentleman saying that the technical services organisation is independent of him when it is directly responsible to him? Did not the right hon. Gentleman have seven valuable months in which to save Welsh taxpayers millions of pounds? It is pathetic of him to hide behind his ministerial predecessors—former Welsh Office Ministers who always face up to their responsibilities because they have nothing to be ashamed of. Does the right hon. Gentleman not recollect the Crichel Down case?

The right hon. Gentleman has been seen to have a feeble and faulty grip of affairs. He should go away and consider his position. The people of Wales have already lost confidence in him.

Mr. Edwards: Almost all the allegations made by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) have been proved false and were dealt with in detail in my statement. The information was not confined to the legal advisers, and there was no secret deal. Indeed, it was WHTSO that inserted into the agreement the disclosure clause that ensured that the information would be provided to Parliament through the Public Accounts Committee, as is normal practice for confidential agreements of this kind. I repeat that there was no secret deal. The information would have been provided to the Public Accounts Committee, and indeed the summary of the financial settlement will appear in the normal course of events in a House of Commons paper that will appear in the next few weeks.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) inquired about the time scale on which legal action was taken. Legal action was initiated as a matter of urgency within weeks of this Conservative Government having come into their place. The hon. Gentleman asked me whether I was involved in the discussions of that settlement. I was indeed fully informed about the early stages of this matter which led up to the decision that we could not proceed with the claim for £3 million of the £4 million at issue, on the advice of counsel. The reasons for that have already been given to the Public Accounts Committee.

I was also involved in the decisions that led up to the renovation programme for the hospital. I can confirm that the cost of the programme is £4 million, and not more, as has been alleged, including the work on the roof. I confirm that writs have been issued in respect of the Bangor hospital.

The hon. Gentleman talks about control of the Department. I have to point out that legal action was initiated within weeks of the Government coming into office and was followed through energetically. No legal action at all was taken by WHTSO to protect its position in 1975 when the hon. Gentleman was responsible for the Health Service in Wales and when his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) was Secretary of State, and no legal action was taken to protect the position of the taxpayer for the five years between 1975 and their going out of office.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): Although it is true that this catalogue and history of disaster appears to have continued for two decades and during the terms in office of several Governments, are there not some signs that the earliest opportunity for effective remedial action might have occurred during the time of the Labour Government?

Mr. Edwards: The undoubtedly crucial event was the issuing of the architect's certificate in November 1975. Counsel has made it clear in his opinion, which is in the Library, that WHTSO could have taken action at that time to protect itself and the taxpayer, and that it failed to do so. It might have had good reasons for doing so, but I cannot tell at this stage because I have no access to the papers of my predecessor. That was undoubtedly a crucial event and it is also undoubted that serious defects were known from 1977 onwards and no effective legal action was taken until we came to power, when a meeting was held with counsel. Action was initiated in July 1979 onwards.

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): As the Secretary of State regrets that I did not communicate with him when I could have had all of the information that I required, does he recall that, in May 1983, I tabled a parliamentary question asking him to give information about the surveyor's report of Ove Arup? He refused to do so because litigation was pending. As he refused to give information, how can he now complain that, until I and the *South Wales Echo* and the rest of the Welsh press prised the matter open, this secret deal was kept under wraps? Is it not clear from the right hon. Gentleman's statement that his passion, which is shared by the rest of the Government, for secrecy is now superseded by zeal for obfuscation? Having failed to put all the responsibility on civil servants, as he shamelessly did originally, he is now attempting, in the most convoluted manner, to persuade the House that some past Labour Administration was responsible, when he well knows that it was his own folly, neglect and lack of monitoring that led to millions of pounds being lost by taxpayers in Wales.

Mr. Edwards: When the hon. Gentleman tabled his first question, as he said, litigation was pending and information was not given to him for that reason. Of the £4 million, £3 million has already been accounted for fully to the Public Accounts Committee, and the accounting officer has been examined in detail on all aspects of this matter, giving details of the amounts and of legal opinions. The legal opinions have now been published. It will be clear to anyone who studies them that I was not responsible for any failure. Furthermore, it is quite clear that every proper legal step to pursue the matter was taken from the moment that the Government came to power. It is also clear that the £1 million that remained outstanding and which was involved in the settlement, would have been reported in detail to the Public Accounts Committee in the normal course of events. Indeed, the settlement provided that it should be.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there are two other statements and that we have a full day before us. I propose to call those hon. Members who were not called at Question Time yesterday when this matter was discussed.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for making a statement. The hospital is in my constituency and the matter is of great concern in Cardiff. Since the news of the settlement came out, what approaches were made to my right hon. Friend or his office by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) before he made allegations of a cover-up by my right hon. Friend? Does my right hon. Friend agree that those allegations have so obscured the pursuit of the heart of the matter that they ought to be considered in a full public inquiry by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs?

Mr. Edwards: I would welcome any investigation by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. My hon. Friend is right. No approach was made by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse). There is no doubt that, in the circumstances that have arisen, I have given fuller disclosure to the House than has probably ever been given about a commercial contract of this type. I thought that it was absolutely right to give the fullest possible information to the House. That is why I made the statement today, and why I have laid so much information in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): As the Secretary of State claims that all possible legal steps were taken as soon as the Conservative Government took office in 1979, will he please explain to the House why no writ was issued as soon as the Conservative Government took office, and why there was a delay from May to December 1979 before legal proceedings were started when his legal advisers should have known well that it was essential to issue a writ as soon as possible?

Mr. Edwards: On the basis of the law at the time, the writ was in time both at the time of its issue and now. The limitation period ran from the time when damage was discovered or was reasonably discoverable, which was the receipt of a letter on 18 December. The law as to the limitation before the Pirelli case was the decision in the Sparham Souter case, referred to in counsel's opinion on 5 March 1982. The Pirelli decision moved the start of the limitation period back in time to the date when damage occurred, regardless of when it was discovered. The writ was out of time as regards the claim of negligence after the issue of the Pirelli decision, but the writ has always been in time for the claim based on breach of contract, and it still is.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Cannot the Secretary of State see the contradiction between alleging in his own defence that WHTSO is an independent agency, and blaming my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) for his deficiencies during his period of office? Has he not admitted that he first heard of this settlement by reading the *South Wales Echo*, which

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

clearly shows gross mismanagement of his Department? Are there any other contracts to his knowledge with these non-disclosure clauses?

Mr. Edwards: No, it is not I who seeks to have this absurdly tight control over a health authority in the settlement of these matters. It is perfectly right that health authorities should negotiate the best possible terms, and I would not have sought to overrule their judgment, which was perfectly correct in the nature of the settlement. The only fault they made was in entering into a clause involving parliamentary disclosure, without consulting Ministers about the way in which that parliamentary disclosure should be made. Opposition Members are arguing that there should be the tightest possible control on WHTSO and that it should be run, as indeed it frequently was by my predecessors, in the tightest possible way. Yet although they ran it in that way, they apparently did not know about these matters or, at least, did not take steps to ensure that effective legal action was taken.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does not the failure of the Secretary of State for Wales and the Welsh Office show a basic flaw in the reorganisation of the NHS in 1974? I was a member of the Welsh Hospital Board which started an investigation into this matter, but we were abolished by the Conservative Government, and the powers for the Health Service were taken over by the Welsh Office. Does not that failure by the right hon. Gentleman's Office underline, as we have always claimed, that the reorganisation was basically undemocratic and that the Welsh Office simply cannot exercise day-to-day control over the running of the Health Service in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I think that when the hon. Lady studies the papers she will find that it was not the Welsh Office. Certainly I have no reason to think that WHTSO was necessarily responsible for a failure to recover. We have a story of a hospital first planned in the 1950s by local hospital boards, carried towards completion under the hospital board, of which the hon. Lady was a member, and taken over under the new organisation. The hospital was planned over a long period. There are lessons to be learnt about the general management of such capital programmes. Indeed, it was exactly about that subject that I made my maiden speech in 1970. The hon. Lady is quite wrong to conclude that the failure to recover and the loss that was incurred were the fault of the reorganisation of the Health Service. It was quite the contrary.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, of the exchanges in the House earlier this afternoon about the withholding of information from the House. Will the Secretary of State, in addition to referring this matter to the Public Accounts Committee, invite the Chairman of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs to carry out an in-depth investigation into this matter?

Mr. Edwards: I should find it hard to discover anything in common between this case and the other case that was referred to. The complaint in this case is that my official did not keep me informed about a matter, which I have since revealed in full to the House. I should certainly welcome any further investigation which the Welsh Affairs Select Committee chooses to make.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is it not remarkable and unbelievable for the Secretary of State, who is responsible for hospital services in Wales, to tell the House that, having been informed that negotiations about the £4 million deficit in a major hospital in Wales were in hand, he never bothered to establish their outcome in the next four and a half years? Does he recognise that it is no good coming to the House and saying that his officials should have informed him about the matter? Is it not a fact that virtually a year after the settlement he knew nothing of it until he read about it in the *South Wales Echo* last week? Does he recognise that on those considerations alone he is guilty of incredible incompetence? Is he further aware that the attempted cover-up that followed was made even more serious by the fact that a term of the settlement could, as you ruled, Mr. Speaker, have been a contempt of the House, had it been enforced? Finally, does he realise that the revelations of the past 10 days have left the clear impression in Wales of a Cabinet Minister who not only does not know what his Department is doing, but does not even try to find out?

Mr. Edwards: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong in almost every respect. I have already said that not only was I fully aware, but a full report had been given to the Public Accounts Committee of £3 million of this matter. The detailed clauses of the settlement were not disclosed to me. It was an error of judgment not to tell me of the particular disclosure clause. That was a matter about which Ministers should have been consulted. There was no attempt at a cover-up — indeed, WHTSO took specific action to ensure that provision for full disclosure to the PAC was included in the terms of the settlement. I believe that I am right in saying that it is for the PAC to decide whether it sits in camera and whether it accepts that the information given to it is confidential. Therefore, in my judgment this particular settlement could not have kept information from Parliament because the PAC could, if it had wished, have published all the information that it received.

Business of the House

4.8 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

The business for Monday 18 February will now be a debate on the sinking of the Belgrano, which will arise on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

I shall announce a new date for the Second Reading of the London Regional Transport Bill at business questions on Thursday.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I tell the right hon. Gentleman that the debate on the Adjournment of the House is a completely inadequate way to deal with the matter? The Government have decided on a subject that entirely misses the point of having the debate on Monday. The debate must be about Minister's responses to questions from right hon. and hon. Members and from the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the General Belgrano. I commend that motion to the right hon. Gentleman. We should debate it on Monday if the House is properly to address the issues. They have become matters of vital importance, especially in the wake of the trial and acquittal of Clive Ponting.

I hope that we may have the right hon. Gentleman's co-operation in ensuring that, well before the debate, a full transcript of the proceedings of the trial is deposited in the House of Commons Library, as some difficulty has been experienced in obtaining that and we shall require his assistance in doing so.

Finally, if we debate the subject that I suggest it will provide the full opportunity necessary for a detailed account to be given of the precise reasons why a prosecution of Mr. Ponting was undertaken, in the light of the fact that apparently he was at no time accused of breaching national security.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition will not be disappointed in his desire that the scope of the debate on Monday is drawn sufficiently wide to enable all the points that he has mentioned to be properly discussed. I have said that the Government wish the matter to be debated on a motion for the Adjournment of the House; he has demonstrated his anxiety on that point, and perhaps we can consider it through the usual channels. I shall see whether I can meet his point about the proceedings of the trial being made available in the Library.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Minister of State for the Armed Forces be speaking in the debate on behalf of the Government, or will he be speaking from the Back Benches? If there is to be no change in his position, will whoever is speaking on behalf of the Government be doing so because the decision to deceive the House was taken much higher up than him?

Mr. Biffen: The easy accusation about deceit of the House is something that can best be left to Monday, when I have no doubt that it will be dealt with in the most authoritative fashion.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): Hear, hear.

Mr. Biffen: As to those who will be speaking in the debate, that has been concluded through the usual channels.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House give an undertaking that the document which has been called the "crown jewels" will be made available to the House — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because it has been circulated to 12 good men and true. It may or may not be part of the transcript that may be available to the House. To have a realistic debate on this matter, there must be an all-pervading argument that the document should be available to hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but I must say in all candour that I can give no such undertaking.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): May I suggest to my right hon. Friend that an all-embracing improvement would be a debate on the new concept in British politics that the ends justify the means?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says, and I have sufficient regard for him to know that, if that is to be the thrust of his speech, he will be making it on Monday.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Does the Leader of the House recognise that the leader of the Labour party spoke for many people in the House when he criticised the decision to have the debate on a motion for the Adjournment of the House and the scope of the debate? What should be discussed is the relationship of the House, Ministers and the Government. Hon. Members might have different views about the wisdom of sinking the Belgrano. Those two issues should not be clouded in the same debate.

Mr. Biffen: I thought that I gave a reasonably responsive answer to the Leader of the Opposition, and I shall not go beyond that now.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is it not a fact that Mr. Ponting has made it clear that he agrees with the Government's action in respect of the General Belgrano? If that is so, why is the scope of Monday's debate so wide? Why is it not focused on the action or otherwise of the Government in replying to the Select Committee's questions? Is the Leader of the House aware that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is considering these matters? Would it not be better to wait until it has reported before debating the wider issue?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the House will feel that it is important to debate this matter as speedily as possible. I also believe that the House would wish to have the debate on a broadly generous interpretation of all the factors that are relevant to this incident, and I am sure that we can fulfil that objective.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have another important statement, and we must not delay too long on this one.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Will the right hon. Gentleman give the House a clear undertaking that he and the Government are responsible for the subject matter of the debate? Will he also give an undertaking that, since the Prime Minister is responsible for the security services, she will take part in the debate?

An Hon. Member: She will be on holiday.

Mr. Biffen: This is a Government motion, and with that go the consequences for the choice of topic and its title. But it is also a matter for discussion through the usual channels, and I am happy to say that that is what happened in this case.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): Will the Leader of the House discuss with you, Mr. Speaker, whether a preferable motion would be that the House should set up a Committee to draw up the rules for impeachment and a bill of impeachment, because that is the last resort of this high court of Parliament against Ministers of the Crown who have misled the House?

Mr. Biffen: I think that I have been helpful to the House in the announcement I made concerning Monday's business, and I have no doubt that the point that the hon. Gentleman wishes to argue can reasonably be made on Monday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will call one more hon. Member.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): If, in the opinion of the Director of Public Prosecutions and, presumably, of the Attorney-General, it was essential, in order that a jury of 12 men and women should have a full view of the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the General Belgrano, for it to see the document known as the "crown jewels", why is it impossible for right hon. and hon. Members to see that document before a debate on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: That point has already been made to me, and I cannot add to the answer that I gave.

Mr. Clive Ponting

4.16 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on my decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting. On 13 August 1984, certain facts were drawn to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions by the Ministry of Defence. In my absence, the Director consulted my hon. and learned Friend—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a matter for hilarity.

The Attorney-General: I wonder whether some of those who are jeering were on holiday in August last year. In my absence, the Director consulted my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General the same day. On 16 August 1984, a report by the Ministry of Defence police was sent to the Director. My hon. and learned Friend and the Director considered that report on 17 August, and both formed the view that this was a serious breach of duty and trust by a senior civil servant. They decided to consult me and I was telephoned on the same day. The facts as reported by the Director were explained to me. The nature of the documents which had been communicated was described and I was told that the Director and the Solicitor-General advised a prosecution. Having considered the facts myself, I, too, decided that the case fell within my published guidelines and that there should be a prosecution.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When did you ring Thatcher?

The Attorney-General: Neither I nor the Solicitor-General nor any of my officials sought the view of or consulted any other Minister, nor was the view of any other Minister conveyed to us before the decision was taken.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Apologise!

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called the shadow Attorney-General.

Mr. Morris: Does the Attorney-General realise that his brief deadpan statement—a 19-line calendar of events—is an insult to the House in the light of the crisis and the operation of this law, its provisions and the activities of Defence Ministers? Would it not also have been right for those Ministers to have lost not a moment in taking the House into their confidence about their personal intentions today? Does not the jury's verdict — a vetted jury, incidentally — reflect the view that Mr. Ponting's evidence either was true or could be true but that it also believed that Defence Ministers blatantly misinformed, or were prepared to misinform, the House? May I first ask — *[Interruption.]* — if the hon. Gentleman will allow me,—we still have freedom in this House—with your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) in the third row who is laughing, why in general there has been no prosecution for many years under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act when security is not involved and whether there has been a change in policy since the present Administration came into office? Secondly, may I express the hope, and indeed assume, that the Attorney-General will never again authorise a prosecution so long as section 2 continues in

existence in cases where there are no security implications? Thirdly, in agreeing to prosecute, did the Attorney-General bear in mind, first, the views expressed by the Lord Chancellor in 1979 about the need to have legislation capable of being enforced and the need to limit the extent of criminality and, as regards continuing the prosecution, the letter of Mr. Sam Silkin to *The Times* on 26 September about the difficulties of getting a true verdict in which he said:

"however careful the trial judge"—

when so many issues might be canvassed—

"and which no intelligent juror could easily dismiss from his mind and conscience"?

He warned the Attorney-General that at that late stage he might reconsider the case and allow events to take their course. Does the Attorney-General now regret not having heeded that advice?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman describes my statement as an insult to the House and says that I should have dealt with the activities of Defence Ministers. May I remind him and the House of the words that he used only yesterday when making a Standing Order No. 10 application:

"the misuse of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and whether the Attorney-General, in current circumstances, should have granted his consent to prosecute in the case of the Queen *v.* Ponting."—[*Official Report*, 11 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 38.]

That is exactly what I have responded to today. The right hon. and learned Gentleman went on to make a number of points. He referred to the false conclusion by the jury. I do not follow why that amounts to a false conclusion by the jury. The jury's verdict was given on the particular facts of the case and does not establish, as I see it, any rule of law or any precedent in law. I shall continue to apply this law as it is, looking at each case on its particular merits. The right hon. and learned Gentleman then asked me to give an undertaking that I would never again authorise a prosecution under section 2 which does not involve security. That is a remarkable proposition. I have a duty to enforce the criminal law. I have no right, nor must I seek, to usurp the function of Parliament by effectively repealing legislation.

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas (Chelmsford): By refusing to accept the solemn word of the Prime Minister, now corroborated by the Attorney-General, that she took no part in this decision to bring the prosecution, has not the Leader of the Opposition done more to undermine respect for democracy than any other action in this affair and is it not time that he apologised to the House?

The Attorney-General: I regret very much what was said and repeated by the Leader of the Opposition. After having heard what I have said, I hope that he will offer the apology that my right hon. Friend deserves.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): May I ask the Attorney-General two questions? He says in his statement that he took the view that there had been a serious breach of duty and trust by a senior civil servant. In that case, why did he not proceed under the Civil Service disciplinary procedures? And was he aware before he took his decision, of the offer that had been made to Mr. Ponting that, should he resign the service, there would be no prosecution? My second point is that the last sentence of the Attorney-General's statement is very carefully worded, stating that neither he, nor the Solicitor-General nor any of his officials were in touch with other Ministers before the decision was taken. That is quite consistent with the assurance given to us earlier by the Prime Minister. However, it does not exclude the possibility that Ministry of Defence Ministers were in touch by telephone with the Prime Minister, after he took his decision and before he acted on it, to get her approval.

The Attorney-General: I am quite unable to say what conversations, if any, took place. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] But it has no relevance. The relevant factor is the decision that I reached, which I reached alone with the Solicitor-General and with the Director of Public Prosecutions and my officials. It was reached without any contact of any kind with any other Minister.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicester, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Steel: What about the first part of my question?

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, while defendants have a right of appeal against a perverse verdict the prosecution rightly, in my view, and in the view of many of us, does not have the right of appeal against a perverse verdict?

The Attorney-General: It would be quite wrong for me to comment in any way upon the verdict. May I deal with the other question that the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Liberal party put to me? I apologise for having forgotten it. Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act is not in existence only to protect national security. Civil servants, whatever their rank, have a special degree of responsibility imposed on them by the nature of their office and of their duties and by the confidence that is therefore reposed in them. Mr. Ponting was a senior officer and his breach of responsibility and trust was accordingly greater.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Attorney-General have any criticisms of the Ponting trial judge?

The Attorney-General: The only comment I would make about the Ponting trial judge is that I agree with his definition of the law.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will my right hon. and learned Friend agree that before this House proceeds to the beatification of Mr. Ponting we should do well to reflect that if senior civil servants want to stand on principle they would do well to resign their official position, make a public disclosure of what they want to disclose and thus openly invite prosecution rather than act in a covert, underhand and disreputable manner?

The Attorney-General: I note what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Will the Attorney-General expand on his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and tell the House what is his view of the judge's ruling that the interests of the state relate solely to the interests of the Government of the day? Is that not a very dangerous trend in British justice and is it not excellent that 12 ordinary people have said that they want none of it?

The Attorney-General: I think that it is a mistake to make the assumption that 12 ordinary people want none of it. There are so many circumstances that may affect a jury, but I have said already and I say again that I accept that the learned judge was right in the direction of law that he gave.

Mr. Peter Thomas (Hendon, South): Could my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House who took the decision that the proper conduct of the prosecution in this case required the disclosure to the jury and to others who are participating in the case of the restricted document known as the "crown jewels"? Who authorised the disclosure and, as the document has been disclosed, can he give any valid reason why the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the same basis as the jury saw that document, should not in accordance with its request be shown the document?

The Attorney-General: There was no intention by the prosecution to make any use of the document called the "crown jewels". The defending solicitor asked for a copy, rightly recognising that some of it might be of a very highly confidential nature. When the edited version was looked at, it was quite clear that it would give a very misleading impression. I then sought the authority of those responsible from a security point of view, and in particular the authority of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence—because they were all defence matters—and asked whether I could use the whole document. I was then given that authority, which is why the whole of the "crown jewels", rather than a misleading part of it, was put before the jury. I cannot, of course, have responsibility for the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Attorney-General explain why on the one hand he decided to prosecute Clive Ponting for actions which did not prejudice national security while, on the other, he has not decided to prosecute Lord Lewin for revealing top secret information about the towed sonar array, which does prejudice national security?

The Attorney-General: As I said in a written answer only a few days ago, which the hon. Gentleman may not have seen, there is an investigation by the DPP into the allegations in respect of Lord Lewin.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, while I fully understand the need to protect the security of the state, the time has surely come when we should examine, review and reform the Official Secrets Act 1911? Further, will he call on the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw his scandalous accusation against the Prime Minister?

The Attorney-General: If I may seek the indulgence of the House, when I sought the authority of those responsible for the security side of the "crown jewels", I should have added that the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was also consulted. The reform of the Official Secrets Act cannot be a matter for me but must be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Many of us are concerned that the Official Secrets Act is now being used less to protect national security than to protect the faces of Ministers. We in this House are concerned with the quality of information given to us by Ministers. In view of this jury verdict, will those in this House who really believe in law and order ensure that the rights of the House are safeguarded?

The Attorney-General: I think I have dealt with that point already, but I shall repeat it again. I found it interesting that the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who shadows me, said on the radio just after one o'clock that, with regard to the leaking, he did not endorse in any way what had been done. I welcome that statement from him.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, had Mr. Ponting genuinely felt that any Minister was about to act improperly, he had a perfectly good chain of communication leading to the Prime Minister's Office itself, through which he could properly have registered his complaints and fears without resorting to the lies and deceptions with which he breached the trust placed in him? Did Mr. Ponting take those steps, and what are they?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is quite right. There is a recognised procedure, which Mr. Ponting did not follow in this case.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Did not two Ministers come here and deliberately tell untruths to the House of Commons? Is it not also true that Mr. Ponting decided that that was not good enough, and that his decision has been upheld by 12 men and women good and true? Is it not clear that if those Ministers involved had any decency whatever, and on the basis of our parliamentary traditions, they would resign from the Government forthwith? Does the Attorney-General also believe that the Government should take no notice of those Conservative Members who now want to introduce legislation that would make it impossible for decent people in future to tell the truth in the House of Commons?

The Attorney-General: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will find that a useful dummy run for the speech that he will make next week.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this case shows that, despite the scaremongering from the Opposition Benches, jury vetting has a useful part to play?

The Attorney-General: I have a feeling that that could be taken in one of two ways. It is of interest that the Crown did not challenge anyone but that Mr. Ponting, through his counsel, at a random selection, removed three potential jurors.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Now that the court has specifically found that the disclosure of certain information was not a breach of the Official Secrets Act, will the Attorney-General, in anticipation of next week's debate, confirm that he will not initiate a prosecution against anyone who similarly discloses relevant information to Members of this House?

The Attorney-General: I thought I had made it clear, but I repeat, that I shall continue to apply the law as it is, looking at each case on its own particular facts.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in the longer term the ideals of more open government are unlikely to be promoted by the surreptitious activities of a distraught civil servant?

The Attorney-General: Probably the most important and damaging consequence is the risk that it may result in a loss of confidence between Ministers and civil servants.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Attorney-General accept that, in the light of the

verdict, his decision to prosecute must be regarded as an ineffective means of dealing with what he considered to be a serious breach of trust? That being so, where he believes that a risk to public security is involved, will he undertake to seek to rely, not on section 2 of the Official Secrets Act—long ago discredited—but on the other specific provisions of the Act which deal with matters of national security?

The Attorney-General: The problem is that there are none. For example, in practically every case in which I have granted my consent since 1979, there has either been a breach of security or information has been sent by a police officer to someone else, usually for corrupt purposes. In one case information was provided by an examiner in bankruptcy to a criminal, and that person had no right to be in possession of it. The question put to me must mean that no prosecution should be launched unless there is 100 per cent. certainty of the prosecution succeeding. To put such a question shows a total misconception of the duties of the prosecuting authorities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that there is to be a debate on this matter on Monday——

Hon. Members: No, there is not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House has announced a debate. I shall allow questions to continue for another five minutes and I shall then call the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), the shadow Attorney-General.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): What worries so many of us is that the traditional trust and loyalty between Ministers and civil servants is being so gravely jeopardised. Will my right hon. and learned Friend point out to the Opposition leaders that if they were ever to regain power they would require that trust and loyalty which we expect?

The Attorney-General: I agree entirely. I was very interested in the passage that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister read out to the House during Question Time.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Did defence officials tell Mr. Ponting that if he resigned he would not be prosecuted? If so, was that offer made with the knowledge of the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General or the Secretary of State for Defence?

The Attorney-General: I had no knowledge. It was not made with approval by me, by my hon. and learned Friend or by any officials. I do not know, I cannot know what the Secretary of State for Defence said.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Ask him.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that his hon. Friends on this side of the House applaud the decision he took in the first place to prosecute Mr. Ponting and that we also warmly welcome the fact, which is as helpful to the Civil Service as to anyone else, that he will prosecute in cases where people betray their trust? Will he not agree that if the Ponting ideal of loyalty becomes the norm, it has more dangers for the Civil Service than it does even for the Government?

The Attorney-General: I think I have made my view clear that there is a real risk of a loss of confidence between Ministers and civil servants. That is a matter which no doubt will be much more fully aired in the debate on Monday.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Do we take it from the answers that have been given today by the Attorney-General that he does not accept what has basically been confirmed in the court's decision: that a civil servant's duty first and foremost is to Parliament and not to a Government bent on misleading the House? Does he not accept on reflection that his own reputation and integrity would have been much higher today if he had worked on the same principle as Mr. Ponting?

The Attorney-General: I have not, in fact, intended to take or even contemplated taking any documents out of my office and giving them to the press, to the hon. Gentleman or to anybody else.

Mr. Home Robertson: Or to Parliament.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the formal admission made by counsel for the defence at the beginning of the trial, together with the summing up of the judge, show that there was a strong prima facie case that would have led even the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) to prosecute?

The Attorney-General: I hope that the sort of approach that I would expect him to take might well have led to that result.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The Attorney-General has told us that he was not aware of the offer made to Mr. Ponting that he would not be prosecuted if he resigned. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that, if he had known of that offer, he would not have consented to the prosecution? Will he also tell the House on how many other occasions has an Attorney-General consented to the prosecution under the Official Secrets Act 1911 without reading the papers and after a brief account of the facts over the telephone?

The Attorney-General: The Secretary of State for Defence has been kind enough to tell me that he did not know either of any offer that might have been made. If such immunity was offered it would have been offered without my consent. Immunity can only be offered in cases of this sort with the consent of one of the Law Officers.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in spite of all the noise we have heard across the House today and in spite of all the excitement in the media, most ordinary people greatly applaud the decision he took? Although Mr. Ponting was acquitted by the jury, they are very distressed about the case and will welcome the debate on Monday on the General Belgrano.

The Attorney-General: I thank my hon. Friend for what he has said.

Mr. John Morris: On mature reflection, was there not an element of undue haste in the decision to prosecute in that information was drawn to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions on 13 August, including, as I understand it, the recommendation of the chief of the defence police, not to prosecute, and on 17 August, four

[Mr. John Morris]

days later, the Attorney-General agreed to prosecute? As we understand it, he was on holiday and presumably, as the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) indicated, had no papers with him. Is that not unique? Does the Attorney-General agree that there is a need for a much more restrictive Act and, in particular, to balance the public interest according to his own words, which I commend to him:

"But the public interest also requires that there is no misuse of secrecy to cover up errors or bungling or to avoid criticism." —[*Official Report*, 15 June 1978; Vol. 951, c. 1258.]

Those were the words of the Attorney-General himself in the House on 15 June 1978.

The Attorney-General: I do not think there was undue haste. It was a very lengthy telephone conversation— *[Laughter]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Attorney-General.

The Attorney-General: —on matters which were in a small compass, which were of no major difficulty and on which I already had the benefit of the very helpful and careful advice of my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and the very experienced views of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In those circumstances there was in my view no undue haste.

The fact that the decision was taken on holiday is not unique. I suspect there were many occasions on which the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), when he was Home Secretary, had to take decisions about warrants when he was out of the office. I am sure it must have happened in other cases.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), requesting a much more restrictive Act, quoted words of mine which I am not ashamed to agree with. That was tried in 1979 in a Bill in which the incoming Government reacted with great speed to the Franks report, very much unlike the complete lack of action by the Labour Government over the previous six years. That Bill did not meet with the approval of the other place. There was a great deal of criticism gummed together by Fleet street—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am not afraid to take on Fleet street. A lot of it was clearly inspired from Fleet street; there is no doubt about it. One had only to read the articles, press criticism and comment at the time. As a result of that the Bill was withdrawn. At least we tried. It is much more than that lot over there did. Since then, as the House knows, the Prime Minister has said that there is no intent to try to reform it again. That is the position as I know it today.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 9219/83 and 11039/84, draft Directive and amendment on air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide, and 11159/83, Communication from the Commission concerning environmental policy in the field of combatting air pollution be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. — [*Mr. Biffen.*]

References to Members

4.49 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not in accordance with the traditions of the House that we treat each other and speak of each other as hon. Members? When an hon. Member accuses another of dishonesty and the Member accused denies that accusation, and when that denial is supported and confirmed by another hon. Member who is in the best position to make a decision and to give us the truth, is it not right that the Member making that accusation should withdraw it totally at the time?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have listened with great care to what was said this afternoon. It is right that we do not impute dishonour to each other, but what the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition said was that he did not himself believe it. That is a different matter.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. What I said, and *Hansard* will show it tomorrow, was that my words stand unless and until I receive an adequate explanation of the decision, in the circumstances, to prosecute Mr. Ponting when no breach of national security had taken place.

Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure)

4.50 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to reform the system of investigating complaints against solicitors by establishing a General Legal Council independent of the Law Society; and for connected purposes.

The purpose of the Bill is to establish a new procedure for investigating complaints against solicitors. We do not know how many such complaints there would be if the public had confidence in the present system. According to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, it has received about 10,000 queries a year relating to the quality of solicitors' work. In its annual report, the Law Society says that it received 9,000 inquiries and complaints, although 2,000 of these came from members of the profession.

The main thrust of my Bill concerns the existing functions of the Law Society and how to replace them by a different system. The Law Society has three functions. It looks after the interests of the profession, it administers the legal aid system and it investigates the complaints by members of the public against solicitors. I contend that what I am seeking to do could not be called something that is against lawyers or the Law Society. I maintain that the Law Society has a major conflict of interest in trying to look after the interests of the profession on the one hand and investigating complaints made against members of the profession on the other. This conflict of interest has been recognised as existing by other professions who arrange their affairs differently—for example, the medical and architectural professions.

The Law Society itself is aware of this conflict of interests. In 1984, its professional purposes committee wrote:

"The Society is accused of putting the interests of the profession and of individual solicitors before the interests of the public when dealing with complaints. At worse the accusation is that the Society is 'whitewashing' members of the profession; at best there is unease on the part of the responsible critics that justice is not seen to be done because the Society is judge and jury in the profession's own cause."

In the previous year, 1983, there was a joint submission by the the Police Federation and the Law Society about the proposed police complaints and discipline system. This said:

"The public does not believe that the present system is impartial. The public does not believe that complaints against the police are fairly investigated and adjudicated. The police investigate and then judge complaints against them within the police service."

It seems to me that what the Law Society has said about complaints against the police applies equally to complaints against solicitors. Furthermore, in the code of professional conduct produced by the Law Society, there is a paragraph that talks about the conflict of interest when a solicitor may represent more than one party. I should have thought that, by analogy, all these points reflect adversely upon the Law Society's conflict of interest. That is understood.

The public may lay several types of complaint against a solicitor. They may concern his conduct, his negligence or what the Administration of Justice Bill refers to as inadequate professional services. By their very nature, these are hard to define or classify. Individual complaints may go from one of these headings to another.

The present system for investigating complaints has at its core the Law Society. I have looked with some interest at the pamphlet produced by the Law Society entitled "Complaints About Solicitors". About half of the pamphlet says what the Law Society cannot do and talks about consulting another solicitor in such circumstances. However, there are a number of detailed questions that the individual should answer for himself before deciding whether there is a basis for an approach to the professional purposes committee of the Law Society. I should have thought that, for the average person in the street, this represents a formidable hurdle, and explains why many people are reluctant to take their complaints to the Law Society in this way.

There are other features of the present system, to which I shall refer only in passing because time does not permit a more detailed analysis. There is the solicitors disciplinary tribunal, to which the public can refer complaints if they are willing to pay costs, but to which, in the normal course of events, there are only references from the Law Society. There is a negligence panel run by the Law Society to help individual complainants find solicitors when they wish to pursue actions for negligence. There are the courts to which the individual has the right of recourse in the case of negligence, and there is the lay observer, whose responsiblity is to look into the way in which the Law Society is investigating complaints where there is dissatisfaction about how this is being done.

Apart from conflict of interest, there is much dissatisfaction with the way that the Law Society handles complaints. Since I became interested in this subject some time ago, and particularly over the past week or two, I have had virtually an avalanche of complaints about the way that the Law Society handles complaints. Letters and telephone calls keep coming to me, and not one has done anything other than support my stand.

There was the famous Glanville Davies case, and I do not want to say too much about that. However, the Ely report which looked into the matter on behalf of the Law Society said:

"The whole episode is a disgrace to the Law Society. We can find few aspects of the complaints that were handled properly."

There is concern that the Law Society will not look into complaints about its solicitors presented by a third party. There is concern about the large number of refusals to investigate other types of complaints by the Law Society. Many constituents and other people have come to me with complaints about fees in immigration cases and so on, and there has been either unhappiness at what the Law Society has done or an unwillingness even to contemplate going to the Law Society.

The purpose of my Bill is to establish a new body called the general legal council. This would consist of solicitors and representatives of consumer organisations such as the National Consumer Protection Council, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Consumers Association and the Legal Action Group. To allay the concern of the profession, the Bill will make provision for a bare majority of solicitors on the council. All the members of the body will not be appointed by the Lord Chancellor. They will have a qualified staff to help them.

The functions of the general legal council will be to have an independent method of investigating complaints against solicitors, to be the sole focus of complaints. That means that one would have only one place to go to for the

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

complaint to be dealt with, even if subsequently it were decided that the solicitors' complaints tribunal might be the appropriate body to deal with a case of misconduct.

Because of the complexity of complaints, the general legal council would have a responsibility to advise and help individual complaintants as to how to proceed further with their complaints. Taking a leaf out of the Administration of Justice Bill, which is going through the other place at the moment, I believe that it is right that the new body I propose should be able to remit part of or the whole of the fees that have been collected by a solcitor if that body feels that there is substance in the complaint.

The general legal council would be able to deal with matters of negligence. The council would have an arbitration panel which would seek to resolve questions of negligence within a £2,000 limit. If arbitration did not work, or if the sum of money was clearly larger than £2,000, there would still have to be recourse to the courts.

I submit that my proposals are popular among many people who feel that they are not getting justice when they complain about their solicitors. The Bill is popular because it is supported by a wide variety of bodies — for example, the National Consumer Protection Council and the Legal Action Group. I believe that it makes sense that the solicitors' profession, for which I have enormous respect, should handle its affairs differently so that the Law Society's responsibilities are distinct from complaints against solicitors. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alfred Dubs, Ms. Jo Richardson, Ms. Clare Short, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Chris Smith and Mr. Tony Blair.

Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure)

Mr. Alfred Dubs accordingly presented a Bill to reform the system of investigating complaints against solicitors by establishing a General Legal Council independent of the Law Society; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 April and to be printed. [Bill 81.]

Orders of the Day

Transport Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: More than 34 right hon. and hon. Members have indicated their wish to take part in the debate. I propose to apply the 10-minute limit to speeches between 7 pm and 8.50 pm. I hope that those right hon. and hon. Members who speak before 7 pm, especially Privy Councillors, will bear in mind the limit that will be applied to Back Benchers.

I must tell the House that I have selected the motion in the name of the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry).

5.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

May I first say a word about the amendment in the names of some members of the Select Committee on Transport and others. I am sorry that Committee members were not able to publish their report before Second Reading today. I hope that they will be able to get the report out before the Committee stage. They have toiled long and hard. The Bill is a major part of the Government's legislative programme. It is also a large Bill. If we are to have sufficient debate in Committee on the Bill's many detailed provisions, we must set it on its course. I look forward to seeing the Committee's report, which no doubt will be of great assistance to hon. Members.

The purpose of the Bill is to halt the decline that has afflicted the bus industry for more than 20 years. Many have assumed — wrongly — that that decline was inevitable. It was not. One of the principal causes of the decline was the system of regulations and near-monopoly — the 50-year-old road service licensing rules which embodied an assumption that the best way to protect bus services was to restrict the numbers that could operate.

The Bill is about competition. We want to see operators free to provide the services that the customers want. We want to see competition providing an incentive to be efficient and to offer passengers a better quality of service. The customers may want greater efficiency, lower fares, smaller buses going into residential estates, greater comfort or a more polite and helpful driver. Competition is the key to these improvements. It is the key to increasing patronage.

The present bus regulations date from the 1930s, but the bus industry must learn to meet the challenge of the 1980s. That challenge comes from the private car. As more people enjoy the use of a car, so bus travel has declined, both relatively and absolutely. The industry's response has been to demand, and local authorities' response has been to grant, escalating levels of subsidy. Revenue support between 1972 and 1982 increased from £10 million to £520 million. Even this staggering increase has not halted the decline. It seems to be assumed that if only there was a little bit more subsidy everything would miraculously be all right. The industry was saying the same thing five or even 10 years ago. It got its way. Subsidy increased. But have services improved? Are the customers now satisfied?

By concentrating too narrowly on subsidy, the industry has neglected its market. Blanket subsidy will never solve the problems of the bus or any other industry. Industries have to adjust to their market, increase it if they can, and eventually live by it. In the short term, subsidies can help to ease the transition from a regulated to a competitive market. Subsidy is also crucially important in the provision of transport for people who do not have access to a car and who live in remote areas or need to travel at unpopular times of day or week. The Bill marks a change from subsidy to the industry—a subsidy that all too often has leaked into costs — to subsidy for those passengers who need it.

The Bill is not about reducing subsidy. It is about putting life back into the industry and making sure that the country gets the best value it can for the customer.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Bearing in mind what the right hon. Gentleman has said about the need to halt the decline, does he agree that, far from there being a decline in south Yorkshire, during the past 10 years there has been a constant expansion of the bus service with the benefit of subsidies? Does that not destroy the right hon. Gentleman's argument that subsidies do not prevent decline? In south Yorkshire those subsidies have prevented a decline. Would it not be better to extend the south Yorkshire system to the whole country?

Mr. Ridley: There has been a massive increase in the subsidy in south Yorkshire. Speaking from memory, the subsidy is about £60 million, 49 per cent. of which comes from taxpayers' funds. That is more than the nation can afford.

In looking only to subsidy—as the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and south Yorkshire have—as a solution, we have overlooked the depressing effects of 50 years of regulation on the efficiency and responsiveness of the industry. Whenever an industry is regulated, some of the freedom of the customer to buy what he wants is removed. One begins to discourage and turn away one's best customers. Passengers on profitable or potentially profitable routes pay higher fares than they ought. The industry becomes defensive. Old markets and old routes are protected at the cost of other passengers. There is plenty of life in the local bus market but it is being stifled by regulation.

Thirty-nine per cent. of households do not have the use of a car. In the 61 per cent. of households which have the use of a car, many members will seldom or never be able to use it. That is the bus's natural captive market—a substantial home base for any industry. The bus industry should be trying also to persuade people who have regular use of a car to take a bus—by providing a service which can be relied upon to turn up on time, and which takes them where they want to go at a price they are prepared to pay.

There is evidence of latent demand. We were told in 1980 that there was no demand for express services; indeed the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) predicted in 1979 that, as a result of the Government's proposals for freeing express coach services,

"In five years' time nothing will remain of the existing public transport system. There will be a substantial loss of jobs in the transport industry." — [*Official Report*, 27 November 1979; Vol. 974, c. 1218.]

It is now five years on and competitive operators have proved him wrong. There has been a 40 per cent. increase in patronage of express coaches. Fares have fallen sharply. The number of express services has increased. Quality has improved. We also have direct evidence that local bus markets do not have to decline. The National Bus Company's new high frequency minibus services in Exeter have brought an increase of 100 per cent. in patronage because they have provided what people want.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The right hon. Gentleman was talking about the use of cars. Is he aware that in parts of my constituency that are 10 miles away from the city centre, where 94 per cent. of young people are unemployed and 70 per cent. of people are receiving social security benefits, people are likely to be denied a bus service because it would not be profitable? Seventy-five per cent. of those people have no use of car whatever. Will he give an assurance that those people will be catered for under his Bill?

Mr. Ridley: It is because of areas like those to which the hon. Gentleman is referring that it is necessary to reform the bus industry so that the people can be transported to where they want to go at reasonable cost. That is the whole purpose of the Bill. I give the assurance which the hon. Gentleman requires that services will benefit, not suffer, from what we are proposing.

The potential for expansion exists in both urban and rural areas. In rural areas the growth of car ownership and the decline in bus transport have had a very damaging effect on mobility for those who have to rely on it. This Bill will improve the services in those areas in three ways.

First, the tendering system will enable much better value to be got for the money councils spend on rural services. Not only will operators be able to offer vehicles of a size suitable to the demand, but the effects of competition will reduce the costs of running uneconomic routes, making many more of them viable.

Secondly, there is to be a transitional grant—£20 million in the first year, reducing by even steps over four years—which will be paid direct to operators through the fuel duty rebate mechanism until the full benefits of competition have worked their way through.

Thirdly, there is to be a rural services grant, administered in England by the Development Commission and in Scotland and Wales by my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Would my right hon. Friend like to comment on the suggestion by some district and county authorities in rural areas that this Bill may be a threat to them because of the threat of phasing out the cross-subsidy from commercially viable routes?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend could not have intervened at a better moment, because that is exactly what I want to do. I will give him some examples of what has happened in rural areas when a competitive element has been allowed in.

First we have the three trial areas. Before I comment on those I would like to remind the House of some of the predictions about them made by Opposition Members during the passage of the 1980 Transport Act.

We were told that if any authority was rash enough to take advantage of the trial area provisions

"The result would be that bus operators would charge skyhigh fares on profitable routes and provide no services on other routes where there may be more need." — [*Official Report*, 27 November 1979; Vol. 974, c. 1215.]

[Mr. Ridley]

That was the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

What has happened? In the Hereford and Worcester trial areas fares have fallen sharply on many routes, and the subsidy requirement has been dramatically reduced by 38 per cent. But, most important of all, the level of services provided has increased by 70 per cent. in Hereford town. It has also increased marginally in the rural areas, where services have been declining fast elsewhere. The passengers, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State can testify from personal experience, think they have never had it so good.

Through tendering for services, Norfolk county council obtained a reduction from £500,000 to £150,000 in the cost of subsidising an identical group of services, and Surrey council is about to save £200,000 through obtaining tenders for a group of services around Guildford. The House must assume that, if savings of that order are available in Herefordshire, Norfolk and Guildford, they are available elsewhere. With savings like this from greater efficiency local authorities can provide better rural services for the same money, or provide the same services for less money. This gives county councils an opportunity to improve rural services at less cost. That is the answer to my hon. Friend, and he will find that county councils have an opportunity both to provide more services and to save money.

There are lessons here, as well, for all areas of the country. The effect of competition will be to reduce costs dramatically. It will bring into profitability services which were previously considered unprofitable. Fares on main routes will be reduced. Operators will look for and exploit new markets and offer new products. All experience is that the person who benefits from competition is the customer. That is the truth that all the propagandists, all the lobbies fearful of having their monopolies threatened by competition, have tried to hide.

If the market is to develop we must remove the obstacles that confront the innovator. So clause 1 of the Bill sets out to reverse the decline of the bus industry by the abolition of road service licensing. If the Opposition parrot cries were true that the aim of this Bill was to achieve a free-for-all for cowboys creaming off the profits with clapped-out buses—a charge to which I note the private sector has taken great exception—there would be no more than clause 1. There are in fact 113 further clauses. These seek to achieve a flexible and competitively structured industry within a framework of stringent controls to ensure reliability and safety and of local authority powers to meet the needs of those not served by the market, and of elderly and disabled people.

The existing requirements for operator licensing will continue, and clauses 21 to 28 contain a number of new provisions to modify and tighten up those requirements. Let there be no doubt about the Government's commitment to maintain operator standards and to provide the means to take firm action against operators who abuse the freedom which this Bill gives.

The provisions are linked to the system of registration which is set down in clause 5. An operator wishing to run a local service must register the route, stopping places and other details with the traffic commissioner. He must give notice of his intention to start or discontinue a service, and he must run the service in accordance with the registration.

Under clause 23 an operator who runs unreliable services or does not register them may have his public service vehicle operator's licence restricted. That can also happen if he interferes with another operator or behaves dangerously or recklessly, or if his maintenance is inadequate.

Under clause 91 an operator stands to lose 20 per cent. of the fuel duty rebate due to him for all local services run by him during the previous three months if he fails to register or runs a registered service unreliably. These are serious sanctions. We are committed to making the registration system work to ensure reliability.

Clauses 6 to 8 give the traffic commissioner powers to impose traffic regulation conditions where there are problems of severe traffic congestion or danger to the public. These powers are new; they have never been suggested before. They can be used to stop operators using unsuitable streets, to limit the use of bus stops or to prevent congestion caused by bunching by allotting the use of stops at different times to different operators.

With the ending of road service licensing there is no longer a need for a body of three traffic commissioners. Instead, clause 3 provides for a single commissioner, the existing Chairman of Traffic Commissioners, to be the authority for operator licensing for both passenger and goods vehicle operators and the new registration authority. I think that the whole House would like to thank all those who have served as traffic commissioners for the excellent service that they have given over many years.

In London, for the time being, road service licensing will continue and part II of the Bill essentially re-enacts existing legislation. Clause 44 enables me to bring deregulation to London also. But first we must see through the major changes that were introduced in London less than a year ago. Indeed, London Regional Transport management has to tackle a legacy of appalling inefficiency.

We also want flexibility between different types of vehicle. Clauses 9 to 14 bring taxis and hire cars into the mainstream of public transport, and restrict a local authority's power to limit the issue of taxi licences as already happens in Scotland.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I should be most grateful if my right hon. Friend could spare a second to cover a point that involves chapter 6 of the White Paper. In paragraph 6.5 there is talk of a gradual increase in the number of cabs. It states:

"The Government will propose provisions to relax progressively the restrictions on the number of taxis which operate in some areas."

I have not been able to find the relevant provision in the Bill. Is it covered by clause 14?

Mr. Ridley: Clause 14(2) contains the relevant amending provision which produces the pressure slowly to reduce the restrictions on taxi licensing.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): Why does the Bill discriminate against 30,000 private hire car drivers in London, who are not allowed to take part in the sharing scheme despite the fact that there is probably the greatest demand for it in London?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend has discussed that matter with me. I think that the Committee will want to debate that point. It is a question of whether we should have supervision and licensing of hire cars, with all the

bureaucracy and expense that goes with that, or whether the present arrangements, which most people find satisfactory, should continue. However, I am happy for the Committee to consider that issue to see where the balance of advantage lies.

There are three ways in which taxis can operate in future. First, passengers may still hire a taxi for their own exclusive use. Secondly, clauses 9 and 10 make it possible for people who wish to share a taxi or hire car to pay separate fares. Thirdly, clause 11 allows licensed taxis to be used to provide regular local services.

In order to be sure that competition is fair, the Bill contains proposals for the restructuring of the bus industry. To abolish road service licensing without tackling the issue of competition on fair terms would be reckless. Freed from the constraints which road licensing imposes, companies could use their market strength, bolstered by public subsidy, to stifle their competitors. That is, indeed, what they are trying to do in Hereford.

I turn first to the National Bus Company. It is required to submit to me plans for the disposal of its operations to the private sector and to implement those agreed plans within three years. The main objective of the company will be to promote sustained and fair competition not only at the disposal stage but also in the behaviour of local subsidiaries competing in the deregulated market.

We want local managers of the National Bus Company and their employees to own as much and as many of these companies as possible and the Bill makes special provision for that.

Secondly, the passenger transport executives and some 50 district and regional councils at present have their own bus undertakings. By the time deregulation takes place they will be required to form Companies Act companies to which they will transfer the bus undertakings. These new companies will be at arm's length from local authorities, and will have to compete on fair terms with other operators. After deregulation it will not be possible to subsidise the companies directly except with my consent. The separation of the bus undertakings from the PTEs is the first step in reorganising the metropolitan bus undertakings into several separate competing companies. Clause 58 provides the necessary powers to require break-up after the transitional period.

I should like at this point to refer to a provision which is not in the Bill, but which is an integral part of our policy for competition. I refer to the removal of the present exemption of bus service operators from the provisions of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act. To continue that exemption would be incompatible with competition. It can be removed by an order made under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act.

One matter of concern during the consultation has been the role of local authorities. In a free competitive market it no longer makes sense for local authorities to have a duty to co-ordinate public transport. Instead clause 55 places a duty on them to secure powers to subsidise passenger services which are not provided by the market. These are powers to promote the use of transport services generally, provided that they do not inhibit competition. Local authorities will be able to discuss the transport needs of their areas with the operators, to provide timetables and to advise the traffic commissioners about traffic problems. Their role is if anything increased.

Local authorities are required to seek competitive tenders for subsidised services under clauses 80 to 84. Open tendering will ensure that all bus operators will have equal access to subsidy; that local ratepayers know what bus services are being bought at what cost to them; and that local authorities will be able to get the best value for money in their use of subsidy.

Clause 80 places a duty on local authorities to consider their expenditure on public and school transport services as a whole in order to get best value for money. These functions must not go on in isolation from each other. This is an important way to get more effective use of public money.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread concern that has been generated by the campaigns run by Opposition parties in my constituency and many other constituencies to frighten old and disabled people into believing that the Bill will abolish bus passes? Will he condemn such scaremongering, and take this opportunity to reaffirm that under the Bill bus passes can continue? Will he give us any details of how they will operate under the new system?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. The Bill gives the lie to the scare stories that my hon. Friend has heard to the effect that the powers of local authorities to provide concessionary fare schemes for elderly, blind and disabled people will go. That is simply not true. But we seek to make them more widely available and to allow any operator who wishes to do so to participate. That represents an extension. Nor does the Bill force local authorities to use tokens rather than bus passes. Some local authorities already operate bus pass schemes with a number of operators. Therefore, I am sure that my hon. Friend will tell those who have been spreading scare stories—and some local authorities have spent a lot of ratepayers' money on propagating scare stories—that they have been wasting the ratpayers' money in throwing it around on something that is not true.

The Bill also clarifies local authorities' powers to provide concessionary fares——

Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier (Sunderland, South): The right hon. Gentleman has been paying a lot of lip service to the experiment in Herefordshire, but is he aware that Hereford council has stated categorically that the experiment has led to

"reduced benefit to recipients of Concessionary Travel Schemes as a result of the unstable fares and the necessary adoption of a token system".

Does that not give the lie to the right hon. Gentleman's statement?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has kindly given me another point. The cheaper the fares are, the less concessionary fare passes will cost. If, as in Hereford, there are free buses running, concessionary fares will cost nothing. Through competition, the Bill's provisions will lead to a reduction in fares on many routes, and the local authorities will be able to make savings by not having to pay so much for concessionary fare passes.

The transitional provisions in schedule 5 are important. They are a result of the consultation exercise. Our aim is to achieve as smooth a transition as possible allowing competition to emerge gradually without giving an unfair competitive advantage to any one class of operator and without disrupting services on which passengers rely. Road service licensing is to be replaced by the registration system on 1 October 1986. By then local authorities will

[Mr. Ridley]

be required to have completed the move from network to tendered subsidy and to have transferred their bus undertakings to companies, and the National Bus Company to have reorganised its operations to ensure fair competition.

Road service licensing criteria will be modified in this period to allow greater competition. The traffic commissioners will be required to accept an application unless the new service would disrupt arrangements being made by local authorities to effect a smooth transition, unless the applicant would be able to compete unfairly because he was still receiving blanket subsidies or unless the new service would create severe traffic problems.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): On the question of transition, will the Secretary of State look at his diary? Does he realise that 1 October 1986 is mid-week? In fact, it falls on a Wednesday so that one system will be in operation on a Tuesday and a different one on the next day. Contracts must be drawn up with operators, often on a weekly basis. Did he consider that when he chose 1 October?

Mr. Ridley: I shall look at my diary if the right hon. Gentleman will read the Bill. He will observe that there is clearly set out in the Bill a transitional period in which all these things will happen so that they are complete by 1 October. The situation will not change dramatically overnight because everything will have been put into place.

The Bill also contains the provisions on bus substitution services that the Select Committee suggested in 1983. The railways board may put forward proposals for bus substitution in situations where existing rail services are making significant operating losses and where buses can provide travellers with a reasonable alternative service at substantially lower cost of operation.

It will be for the railways board to put forward proposals for bus substitution in particular places, and I would take account of those bus substitution proposals in deciding whether to give my consent to any proposal from the board to withdraw rail passenger services from a particular line. This is an area where the Select Committee can see its work reflected in our proposals.

My proposals for the bus industry have been called radical. They are; nothing less would do. It is strange that these days the word radical frightens the Opposition parties to death. The Labour party's radicalism is to throw more public money at any problem that it observes. Liberal radicalism has become agreement with everyone who has a complaint in the hope of picking up the odd vote. But bus services are too important to too many people. We cannot shirk reform. We cannot sit idly by and watch the bus industry sink further into decline, leaving more people isolated. There is far more to this Bill than deregulation, far more than privatisation. It is a full-scale rescue plan for the bus industry. It sets local authorities free to concentrate on help for people who need it. It sets operators free to compete and find markets in order better to serve their customers. In short, the Bill puts the passengers first. I commend it to the House.

5.33 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is important to establish what the Bill is and what it is not. First, it is not a Bill about improving public transport. The one thing that is absolutely certain is that the Secretary of State has pushed ahead with the legislation irrespective of the fact that he has no proper evidence to prove that it is necessary, that a Select Committee of the House has been taking detailed evidence which would have enabled him to come to some sensible conclusions and that, even after the rapid run round the country which passed for consultation on the part of his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, there is still nobody of any status or with any real knowledge of the transport industry who imagines that the legislation will improve the bus services.

The Bill is about the two pet obsessions of the Secretary of State. One is privatisation and the other is deregulation. It is therefore important that we should examine closely what is being introduced to the House in such a hurried and incompetent manner.

The Bill will not provide a better service for children on their way to school. It will not improve facilities for old-age pensioners who need concessionary fares. It will not provide a more efficient service for women who rely on public transport to do their shopping and to get to the doctor and to other essential services.

The Bill is about the Secretary of State's wish to save money on subsidies. He has made that plain from the beginning of the debate. His attitude towards public service is that it should be provided free of charge preferably and with no protection for the people working in the industry or for those who wish to benefit from the services. He made that clear in the explanatory statement. He says that of course 50,000 jobs will have to go, but that other jobs will be provided in the public service.

The change that the Secretary of State is proposing will lead to total anarchy. No such measure is applied anywhere in the world except in Kenya, which has now decided that it needs a form of regulation, and in Hong Kong, which has one or two minor differences from the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland. Such a measure when applied in other places has been found over a period to lead to total anarchy and chaos.

The attitude of the Secretary of State is that people should be prepared to go and buy cars and, if they cannot do that, they must travel by taxi. That argument has threaded through consideration of the Bill.

The National Federation of Women's Institutes, an organisation not normally connected with revolutionary ideas, was so worried by the implications of the Bill that it carried out a survey of 4,000 members. It found that 50 per cent. of women in the Oxford group had no day-time car, 40 per cent. of women in the area had no car licence, 30 per cent. needed the bus once a week or more and, of 237 towns and villages covered in the survey, only 33 had an evening service. Therefore, the majority of women, for shopping and medical attention, needed the advantages of a bus. The NFWI said that the effect of the legislation would be for women in rural areas to be left totally isolated, and that its anxiety had turned to despair. It said that only those with two cars per family in the country would be able to have decent lives.

The effect of the legislation will be that not only those who live in villages will suffer. Those who live in large cities where shopping centres and hospitals are concentrated on the periphery will also suffer.

Mr. Colin Shepherd *rose*——

Mrs. Dunwoody: I will give way to any female member of the Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "Sexism."]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): It is clear that the hon. Lady is not giving way.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: I am most grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. This is an important matter to the women of the country. When the hon. Lady wrote to the National Federation of Women's Institutes, did it tell her that the Herefordshire federation did not share the view of the national federation? It is the north Herefordshire women who have been living and working in the trial area during the past three years.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I shall come to the Hereford experiment later and go into it in very great detail. I shall then comment on the hon. Gentleman's point.

The reality is that nationally 30 per cent. of women have car licences, compared with 68 per cent. of men. In the west Midlands, women account for 60 per cent. of the passengers of the bus companies. Among old-age pensioners, 14 women use buses for every six men. It is important, therefore, that we are aware who will be especially concerned with and damaged by the proposals.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The House would find it tremendously helpful if the hon. Lady could explain why the Bill, which is removing regulations that are controlling the system and not allowing it to liberate, will discriminate against women. In fact, it will help women by providing many more services, especially in rural areas where it will bring women into the towns. That is a good thing, not a bad thing.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As a large number of hon. Members on both sides of the House will seek to catch my eye during the debate, I must tell the House that in deciding whom to call, I shall take into account the interventions made and the extent to which they have pre-empted other hon. Members.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It is very important to understand that the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) comes from an area with large spreads of villages and very few buses. He will soon find that in the South Hams area those who need buses will have their interests badly damaged by the Bill. The reason lies precisely in the effect of deregulation, which we have just been told is the most important aspect of the Bill.

The reality is that the entire legislation has been brought forward on the basis of what we were told were a number of experiments. The Hereford experiment has been mentioned time and again. We were told that deregulation and the conversion of municipal and NBC operations into private companies would wholly transform any provision and that in identifying unprofitable routes and the tendering for private contracts, the bus industry would be liberated and better services would be provided for everyone.

The reality in Hertfordshire, and especially in Herefordshire, was the opposite. In Hereford, the rural areas were, without exception, worse off at the end of the experiment than at the beginning. It is true that in the centre of the town there were initially a number of additional buses. However, they did not come in a properly timetabled manner nor in a way that provided better facilities. Some of the fares went down initially, with some operators actually running free services.

One does not need to be too brilliant an economist to work out that no company can continue to run free services for any length of time if it is, first, to replace its existing stock and, secondly, to provide decent conditions for those who work for it. Yet we are told by the Secretary of State that that is not a problem because in future those who want to run buses will have total freedom to do so. The right hon. Gentleman has actually suggested that those who are out of work can rush out and buy a bus and operate it in the areas where they are unemployed. Far from creating new jobs, this legislation will do one simple thing—it will make it extremely difficult to maintain any safety standards for the passengers. I would have thought that even Conservative Members would be concerned about that.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Tell us about London Transport.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I shall be happy to discuss London Transport in a minute. If the Secretary of State really believed that the Bill was the answer to providing a new transport system, surely he would have been before the House today saying that it should be brought in for London as soon as possible. The actual contradiction to his present argument lies in the fact that he has an opportunity to introduce the scheme in London, but he has no intention of doing so.

Any public industry must have a safety responsibility to its passengers. In Hereford, some of the private operators were found to have many dangerous faults in their buses—47 in one instance, and the operator lost his licence. One man was maintaining his buses in a layby —which is the ideal way to ensure a high standard of public service vehicles. Other operators were found to have a number of major faults in their buses. But we are told by the Secretary of State that we do not have to bother with all that, because he will monitor the effects carefully to ensure that all public service vehicles maintain a very high standard of safety.

All sides agree that, at least initially, we may have a larger number of smaller bus operators providing services —even if those services, almost inevitably, cover a smaller number of routes. There is no doubt that one effect [illegible]ough smaller bus companies will be additional pr[illegible] in maintaining the standard of the vehicles. Even if we ignore the business methods of the sort of people who will try to cream off any profitable routes, and look at everybody across the board, additional problems will be created simply because of the size and viability of the companies.

The Leeds institute for transport studies, in the most thorough survey of deregulation to date, quotes a survey of 478 bus operators in Yorkshire. It found that small companies with one or two buses were eight times more likely to have defects than the major companies with 50 or more buses. That also applied to the number of defect notices per million vehicle kilometres—the figure was absolutely minimal at the top end of the scale compared with operators with one or two vehicles. One reason is that a small company cannot afford its own maintenance yards and equipment. No matter how honest the new operators, safety standards inevitably decline.

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

The evidence from the Government's trial areas is very instructive. Four new operators emerged in the Hereford trial area. The Devon and Norfolk areas were not considered to have shown the effects of deregulation. Of the four in Hereford, one company had its licence reduced and was then banned in February 1983. The operator had broken 47 safety codes, 27 of them immediate — meaning that they needed immediate attention. The traffic commissioner, in banning the operator, said:

"to allow you to continue to hold a PSV operator's licence for any longer than is absolutely necessary could result in death or injury to the public."

In March 1984, another operator had his licence reduced following more complaints.

From the evidence that exists, it is clear that more companies with more safety problems and more operators with even less interest in safety will enormously increase the strain on the traffic commissioners. Without additional resources — and although the Secretary of State has spoken about the need to maintain a proper service, he has given no sign that he will provide the proper resources —the traffic commissioners will inevitably have to shift from preventing the operation of unsuitable companies to picking up the pieces and banning the companies after they have proven to be inadequate for the task in hand.

The work of the traffic commissioners for road haulage and passenger vehicles will be merged under one person. An assurance is needed that the work per employee will not be increased. There are signs that the merger may lead to overall reductions in staff available and consequently to even less monitoring of the safety provisions.

The White Paper promised new safeguards to ensure that safety standards were maintained. The control, to which the Secretary of State referred this afternoon with great approval, means that the traffic commissioner is able to prevent dangerous traffic conditions or severe traffic congestion. Those are the circumstances in which he can operate.

However, clause 7 says that an operator cannot be assumed to operate the proper service

"solely by reason of his complying with any traffic regulation conditions."

It is clear that part-time drivers working on the buses as a second job could become the norm. Otherwise, why is it so essential we should introduce those changes? All the threats to safety that that implies have been glossed over both this afternoon and in the talks that the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State have had with all the people concerned.

Clause 81 says that tenders

"may not include conditions with respect to the terms of employment".

In other words, we shall have no way of knowing what hours the people operating the buses will be working and how tired they will be. After 50 years of proper controls, the chance of bad crashes caused by over-tired drivers will be introduced as a law.

Inevitably, the Bill will affect those that we are told will be protected. The Secretary of State says that in future local authorities can, if they wish, hand out bus passes. Let us consider the whole business of concessionary fares. The Government say that they have not been banned, but they never refer to the fact that many authorities will not only be rate-capped but will be constantly told that they are in danger of going into penalty. The spread of operators alone will make travel cards, which are a great asset to many old age pensioners, extremely difficult to use. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]

Hon. Members do not seem to understand that, if there are many different operators on the same routes, there will, almost inevitably, be constant arguments over who is eligible to use travel cards. Inevitably, local authorities will move towards a system of tokens. One effect of that, which nobody ever wants to discuss, is that free travel comes to an end when all the tokens have been used up. At the moment, many elderly passengers go backwards and forwards using travel cards to do their shopping, to go out for entertainment, to receive medical attention and to go away at the weekends. That will not be possible under a system of tokens, which will be a much lower standard of provision. The scheme is completely indiscriminate since every operator must be given access to it. The only control that the authorities will have is if the charges are unusually high. A difficult service or an unhelpful company cannot be banned under the existing legislation.

The Government will claim that they have extended the scheme to children, but it emerges from schedule 7 that, although they have maintained the Scottish right to aid the mentally handicapped, there is no similar provision for those elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The Government have already decided that next year they will cut concessionary fare grants by £48 million— more than 20 per cent. With the rate capping of the metropolitan county PTAs, the concessions will be of astonishingly little use.

It is not only the elderly and those in receipt of concessionary fares who will suffer. Those who live in the country will be particularly affected. Services will be disrupted. The National Bus Company is the main service in the counties and the cross-subsidy is worth at least £122 million. The institute of transport studies in Leeds estimates that it could be as high as £305 million. That will be lost because the Secretary of State has made it clear that he does not believe in cross-subsidy. He does not accept the fact that the only way that many bus companies make their operation viable is to cross-subsidise between peak hours and busy routes and difficult hours and rural routes or non-viable routes in the suburbs. That is such a basic way of balancing the bus books that I should have thought even the Secretary of State would have been careful before he wiped that out.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady should be a little careful, because cross-subsidy involves much higher fares on the prosperous routes than are necessary even to break even. The Bishop of Durham has already said that it is immoral to make a profit on a bus route, so to cross-subsidise on a bus route must be super-immoral.

Mrs. Dunwoody: If people living in country villages have a choice between a higher fare and no bus, they will be perfectly clear in their own minds which they prefer.

Let us be quite plain what we are talking about. The Secretary of State tells us not to worry about the transitional period, because he is aware of the difficulties and will provide £20 million. Of course, he will reduce that by £5 million over four years until it disappears, but he says that that is nevertheless bound to be enough to deal with all the difficulties. He also says that perhaps we should have £1 million for experiments with minibuses because they may be the answer. In Cheshire, the authority

bought a minibus and handed it over to Crosville. Less than 11 months later, that vehicle is clapped out, needs replacing and is unable to perform the function required of it.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): I am rather worried if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is more extreme than the Bishop of Durham, but let me leave that on one side. The hon. Lady is looking all the time at the cross-subsidy from the point of view of a person receiving it, not at the £140 million which others are paying for that subsidy. Why should people in towns pay that subsidy, which is in effect a tax, to help those in rural areas?

Mrs. Dunwoody: Unfortunately, people in towns will not escape the effect of the Bill. We have heard a great deal about the services in Exeter. No one has said that the little minibus there is only running up and down an exeedingly limited central part of the city. Those who are paying the taxes that we are talking about, whether by rates or taxes, in the outer suburbs of Exeter are not benefiting from that tiny minibus and are not likely to do so. The hon. Gentleman must be clear that those people who live outside one or two clearly demarcated busy routes in the centre of cities will be in the same situation as those in the rural areas.

No one will cross-subsidise a bus going to a hospital outside the urban area. No one will cross-subsidise a school bus that is going across country from one comprehensive school to another. No one will cross-subsidise buses during difficult hours or on difficult, unused or half-used services. To think that those who live in towns will automatically be provided with better services is not to understand the implications. Almost inevitably, services will disappear. Then and only then shall we see the extent of the need for cross-subsidisation in order to provide a public service — because that is what the bus services are.

When we talk about the effects of the Bill in rural areas, we should be aware that the shire counties alone will have to find an extra £102 million in subsidies just to maintain services on the NBC routes. With a cut of £250 million —30 per cent.—planned in April in transport subsidies, there is no way in which the shire counties can maintain those subsidies.

In Hereford — despite what we were told about Hereford town—no operator was willing to take on one of the 53 routes without a subsidy. We are told, however, "It is unfortunate if people cannot get buses. They can always get taxis." The Department is adopting a Marie Antoinette attitude — if people cannot have buses, let them take taxis.

It is, of course, more expensive to travel by taxi. Taxis cost on average 95p a mile, compared with 16·5p a mile on buses. About 75 per cent. of the population will not take cabs. The city controller's office in Indianapolis studied the various systems, and when told that it was the intention of Britain's Secretary of State to change the entire taxi service, commented:

> "England had the best taxi service in the free world by industry standards. Why is it that Government always wants to fix something that isn't broken?"

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): While the hon. Lady is talking of the United States, may I ask her to consider what is happening in Phoenix, Arizona, where taxis are operating as subcontractors for the weekend bus service, at which time there are between 300 and 400 passengers, compared with 40,000 passengers a day during the week? That shows that, when there are fewer passengers, it is appropriate to have a taxi service. Is she aware that in that case taxi fares are almost identical to bus fares?

Mrs. Dunwoody: Removing the regulations applying to taxis will be no gift to taxi operators, many of whom will find themselves being undercut by others coming in. The system of licensing which they have enjoyed will be wiped out. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) will discover that those in the taxi business regard this as an ill-conceived and unimaginative piece of legislation.

The second and next important leg of the right hon. Gentleman's case is the whole question of the privatisation of the National Bus Company. We are told that the right hon. Gentleman is not interested in having viable companies but wants them broken down into smaller units, although today he did not specify the size of company that he would regard as viable.

Grieveson Grant and Company, the stockbrokers, said that, if the whole of the NBC was sold as a unit, it would be worth between £150 million and £200 million. That estimate explains why the Bill is being rushed through. The Secretary of State is rushing to help the Chancellor of the Exchequer; if the Government cannot find sufficient state assets to sell off, the Secretary of State believes that the National Bus Company can be sold to help the Chancellor do something to improve the economic situation.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission stated that the present structure of the NBC was beneficial to efficiency. The attitude of the Secretary of State is muddled. On the one hand he has evidence to prove that the unit as a whole is worth a great deal of money. On the other, he tells the operators, "I want it broken down into smaller pieces." He will, in the process, fall heavily between two stools. He will provide units that are too big for local operators to buy and run, but too small to interest the institutional investors.

All this destruction is being carried out in the name of promoting better public transport. It is worth noting that, since the National Bus Company was formed, nearly all the private companies, particularly the holding companies, have pulled out and have put their money into different types of operation.

The effect on the staff of the NBC will be disastrous, especially as most cost advantages will come from reduced wages being paid to them. The NBC has made it plain that its pension plans for staff will not be protected by the Bill and that the 1982 Act will not help the 15,000 pensioners involved.

Why are the Government so determined to push this legislation through in this way? Do they genuinely believe that by opening the gates to competition they will produce a new era of better bus transport services? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] In reality, nothing of the kind will happen.

The Government feel that they need not indulge in consultation to discover what is really important for the public. They do not believe in constructing legislation based on research and investigative work done by those with knowledge of the bus industry. For this Government, it is sufficient to move fast towards certain shibboleths that

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

are important to the Secretary of State. One is to remove from the public sector any service that is providing a level of care if that service has any reliance on subsidy. It does not even matter if it is impossible for other sectors to replace the existing system.

It does not matter to them if many rural areas suffer and if people in towns who wish to use buses at off-peak times find it impossible to do so. It does not matter to the Government if what the right hon. Gentleman is doing will wipe out 50 years of road safety, of better services generally and of good facilities for those most in need. It does not matter to them if concessionary fares for the old and benefits for the young are wiped out.

It is important for the House to understand that the Secretary of State is concerned only that we should, by some means, hand the system over initially to small companies which want to cream off profits from any little areas of state assets that can be made available. The cost of this Secretary of State is high, but it is high mostly to those who cannot hit back, those who cannot protect themselves. I hope that, for that and many other reasons, the House will refuse—in the interests of those who are of most concern to us all—to give the Bill a Second Reading.

6.6 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

this House declines to give a Second Reading to the Transport Bill until it has had the opportunity of studying the imminent report of the Transport Committee on what is the most fundamental upheaval in the bus industry for over 50 years.

The amendment stands in my name and in the names of most members of the Select Committee on Transport.

I begin with what I regard as a House of Commons point. Last year the Select Committee decided to conduct an inquiry into the financing of the public transport services. In the autumn it decided to extend that study to take account of the bus White Paper. We discovered, however, in view of the amount of evidence that was put before us, that we could not report before Christmas. On the other hand, the Government, having produced their White Paper, also produced a mass of consultation documents and gave no deadline for this Second Reading debate. The chairman of the Select Committee wrote to the Secretary of State saying:

"The Committee has accordingly agreed that I should write to you to request a delay in the introduction of that legislation until our report is published."

On 10 December last the Secretary of State replied:

"I fear I could not undertake to do that—nonetheless, a Bill of this importance will undoubtedly be very thoroughly considered by Parliament through all its stages."

One would imagine from the wording of that letter that the Government were proceeding with speed to produce a Bill immediately following the Christmas recess. Indeed, that was the advice that some of us were given, yet not until today do we find the Bill before us on Second Reading.

The majority of members of the Select Committee feel that the evidence given to us was of such a nature that the rest of the House — certainly the members of any Standing Committee that might be set up to consider this major revolution—should have the advantage of that evidence and, preferably, of any report that is made.

We were aware of widespread concern on a variety of points among all sections of the community and across the political spectrum. I tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and my hon. Friends, that so far most of those concerns have not been resolved by the publication of the Bill. I believe that the work of the Select Committee is important. We have laboured hard and long to produce the report. We have taken evidence, and visited Hereford and Worcester. The taking of evidence has now ended and the report will shortly be produced.

I do not claim that the report will be enough. I do not claim that it will be either for or against the Bill. It will, however, show the House and the country how much feeling there is on the issue and how necessary it is to proceed with caution rather than rush madly ahead and accept the first set of proposals put forward.

In addition to my amendment, I should like to mention early-day motion 358 which calls for consignment of the Bill to a Special Standing Committee, again because those who will deal with the Bill should be entitled to take evidence from anybody whom they think would be able to help them, and, at least, to study the evidence that we have gathered. That is the very least that the House should allow. If we do not allow members of the Standing Committee to take advantage of all the work that their colleagues have done, the whole future of the Select Committees and the relationship between them and the House will be brought into question.

There are occasions when party politics are put on one side and we try to produce useful ideas that have a broad measure of agreement. That has been one of the bonuses of the Select Committee system. If Committees were always strictly partisan, their reports would be greatly devalued. I pay tribute to the Labour members of the Select Committee who bravely joined us in producing a unanimous report on the London area even though some people might have thought that they had gone too far in our direction.

The amendment is not supported only by those who put their names to it. It is also supported by no fewer than 11 national organisations. They are the Association of District Councils, the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers, the Bus and Coach Council, the Chartered Institute of Transport, Friends of the Earth, the National Association of Local Councils, the Ramblers Association, the Royal Town Planning Institute, Rural Voice, and Transport 2000, all operating under the aegis of Women in the Community — the National Federation of Women's Institutes. The organisation wrote to me as follows:

"We cannot anticipate what the Select Committee will say, but we feel that it is constitutionally inappropriate for the House of Commons to consider legislation in advance of receiving the report of its Select Committee".

Although not opposed to the Bill in principle, the Association of County Councils also has strong misgivings and would like to see the Bill sent to a Special Standing Committee.

The list is impressive. It cuts right across the political as well as the transport spectrum. What is at issue is the right of the House to information. It would be a mistake for the report and the evidence that the Select Committee has heard to be produced after Second Reading—let alone after Committee stage.

Many of my hon. Friends are completely bemused by the Bill. They receive conflicting reports from local

councils, bus operators and voluntary organisations such as the NFWI. The Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary ply them with tea and sympathy in an attempt to encourage them to support the Bill. In my view, the House should have an opportunity to make up its mind about this fundamental change on the evidence, when it is published. That is the core of my plea. The House must decide whether to use our Select Committees or ignore them. Do we regard them as peripheral centres of activity to which we consign awkward hon. Members in order to keep them out of the Chamber, taking little notice of what they have to say? *[Interruption.]* Yes, some of us emerge every so often. Alternatively, do we accept that the Committees represent a serious attempt to enable a group of hon. Members gradually to gain a level of expertise on a subject that others would find it difficult to attain, to question Ministers and civil servants from a state of knowledge, and once again to begin to assert the influence of the House upon the Executive, no matter what colour it may be? No instance since the Select Committees were set up has brought the issue before the House as sharply as this.

My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Leader of the House can ignore the protests that I am making. There is no doubt that the Government, with their huge majority, could roll the matter over. However, in the long run such action will not be good for the Government or the House of Commons, and I doubt whether it will help the cause of parliamentary democracy in this country.

Of course Ministers want to push through their legislation — that is what we expect of them — but sometimes Governments display a tinge of arrogance. I am sure that my right hon. Friend does not wish to give the House an impression of arrogance. It is because I am sure that he does not wish to give that impression that I urge him to accept my amendment.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): Do I understand that the Secretary of State ignores the work of the Select Committee — as a senior member of another Select Committee I regard that as a serious matter in itself —even though he has been before the Committee for a substantial time?

Mr. Fry: It is true that my right hon. Friend appeared before the Select Committee, and we had a long and interesting session. He did not ignore the work of the Committee. The Committee made him very much aware of the work that it had done.

I should like to make it clear that I favour increased competition in bus services, that I believe that subsidies to passenger transport executives should be reduced and that I favour the privatisation of the National Bus Company. In regard to the latter, I must declare an interest, although my interest in bus matters goes back many years to when I was chairman of the Conservative bus policy committee and took part, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, in producing our policy document "The Right Track" before the 1979 general election.

It would be wrong if no Conservative Member expressed some anxieties about the Bill. I should like first to deal with some of the wrong impressions that have been spread abroad. The first is that, because the Transport Act 1980, which liberalised coaching, has been successful, the same must automatically apply to the stage carriage bus industry. With coaches, the competition was not between two types of road operators but between two modes— road and rail. Moreover, as with deregulation in other respects, such as aviation in the United States, the result is more services on some routes and the disappearance of services on others. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory study has come up with some rather interesting figures. With all the extra coaches, there are only 43 more services as a result of the 1980 Act. That might surprise some hon. Members. Taking a service away to put it on another route is all very well, provided that a service remains in spite of the redirection. If a coach is taken off a route, there might be a stage carriage bus service serving the same route, but take off the stage carriage bus service and the people of the area are probably left with no public transport.

The second wrong impression is that innovation is virtually impossible under the present legislative set-up. Less than 0·5 per cent. of applications for licences have been refused recently. Even the example of Exeter, which has been given today, has taken place under existing law and without any competition. Competition could well undermine the success of that experiment.

A third false impression is that there has somehow miraculously been an increase in the number of passengers, enabling more services to be supplied and fares to be reduced. Revenue can be got only when demand exists. If there is not much demand, it is difficult to extend services as the Bill intends. Indeed, the evidence shows that the extra revenue comes not from existing passengers who make extra journeys. That is the evidence of the Association of County Councils.

A fourth misconception is that there will inevitably be massive economies. Existing economies are within a regulated system and at current fares. There is no guarantee that, in an unregulated system with cut price fares and without cross-subsidy, the same savings will necessarily accrue. The fifth fallacy is that the traffic commissioners are the ideal people to deal with problems that arise. I have been to Hereford and Worcester and seen some of the dangers of competition there and I am far from convinced that the traffic commissioners are the ideal people to do that job. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said today that the Bill would stop bunching, but how can we control six operators who arrive within one minute of each other at the same bus stop without taking control of the timetable? If we take control of the timetable we are not deregulating but altering the method of regulation. I ask my right hon. Friend to take that on board.

The idea that competition will always be the best thing is not borne out by current circumstances in Hereford, where the National Bus Company, by competition, is destroying the competition of the independent operators. It is doing that with a grand total of 22 buses in the Hereford bus depot. Unless each National Bus Company company is to be cut to less than 22 buses, such action would occur throughout the country. Utterly unregulated competition can lead to its own demise.

As for inspection, at least one traffic commissioner reckons that we shall need at least twice as much inspection as we have at the moment. I am waiting for some reassurance from the Government that that will be provided. It is exceedingly odd that people who want to apply for a heavy goods vehicle licence have to prove their

[Mr. Fry]

financial stability before being granted a licence whereas no such requirement will be necessary to run a public service vehicle if the Bill goes through in its present form.

As to concessionary fares, I am sorry to disappoint some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, but the chairman of Hereford and Worcester transport committee agrees with me that bus passes are difficult if not impossible to apply when there is a large number of operators. In those circumstances, it is almost certain that token systems will be necessary. Tokens only cause resentment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): What does my hon. Friend mean by a "large number" of operators making bus passes difficult to operate?

Mr. Fry: If the chairman of Hereford and Worcester transport committee thought it difficult with four or five operators in Hereford, I suggest that there must be many other parts of the country where the same will apply if the Bill goes through in its present form. I am merely taking the advice of those who ought to know.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has mentioned the north Herefordshire women's institute. It violently opposes the Bill and feels especially strongly on one issue. It believes that the county council should retain an important role in public transport. It is worried that removing the council's responsibilities will result in a deterioration of rural routes.

I should like to conclude by considering the fundamental issue. As with everything else, the fundamental issue is finance. The Association of County Councils—I am sorry to keep quoting it but I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends appreciate that it is not hostile to the Government or our party—says that it would require a minimum of £30 million extra to keep services as they are today. If we add that £30 million to the lowest estimate of cross-subsidy being spent on non-profitable routes—about £120 million—we arrive at a loss, if cross-subsidy is ended, of £150 million. That has nothing to do with London, the PTEs or the metropolitan areas. It relates entirely to the shire counties, which many of my colleagues represent. Therefore there is a real danger that that money will not be forthcoming and that councils will find it difficult to maintain the current level of services. Obviously, there could be an improvement in efficiency, which could result in lower fares on busy routes, but I and most people involved in the intricacies of transport finance doubt that it could also provide for the loss of cross-subsidy.

Almost a year ago I listened to the Secretary of State when he spoke at the Bus and Coach Council dinner. He made it abundantly clear that his main determination was to reduce the amount of public money spent on subsidising the bus industry. I do not necessarily disagree with him. However, I cannot understand why we need this Bill to attain the objectives that he wants. Competition can be extended by competitive tendering. My right hon. Friend might even consider negative tendering on certain routes. But privatisation of the NBC is already impossible. If he reduces the NBC to too many units, some of his ex-hon. Friends at the Treasury may have some words to say about the sum he receives from the public in exchange for it.

My right hon. Friend can control the spending of the PTEs. There has already been a change in transport supplementary grant. Already there is legislation to abolish the metropolitan counties, and he could replace them with any regime he wishes. All that is possible without the Bill. However, if we are to have the Bill, it needs considerable amendments. It needs amendments on tendering, licensing and the role of county councils, and there must be a great deal of reassurance on the question of finance. Without those amendments and that reassurance, I fear that the legislation, although welcomed by Conservative Members, may be viewed as the reforms in the Local Government Act 1972 are viewed. What appear to be a number of reforms may lead to an increased number of problems.

The Government have the opportunity in Committee to put right some of those points. I shall listen carefully to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State when he replies. If he assures me, as I hope he will, that he will wait for the Select Committee report, and that he is prepared to accept meaningful amendments, I shall not vote with the Opposition. However, I warn him that if the Bill emerges from Committee in its present form, I shall have no hesitation in voting against it on Third Reading.

6.33 pm

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): I am aware of the time and the fact that a huge chunk of it has been taken from the debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and to the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) for their comments, which will enable me to cut my speech even shorter than I intended. The hon. Gentleman's speech showed the worthiness of Select Committees. He has examined the legislation closely and warned his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench of the dangers. If his amendment is rejected, he will suffer what we on the Opposition Benches have been suffering for a long time. If it is rejected, I hope that the Government will be sufficiently gracious to ensure that it is reconsidered in Committee. However, I should not like to guarantee him that, considering the content of his speech.

During the general election I wondered what the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) meant when he said that he was worried about the Government having a large majority. As an ex-Whip I could hardly understand that because I had always thought that the larger the majority, the easier a Whip's job would be. Since then we have discovered that the right hon. Gentleman was absolutely right. A large majority means bad legislation. We have had to get used to democratic dictatorship. Some Bills that have been introduced have depended not on argument or content, but on the size of the Government's majority to force them through. They should never have seen the light of day, and if the Government's majority had been about 50 or less they would never have seen the light of day. This Bill is one of them.

The Bill has nothing to do with services, and a great deal to do with party dogma and the dogma of the Secretary of State. He could not care less about safety, concessionary fares, services, routes or even job losses and the growth of moonlighting that the Bill will encourage. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State does not need to visit Phoenix, Arizona to find out what happens when taxi services are turned loose. He will remember from his stint in Northern Ireland, as I do, what happened to the taxi

service and buses there. He knows the anxieties of insurance companies about the way vehicles are maintained and driven. I look forward to his reply.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough warned the Government about sensitive rural areas, and about the membership of various county councils. There have been rumblings among county councils and county councillors. The Government must accept that the Bill will be a major issue in the county council elections in May. Certainly in Nottinghamshire, where we are proud of our bus services and of what our county council has done for rural bus services, there is already consternation, and there will be more. There has been expansion there. It is not true that people in built-up areas do not care. The majority of councillors in Nottinghamshire county council, who represent areas, such as Mansfield, Bassetlaw and Ashfield, care. They could sit back and say, "It will not affect us very much", but to my surprise those councillors are more against the Bill than some Conservative county councillors. They seemed to acquiesce, but of late they have started to wonder about the political rumblings of people in those areas.

I have received stacks of briefing notes about this matter and others from my county council. I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich and to the hon. Member for Wellingborough that I do not have to discuss those matters now. I made a promise to make my speech as brief as possible, and so I shall. I hope and trust that if I am fortunate enough to be a member of the Committee—that is volunteering beyond the call of duty—this piece of political dogma will be considered thoroughly and properly on behalf of the people who will have to use the buses. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is no doubt that all the informtion that one can glean about the matter shows that there is a great deal of worry and consternation. I hope that the Committee stage will not be based on straight party political dogma. As I said, the county council elections will thrust this matter to the front of politics. I hope that the matter will be considered seriously. If not, the Opposition hope that the other place will again do its duty on behalf of the people who live in rural areas.

I have not gone into the nitty-gritty of the Bill, because it is not necessary for me to do so now. I promised that my speech would be short. I did not think that it would be as short as this. If we do not defeat the Bill tonight, which is what we want—we can win all the arguments but lose the vote—I hope that we shall take the Committee stage seriously.

6.40 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): It gives me great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), who have demonstrated across the Floor of the House that there can be some consensus. Had I been called by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a little earlier, I might have said that some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) would have driven me away from that consensus.

It is fair to say that the Bill is a radical and imaginative set of proposals. It is right that the House should consider on Second Reading the Government's justification for those proposals, and I believe that they have made a case, at least initially, as to why some changes are necessary. The statistics for the decline of the bus industry are spectacular. In three decades from 1951 to 1981, total passenger miles in Great Britain increased threefold, while bus and coach passenger miles decreased by a half. A 51 per cent. share of the market became an 8 per cent. share. Why was that? The growth in car ownership was equally remarkable, if not more so. That has provided a competitive pressure that must make nonsense of the idea that the bus industry is a monopoly. Competitive pressure from the private motor car is the most important consideration in judging how to deal with the future of the bus industry.

We must recognise another major change in social habits during the past 30 years. In the 1950s, the British were cinema-goers; in the 1980s, they are television-watchers. In the 1950s, local bus services could rely upon a third daily peak in travelling habits—an evening peak to be added to the morning and late afternoon peaks. When cinema attendances decreased, the financial viability of buses changed dramatically. As the cinema declined, so did the profitability of the bus industry. To that can be added the change from a six-day working week to a five-day working week, which also affected the viability of the industry. We must consider carefully the statistics of the past 30 years before assuming that all the blame for the decline lies with the bus industry.

The key to the Bill is clause 1, which will unlock the vast, rambling edifice of subsidy that has been built up over the years in the bus industry. Action is undoubtedly needed on this front. However, my quarrel is not with the bus industry, but with local politicians, especially those of the Left wing. The bus industry has fallen into their hands in many areas, and it has consequently suffered. Indiscriminate subsidy which seeks to prevent fares from increasing in line with inflation has done nothing to protect the industry from the competition of the motor car; it merely sucks resources from the local community in the form of rates. To the extent that clause 1 will lead to a reduction in subsidy, it is to be welcomed. Furthermore, the elimination of cross-subsidy implicit in the Bill should lead to lower fares.

In my constituency those who live in areas of Swindon such as Penhill and the Parks estates, who have low incomes or none at all, have been encouraged to believe by the opposition to the Bill that they will have no bus services in the future. On the contrary; they will be pleasantly surprised when fares are reduced. Why should they—the less well-off in society—subsidise those on higher incomes in areas where the motor car is a readily available substitute?

I wonder whether the Government realise the extent of cross-subsidy in the bus industry. If they have not yet had time to read the report of the Select Committee hearing evidence from the National Bus Company, I urge them to do so. The report makes it clear that £20 million to replace the money lost through cross-subsidy will not be nearly enough to meet the requirements of the industry, if it is to maintain present services.

May I say something about the effect of competition on the environment in which we must live. The conscientious transport manager—I have known many in my years in the industry—is constantly seeking to do two things. He will endeavour to amend services from time to time to meet changes in passenger demand, because he dislikes empty buses and he dislikes passengers being left behind at stops. He will also try to plan an integrated network of routes to cover his area. Attacks on monopoly and vested

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

interests are misplaced. It is in the interests of passengers to have a planned, integrated network of services on which they can rely, especially when they have no alternative means of transport. To the extent that the competition inherent in the Bill will hinder such planning, it is to be regretted. Passengers will not thank the Government for lower fares if dislocated services follow behind.

In this context, I would welcome a reassurance from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State when he replies to the debate that the successful tenderer for a loss-making and, therefore, publicly subsidised route will be protected for a reasonable period from speculative competition. Such protection should not be necessary in normal circumstances, but its availability would engender confidence.

The proposals in clause 6 could provide the framework for a sensible regulation of the new system. It empowers the traffic commissioner to determine "traffic regulation conditions" to

"prevent dangerous traffic conditions or reduce severe traffic congestion"

by controlling routes, stopping places and lay-over times. In extremis, the traffic commissioner must have the power to refuse an application through a regulation which adequately safeguards the environment by banning a service in a sensitive area such as a town centre bus interchange point which is already over-congested. Conversely, I hope that the traffic commissioner will use clause 6(4) *(d)* to ensure that operators will offer services of reasonable fullness on a daily and weekly basis. That would provide a framework within which competition can flourish and the passenger benefit, as hon. Members on both sides of the House would wish.

I am sure that the Government do not wish to encourage cowboy operators, unsafe vehicles or stranded passengers. However, if they are to avoid those possibilities, they must strengthen the proposals. A framework for competition was considered right by the Government when British Telecom was liberalised last year, and a similar approach is entirely justified here.

I welcome the Bill's proposals to free the National Bus Company from state control and to reduce restrictions on the hiring of taxis. I welcome the drive to extend the flexible provision of transport into rural areas where profound social changes are taking place. There is a positive benefit to the nation in maintaining the rural population. I would also welcome a commitment from the Government to public transport in its true sense — transport for the public, not transport owned by the public. We need stimulation of fixed rail, overhead, underground and water-borne transport to reduce pressure on the road network.

The Government do not wish to destroy public transport, as has been suggested by the Opposition, but they want — rightly in my view — to reduce its costs. These proposals are at the least risky and at worst a clear threat to the level of public transport that we need, particularly in our towns and cities, to make the best use of our road networks. If the Government would consider fixing an upper limit to the permissible level of subsidy —say, at 10 or even 5 per cent. of income from fares, excluding concessionary fare contributions — it would meet the need to reduce public subsidy and would make enemies only among the far Left of the political spectrum.

To sum up, the Secretary of State reminds me of a character I once read of in a John Buchan novel who showed his bravery by going from a lighted room into the dark beyond. The Secretary of State has undoubtedly seen the light but he is now setting off into the darkness on an unknown path. There he may bump into the hon. Lady the Member for Crewe and Nantwich, the spokesman for the Opposition, which will be frightening enough, but he will also come up against some hard realities and some uncomfortable facts. The Secretary of State should travel carefully with the Select Committee's report under his arm, lest he should never arrive.

6.51 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) began his speech by referring to an imaginative and realistic set of proposals that had been produced by the Secretary of State. He then referred to regulatory provisions that ought to be introduced in order to temper somewhat this state of imagination and realism. That is a dichotomy of thinking which in my experience is an attempt to back two horses at the same time when they are running in different directions. However, the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) was far more constructive and realistic and showed a profound knowledge of the subject matter. The right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) gave a crowning piece of advice, good sense and caution arising out of his ministerial experience in Northern Ireland.

We are left with the Secretary of State for Transport. He has been here for a long time, but he appears to have learned nothing. He has behind him many years of experience but they do not appear to me to reflect great credit upon him. Wherever he has been he has left behind him concern and destruction. He is a devastating character. He is the only person who has followed persistently the proposals contained in the White Paper and who has ignored the practical advice and experience of all those who are involved in the operational and administrative aspects of transport. These sources have put forward an overwhelming case against the Bill. The Secretary of State clearly is the odd man out. It is a very lonely position in which to be and illustrates the pathetic state of the Secretary of State's case. He is anchored to dogma. He knows that deregulation and competition turn back the clock to the period before the 1930s. Regulation, licensing, co-ordination and all the other trappings of a public transport service in the United Kingdom have come into existence since the Road Traffic Act 1930. The Secretary of State has been warned from all sides that times have changed. The transport problems of today cannot be solved from the experience of the past.

The Secretary of State is returning to the conditions of the 1920s. He is not looking forward. The future development of our transport services requires a modern approach that involves planning, co-ordination, co-operation and support in the national interest, but the 1980 Act got rid of certain licensing procedures.

What has happened? The Secretary of State boasts in his White Paper that bus services have improved and that fares have been reduced. However, on examination we find that the picture is not as the Secretary of State paints it. Much of that traffic has been taken away from British Rail. Consequently, British Rail needs further financial support in order to meet its increasing overheads.

However, the Secretary of State is adamant and has tried to pretend to the House that he has put forward a constructive set of proposals.

The Secretary of State wants to introduce something that is, as yet, untried. Nothing in the Bill has been tried and tested. There is no evidence to support what the Secretary of State wants. Furthermore, what is counter-productive he actually denies. What is unworkable he scorns. He refuses to admit that the Bill puts at risk the quality, availability and efficiency of local bus services. Sadly, we shall have to wait and see what is the degree of his recklessness.

All that we have before us now rests not on a better transport policy. If that had been the case, we should have had before us a measure that reflected the experience of well-established bus operators and the experience of county councils, district councils, passenger transport executives, the National Bus Company and the Bus and Coach Council. The private and public sectors would have been partners in assisting the Secretary of State, if that had been his policy. Instead, we have expenditure cuts presented in the guise of lower transport costs. Just as surely as this policy has damaged the education service, housing programmes and social services and has forced additional costs upon ratepayers, so in this case ratepayers will be faced with higher costs and poorer services.

The abolition of road service licensing will break up a well-established network of services. The urban areas will suffer and the rural areas will be further deprived. The needs of both will have little priority in the scramble that the Bill invites. I am afraid that this applies also to standards, safety and the environment. Cross-subsidy—the provision of services that no private operator will provide—will be lost. No town is without the problem of providing a service that is socially important but which is unable to produce adequate revenue. The provisions contained in the Bill fail to meet the problem. The case is well demonstrated by the debate on 25 October 1984 in another place.

Part IV of the Bill is an exercise in muddled thinking. District councils are expected to transfer their well-organised bus undertakings to separate companies. What has been developed by public demand, criticism, social needs and accountability is to be handed over to municipal companies. However, those districts councils will remain burdened with public sector spending and investment responsibilities.

Municipal companies of this kind will immediately face unfair competition, and in this regard the Secretary of State can say nothing to deny the damage that we foresee. Eventual inconvenience will be a further consequence to passengers, in addition to a higher cost to the ratepayer. It is clear that all this will result in grave losses to the community.

The first will be the scrapping of the present road licensing system. That has been well tried and has been described as a useful instrument for the development of good services. That will go, as will cross-subsidies. The National Bus Company and municipal bus services will be broken up. The obligation on county councils to co-ordinate public transport will also disappear. There will be widespread reductions in service levels, and whether or not the Secretary of State admits it, there will be an increase in fares. That is bound to happen. A poorer quality of service will result, with a lowering of safety standards and job losses in existing undertakings.

I am advised, and I have no reason to doubt it, that the Bill will remove power from local government but that direct powers in many areas will be taken by the Secretary of State. This approach reverses the policy, previously endorsed by all parties, that local decisions should be taken locally. The Bill superimposes an alarming amount of ministerial control, often without further reference to Parliament.

I ask the House to consider the enormity of that. This Government presented themselves to the country in 1979 and 1983 and boasted about the amount of choice and non-intervention in local government. They were telling the electorate, "We will set the people free." Yet since 1979 we have had a most abrasive Government who have indulged in daily intervention and have dictated to industry, voluntary organisations, individuals and corporations alike. They have become an arrogant Government. They will not listen.

We have already heard from the well-informed hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) how the Secretary of State has had the audacity to appear before a Select Committee—charged under its terms of reference with scrutinising and monitoring Departments—and after two and a half hours took no notice of its comments, even though they related totally and wholly to the subject matter in the Bill. No operating undertaking is listened to. In other words, everyone has wasted his time.

I am sorry to say it, but as usual the people will have to suffer the consequences of the Government's actions. However, time will tell, and this Government, through the person who seeks to emulate his Prime Minister more than anyone else, will again be proved wrong.

7.4 pm

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I very much welcome the Bill. Over the years I have received many complaints about buses, especially in my rural areas. Only last November, a large headline appeared in my local newspaper drawing attention to the fact that a parish council was complaining bitterly that its bus service was "diabolical". It was absolutely right. Only a fortnight ago, an article in the local newspaper which was titled "First catch your bus" complained that passengers wanting to get from Garstang to Scorton boarded a bus marked "Scorton" —a reasonable thing to do—only to be turfed off a few minutes later by a bus driver who said that it was going nowhere. They finally tracked down the right bus, even though it was wrongly labelled. As the writer of that article said, it is hardly surprising that the Scorton-Garstang bus is under-used and that

"on an average Thursday you could fit the passengers into a mini, let alone a mini-bus".

Small wonder that in Lancashire over the past 10 years, bus usage has shrunk by 46 per cent. and bus mileage is down by 14·3 per cent. while the revenue subsidy—this may delight Opposition Members — has risen from £93,000 to £8·5 million. This money has come out of hard-earned wages.

That is why I welcome my right hon. Friend's courageous efforts to provide passengers with decent bus services which go where they want to go, not where it is convenient for the bus company to take them, and at a price they can afford. I say "courageous", because my right hon. Friend knew very well that he was tackling not only the vested interest of the huge National Bus Company and the local authority bus services, which do not want

[Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

their effortless, comfortable monopolies swept away. More difficult, he was also tackling the "When in doubt cling to nurse, for fear of getting something worse" syndrome, which is exemplified on the Opposition benches.

However, even when people complain like mad about something, they still fear change. Believe it or not, the very parish council which complained that its bus services were diabolical was frightened of change. By then it had the expensive benefit of the Labour-controlled Lancashire county council's propaganda campaign against the reform proposals. One can get a lot of propaganda for 135,000 quid, including a photograph of the county council chairman in all the local newspapers. I understand that it will shortly be on the back of all the buses. That is a mighty useful election gimmick—just before the county elections — at ratepayers' expense. But following Westminster's successful case against ILEA, this expenditure may well prove to be ultra vires, and Labour councillors may be liable to pay it. It may also mean that she has opened her election campaign.

The fears which have been aroused are precisely those that were felt when the experiment in Herefordshire was about to begin. There are no such fears there now. Everyone is delighted with the service, and no one wants to return to the old ways.

It has always seemed such a waste of public money to have taxis with one child in them, or health service transport vehicles going around the country half empty. Therefore, I particularly welcome clause 80 which makes the services co-operate to achieve better value for money for ratepayers and better services for passengers.

Shared taxis, provided for under clause 9, will give the flexibility which buses lack and, provided they are full, at little, if any, higher cost then buses. There is no doubt that travelling in from a country district is now expensive.

Country areas do not need large buses. Nothing annoys people more than to see huge buses containing only one or two people lumbering around country lanes, when a minibus would to a better and cheaper job. When I have suggested this in the past, I have been told that the bus grants system made it no more expensive to buy a full sized bus than a minibus. If that is so, it certainly needs altering.

With new, flexible services and the grants for services in rural areas available under clause 89, I believe that the country dwellers in my constituency will get a much better deal.

Much deliberately misleading rubbish has been talked about concessionary fares. Clause 85 makes it abundantly clear that concessionary fares are in no way threatened, and local authorities can operate schemes as they think fit. I was glad that the Secretary of State answered a Labour allegation that it would be impossible for local authorities to run concessionary fares schemes, either because they will have no money to do so or because it will be difficult to operate a scheme when large numbers of private operators are involved. At present many of my constituents who would be eligible for concessionary fares cannot use them because there is no bus service going where they want to go. Under the provisions of clause 86 any operator can tender to operate such concessions and the improved availability will benefit people in areas with poor services, including my old-age pensioners in inaccessible top-of-the-hill council estates.

One of the most illogical attacks on the Government's proposals has been on the safety aspects of buses. During the running-in period in Hereford, a lot of faults were found in buses, which were put off the roads by inspectors. This, of course, is exactly what tests and inspectors are for. I welcome the tightening of conditions for vehicle maintenance in clause 23 and the provisions to disqualify operators who operate dangerously or go in for such practices as bunching, so common now in all conurbations; the buses always run in flocks.

It is astonishing that the very people who profess to be worried at the imagined prospect of unsafe private buses on the road appear not at all worried by the published figures, given to me the other day, of safety test failures of National Bus Company vehicles. A failure rate of 40 per cent. on the first test in National Bus Company buses in the year 1983-84 is nothing to brag about, and the stricter standards will be welcome all round.

I appreciate that there is understandable anxiety among the staff of the National Bus Company and local authority undertakings, but there is also keen anticipation, and many employees are looking forward to getting a share of the action. Their appetite has been whetted by the knowledge that the employee-owners of the National Freight Consortium have seen their share in the consortium rise from £800 to £6,000, and it is still rising. Moreover, the consortium is able to plough back far more into new investment than the old company, so that is good for jobs in the manufacturing sector as well. The same applies to Tyne Shiprepair, doomed when nationalised and losing £12 million, but which now, after a workers' buy-out, has doubled its work force and is making a profit, so staff need not fear privatisation.

The Times summed it up splendidly when it said that the Government seek to eliminate quantity control while retaining quality control and to provide subsidies more related to need. All in all, I welcome the Bill and hope that my right hon. Friend will be in no way deterred by the orchestrated clamour that has been raised against it.

7.11 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I am amazed at the cavalier way in which the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), like some other hon. Members on the Government Benches, has said that if no buses are available one can always order a taxi. Anyone who knows what it costs to order a taxi in my constituency to go to hospital or to an airport will realise that it is not something that people can do every day of the week.

In his peroration the Secretary of State said that we cannot shirk reform. The use of that phraseology suggests to me that some unpleasant medicine is to come. A few may benefit, but most people will find the contents of the Bill very unpleasant indeed.

I cannot be the only Member who has asked why a Bill of this size and detail could not have awaited the report of the Select Committee on Transport. I was glad that the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) dealt with that question adequately and in some detail. This is an important issue for the House. Although we know that Government are not bound by the findings of these Committees, at least they might recognise the time given

to them by Members. If this is to be the pattern, in time it will be difficult to get Members to serve on such Committees.

When the White Paper, the precursor of the Bill, was issued last autumn, it was clear that the Scottish Office had merely accepted the views of the English Department of Transport. My party, the Scottish National party, said then that if the proposals were implemented they would be ruinous to the existing network of Scottish bus services, because feeder services and urban services to housing schemes are in a completely difference position to the lucrative express services and services on main routes. If the profitable routes are hived off under the deregulation proposals, their profits will not be used to cross-subsidise the services to rural areas and outlying areas of housing which, although loss-making, are socially necessary. I was disappointed to hear it said that people in towns would not agree to pay for losses in rural areas. I think many councillors have a more responsible attitude than that to their duties.

My party has made it clear that we believe the White Paper proposals to be extremely damaging to Scotland. Our transport needs are different and are often based on a dispersed population in rural areas. These conditions are rarely mirrored south of the border. If anything, it can be argued that Scotland needs greater rather than less co-ordination of public transport.

On cross-subsidisation, I understand that the Scottish Office has said that a new rural grant will be introduced to cover the transitional period when such subsidies are being reduced. I would be interested to hear more details of this; perhaps the Minister will be able to provide them tonight.

The evidence gathered by the Scottish consumer organisation suggests that the proposals in the Bill are not welcomed in Scotland. That organisation has reported that, following a wide-ranging survey, only one private bus operator fully supported the proposals. Regional authorities within Scotland, of all shades of opinion, have heavily criticised the Bill.

It is also worth noting that the Government are pressing ahead with the legislation on the basis of no practical experience in Scotland. Experiments in deregulation have been carried out in England but there have been none in Scotland. In regard to the Scottish dimension, we are taking a great leap in the dark. I fear the consequences will be damaging. If the Scottish Office is determined to press ahead, it would be worth while considering at the very least a longer time scale for implementation of the plans and perhaps also the need for controlled experiments.

Many questions remain unanswered or not sufficiently answered. What additional resources will be made available to make up for the loss of cross-subsidy? What will happen in rural areas, like my constituency, where there may not be competition in tendering for a service? Will the local authority have to accept a tender which is considered very high? I hope that these questions can be answered by the Minister.

The Bill reflects the Government's zeal to allow market forces to prevail, regardless of the consequences. My suspicion is that their principal motivation is not to improve bus services but further to reduce public spending and to stamp their own brand of ideology firmly on the public transport system. The Scottish interest demands that the Bill should be opposed, and I shall vote for the amendment.

7.17 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I am grateful to you for calling me, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that you will make a rude noise if I wander near my time limit.

As I have listened to the contributions so far I have been reminded very much of the difference in attitude portrayed by two shoe firm representatives who went to Africa. The first one sent a telegram back saying, "Opportunities appalling; nobody wears shoes." The second one wrote back saying, "Opportunities absolutely magnificent; nobody wears shoes."

We can take a totally negative view on this exercise or we can take a positive view. Anybody confronted with the basic figures which show that there are far fewer passengers, far less bus mileage and far more money ploughed into maintaining this creaking structure has to say either that we do not do anything about it but dig deeper in our pockets, confident in the knowledge that the situation will deteriorate, or that we take a constructive view that something has to be done. I take the view that no responsible Government, confronted with the figures, can do anything other than address the matter seriously. The state of affairs is so serious as to warrant major attention rather than minor tinkering with the structure. That is the basis on which I view the Bill.

I have the pleasure to represent Hereford, which has been the subject of a trial bus deregulation for the past four years. It might be helpful if I briefly set out a few of the things that have happened in that trial. There are those who have approached this in a negative way, and have said that the trial has caused problems. I think that it has been a valuable experiment from which much valuable information has been gathered if one wishes to look at it in a constructive manner.

I do not know whether the National Bus Company, which has the main service in Hereford city, is typical of other bus companies in other parts of the country. However, before 1981 if I wanted to get nearly lynched, I went into High Town and asked people how long they had been waiting for the bus. I had a string of complaints —the bus did not turn up, the bus did not stop, the company did not bother. When I complained to the driver, I would be told to get on down to the back of the bus. When I asked Midland Red (West) Ltd. why the bus had not turned up, I was told that there was no driver or no engine or that it could not get spares. It was not a happy state of affairs.

The county council's figures show that in 1975, £87,000 was spent in supporting buses, and in 1983, £867,000. That is three times as much in real money terms. Before the experiment, there were declining services, especially on Sundays and in the evenings. As a consequence of deregulation in Hereford there is competition from smaller operators, although this took a little time to start. There are, in general, reduced fare levels, and in some cases they have reduced substantially. More important, this has induced people to travel on the buses more often, which cannot be bad. On a personal note, the flow of complaints has dried up. Furthermore, I cannot find a queue of people waiting for buses in the city. They have gone because they are on the buses, which again is not a bad thing.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned subsidies, and in Hereford the subsidy has gone down by 38 per cent. If one adds in the amount of saving brought

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

about by sensible use and co-ordination of school transport, we are talking about double that amount. If one saw that lying on the floor, one would bend down and pick it up. It would be worth while to do so because double 38 per cent. is a lot of money in anybody's terms.

All this has been done without reducing bus mileage in rural areas. We have commercial services operating without subsidy on routes that were previously operating with subsidies. We have managed to deploy ratepayers' and taxpayers' funds in such a way as to operate bus routes without a subsidy.

This is not necessarily just a cost-saving exercise, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that the Bill is aimed not at reducing subsidy but at making possibly better deployment of subsidy. If the county council wishes to put more services out to tender, to change the structure of the bus services, it can do so. It is significant that the same level of bus mileage—or 2 per cent. higher—can be sustained for less subsidy.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I admire the tenor and spirit of my hon. Friend's speech, and he has had a great deal of experience. Has there been any difficulty when services have been put out to tender, the tender has been accepted but competition continues and the operation becomes difficult?

Mr. Shepherd: The question has not arisen because, as the service has been put out to tender it is, by definition, a difficult one, and the operator of the service runs it. No one has been interested in coming in in competition because it is recognised that there is not the volume of passengers for two companies. Potential competitors have turned their attention somewhere else.

Safety standards have been rigorously enforced in Hereford. We have had chapter and verse quoted about the failure of the safety standards, but that is because of the rigorous enforcement of the inspection of vehicles. We cannot, and I do not want to, complain about that. That is as it should be. Nobody should enter into this game unless his vehicles are in good nick and he can keep them in good shape. He must recognise the name of the game before he comes in. I pay tribute to those who have come in, who have learned their lesson the hard way, who are succeeding and who are determined to stay in.

It would be wrong to say that we have not had problems. There have been environmental problems, buses have bunched and have been standing over. However, in developing this Bill, my right hon. and hon. Friends have sought to overcome this problem. One can either throw the baby out with the bathwater and say that this problem is too difficult to solve, or one can say that the prize for solving it is enormous and therefore, solve it we must. There must be a constructive approach to resolve the difficulties that result from the nature of the competition. The provisions of clause 6 are essential in this respect.

What has been the competitive reaction? Midland Red (West), the National Bus Company in Hereford, set out to win the competition. It has massive resources and its buses were operating only on what were seen to be the effective routes. It improved its performance by 25 per cent. and its attitudes to the customers changed. People riding on buses in my part of the world say, "Do not let this go back to where it was because the bus operators will stop being nice to me." That is a small point, but it reflects through the whole ethos of bus operations. The customer matters. We should be thinking of him because buses are about customers.

The Midland Red (West) has tried hard to swamp competition, as has been said. Massive numbers of buses were poured in to try to swamp the opposition and wipe it out. However, if the company had to compete on all fronts it would not be able to pull buses in to try to obliterate the competition. As it is, the company underestimated the determination of travellers in Hereford to sustain two bus companies on routes.

At the moment we have what I am told by the Opposition is a disaster. Midland Red (West) tells me that it is making money like it has never made it before, without taking a penny in subsidy from Hereford. It also told the Select Committee and Ministers that. The independent companies have no wish to leave the scene. The ratepayers, via the county council, are paying less money and the level of fares is lower, so for the most part buses are serving passenger needs better and more efficiently.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has had his 10 minutes, so there is no time for interventions.

7.27 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): We are grateful to the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) for giving us his experiences. I think that he will agree that Midland Red (West) Ltd. accepts that it was providing a rather poor service before competition was brought in, but it has managed to pull up its socks since then.

I shall not attempt to argue that there is no need for competition in the bus industry. Nor shall I pour cold water on the idea of further experimentation to reduce the costs. These are obviously necessary. However, I seriously question whether a Bill running to 114 clauses and seven schedules is necessary to achieve those ends when we already have the Acts of 1980 and 81 on the statute book. Some of the remedies proposed in those Acts, certainly those of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 have not been fully tested.

It would be foolhardy to rush into this measure so soon after the publication of the White Paper, which was only last July, particularly in view of the huge numbers of concerned representations that have been sent in by the various and varied interested bodies. The Select Committee alone received more than 160 detailed depositions, and more are still coming in. It is regrettable that we could not get our report out before this debate, because I believe that there is a reasonable chance of achieving a fair measure of cross-party agreement on at least some of the proposals. I support the amendment so ably moved by the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry).

I am afraid that the Government, in their almost total but naive belief in market forces, think that such policies will solve all our problems. This measure will, however, unnecessarily destroy what is in many parts of the country a very fine bus network. I include the service in my constituency in that description. As far as I can discover,

only *The Times* fully supports the Secretary of State. That is not surprising and is no commendation under that newspaper's present management structure.

It was claimed at Question Time recently that the Association of County Councils fully supported this measure, but its latest brief hardly bears that out. The Secretary of State has certainly stabbed the association in the back, despite the cosy chats at Marsham street with Councillor Ron Carrington of the Hereford and Worcester county council. Because he pioneered the Hereford area trial, the Department should have listened to his views. Once again, under this Government, locally elected representatives are to be made the unhappy whipping boys of the Department of Transport, while the real power passes directly to appointed bodies—in this case, the traffic commissioners.

As a member of a county council and a former representative on the ACC, I believe that it is high time the ACC took the gloves off in dealing with this Administration. As the association rightly says, it is a grave error not to give the counties the registration function with powers selectively to grant protection to subsidised services against the creaming off of profitable traffic by competition on the road. The co-ordinating role provided under the Transport Act 1978 is greatly weakened by the measures in the Bill, and the traffic commissioners' remoteness will not help.

The success—such as it was—of the Hereford trial area, even down to the publication of timetables, owed a great deal to the county, its chairman and officers. I accept that there are successes, but there are also disappointments. In fact, only two private operators are left, one of which is supposed to be pulling out. The Secretary of State should have taken much more notice of the county's representations. The county put a great deal of effort into that scheme and deserves some credit. Its co-ordinating role will be diminished to a large extent by the Bill.

It would have been far more sensible if a trial in an urban area had been pursued first. For example, in Plymouth outside consultants have been employed. In a detailed report, which I expect hon. Members have received, those consultants cast grave doubts on the costs and claimed advantages mentioned in the White Paper. They calculate that the proposed changes could increase rates in Plymouth by 22 per cent. They remark that Plymouth boasts a good bus system that costs the ratepayers relatively little. That is the case in many other parts of the country. Why destroy that system?

The outcry against cross-subsidisation is levelled especially at rural experiences. Insufficient attention has been given to the desirability of cross-subsidisation in urban areas. The changes will impose severe difficulties and certain cuts on my constituency. We unashamedly increase charges in the summer to pay for winter services. At present, about £500,000 of cross-subsidy comes from some of the profitable services whose profits are made in the summer months. That cross-subsidy, added to the £250,000 subsidy from the Isle of Wight county council, is needed to retain the uneconomic services. If the socially desirable services are to be saved by the Isle of Wight county council, the council would need to treble its present subsidy by taking money from the rate support grant. That could happen at a time when local authorities have less money available to them from central Government. The £20 million extra from the Government will do nothing to alleviate this problem. I believe that about £100 million would be more realistic. Even the Government's figures seem to show that at least £60 million is necessary.

Deregulation of taxi operators outside London is highly dubious. Such a scheme certainly did not work in parts of the United States. Privatisation of the National Bus Company by splitting it into smaller operating units is unlikely to be successful. I believe that the proposed break-up of the municipal public transport authorities is a retrograde step, especially in a place such as Tyne and Wear which, by common consent, has built up the finest co-ordinated transport system in the country.

The future of concessionary fares does not bear thinking about. It is time that the House insisted on the rest of the country being treated like London. Unfortunately, that measure was not written into the Tory manifesto at the last election. Undoubtedly, existing schemes and through booking arrangements are at great risk, especially if my Sealink experience is anything to go by—I suspect the members of the Select Committee expected me to make that point. Great difficulties have been experienced trying to maintain through bookings. Concessions for disabled drivers have been virtually removed.

I am concerned about the inclusion of clauses 94 to 100, which relate to rail services. I know those measures were included because of suggestions by a previous Select Committee. I believe that the time has come to halt all rail closures and even to reopen some lines. Our small overcrowded island cries out for a comprehensive rail network. The continuing chapter of hideous road accidents should persuade us of the need to preserve these priceless assets. We require more, not less, co-ordination; more, not less, co-operation; and more, not less, local involvement.

If enacted, the Bill will cause chaos. It will unnecessarily destroy what is good and replace it with an inferior product. It will lead to altercation and interminable disputes into which the police will inevitably and unnecessarily be drawn. I suggest that that is the position in Hereford. The Bill may lead to cheaper fares in the short run but, in the long term, the consumer, wherever he lives, will come to cuss the very mention of the name of the Secretary of State.

7.35 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I warmly welcome the Bill. We have seen an era of declining bus services and rising costs. They have been reflected in the rising subsidies that have been necessary.

I started in local government a long time ago at the age of 22 on St. Andrew's burgh council. During the first year in which I was a member of the council, Alexander's bus service, which is part of the Scottish Bus Group, asked for a subsidy for the first time. That bus company was given a subsidy. The next year it came back for more, and so on. No attention was paid to whether that service was provided in the best and most efficient manner possible. I believe that a stimulus is required to make such companies examine better ways of operating.

Not surprisingly, there has been a decline in rural services because of increasing car ownership. That has occurred partly because the ordinary public believe that it is desirable to own a car and partly because of necessity. There are unreliable bus services in the towns. I receive many letters—my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has received such letters also—from

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

constituents complaining that a bus due to arrive in their area of Hemel Hempstead did not turn up one morning. Sometimes the reason is a lack of drivers or maintenance, but often the reason is that a bus driver has slept in and has driven straight on to the next set of stops. That is unacceptable. When I ask people in factory canteens about the biggest problems in Hemel Hempstead, the inadequate bus service is their main criticism.

In contrast, we have the experience of the deregulation of the inter-city services. I am surprised that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not mention the incredible success of the commuter coach services, especially around London, which have been of great benefit to my constituents and have resulted in their being able to continue to work in London. They would not have been able to afford to stay in their jobs if they had been forced to rely on an out-dated and inefficient public transport system. That is the scene behind the White Paper and the Bill. Proposals have been made for extensive deregulation, but I believe that it is important to stress that we are not considering total deregulation. The proposals rightly pay attention to the need for more safety regulations.

There are, or should be, two objectives in our policy. We must have a more reliable, flexible and less costly service for the consumer, and secondly, we must make sure that we give the public the best value for money.

For the consumer, safety is probably the absolutely essential requirement, so I welcome the Government's commitment to an increased regime of safety requirements. I make two further points on that score. First, if the safety inspections are to be effective, the penalties must be swift and there must be no question of matters dragging on as a result of a contested appeal system. Secondly, I commend to the Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend a three-tier system in which an operator could lose part of his licence for one route or his licence for all the areas in which he is operating under this Bill, or could lose his operating licence for all bus services whether under this Bill or not.

On flexibility, much has been said about the ability to introduce taxis or minibuses as an alternative to buses, but little has been said about the possibility of co-ordinating rural bus services with the school bus network. Here, I believe, there are possibilities of real savings. During the past fortnight in my constituency, a rural route running from Potten End to Hemel Hempstead was cut by the county council. It was replaced immediately by a private contractor who, because he was operating on a school run, was very willing to continue during the rest of the day to provide a service for the ordinary passenger wanting to go and shop in the town. The service is now more regular than ever it was before the county council service stopped.

The evidence concerning prices is staggering. The most comprehensive report is the 1980 production by the United Kingdom Transport and Road Research Laboratory. It produced the statistic that the mean fare in areas covered by private bus services was 25 per cent. lower on rural and inter-urban runs than in areas covered by public sector contractors. This is hardly surprising. The reasons were that they used lower-cost premises, had greater flexibility of staff, including part-timers and mechanic-drivers, had more one-man operations and used more small vehicles —a correct response to the market.

As regards value for money, I believe that the prime consideration should be competition. If the same or a better service can be provided at the same or a reduced cost, that is the essential test of efficiency. But we must make sure that that competition is fair and frequent. It is no good having competition with municipal bus services if they are not putting their assets in their accounts at a proper valuation or are in various other ways seeking to lower the costs that would appear in a normal private sector company's accounts.

Similarly, it is no good having large undertakings able to buy routes. Therefore I welcome the proposals of my right hon. and hon. Friends for breaking up the National Bus Company. However, I must ask why this does not apply to London, where, above all, it is needed.

I want to put a question to my hon. Friend on creaming off services, which I hope he will reply to in winding up. How would the competition requirements work where, say, the middle part of a route might well be profitable whereas the two ends would, under the present system, be unprofitable? Surely the answer is to make sure that the route is treated as a whole and is subject to competition.

This Bill will be a tremendous advance for the bus passengers in my constituency. I am sure that they will find they have a better service, as has already been proved in the one area which has undertaken to operate a private sector service in advance of the Bill.

I commend this Bill to the House.

7.45 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): We have heard in this debate about the effect that this Bill will have on passengers, and I think that there will be quite devastating effects, particularly in rural and suburban areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) explained, quite rightly, the effect that this Bill is going to have on road safety. I should think that in the chaos that will result from the operation of this Bill thousands of people will be injured, maimed or even killed in the rat-race competition that will exist on the roads. It is the biggest setback to road safety that has ever come before this House.

I do not want to pursue those lines in the limited time available to me, because I speak as a sponsored Member of Parliament of the Transport and General Workers Union, which is the union most affected, and indeed a member of the passenger branch of that union. I want to talk about the impact that this Bill will have on the jobs of drivers, conductors and inspectors in the PTEs, in the municipal bus undertakings, in the National Bus Company and, not least, among taxi drivers, whether employees or owner-drivers. They have not been mentioned a great deal in this Bill and they are seriously affected by its provisions.

The whole Bill is quite explicit that manpower will be reduced, and it is my contention that this will be effected by severe reductions in services. Certainly the services will exist on the more profitable routes, as has been said in the debate, but in the rural and suburban areas services will disappear altogether—that will be the effect of this Bill—and jobs will be lost as a result.

On the question of manpower, the explanatory memorandum states:

> "Public sector manpower will decrease by some 50,000 as a result of the transfer of the operations of the National Bus Company to the private sector; a further decrease is expected as a result of improved efficiency in public sector bus operations."

What that means is that services will be cut.

On page ix, it is stated, in reference to the public sector:

"the transfer of the bus operations of PTEs and of district and regional councils to companies will involve transitional costs (mainly on professional fees) of about £1m. Where competition causes a reduction in the scale of some public sector operators, there may be redundancy costs."

There will be redundancy costs on a very large scale indeed. Let us take the 50,000 employees of the National Bus Company, that highly successful, efficient and profitable nationalised industry which the Secretary of State is aiming to destroy. Clearly the Government do not envisage that all 50,000 will merely change their employer. Jobs will go. The competitive successor companies will not run routes to rural villages. They will not run in the evening or on Sundays. It would be quite contrary to their purpose so to do because their raison d'être is to make a profit, not provide a service. So many more thousands of jobs will be lost in that sphere.

The same applies to the companies which will succeed the municipal undertakings. They will not be competing fairly with the privateers. The Secretary of State has seen to that in this Bill. They will be competing with one hand tied behind their backs, waiting for the day when the successor companies that he has created disappear again entirely into the private sector.

The privateers are in this business for profit, not for the comfort, safety or convenience of passengers. They will cut down to the bare minimum that they can get away with in questions of maintenance and cleanliness, because not to do so would reduce their profits. The people they employ need not be full-time bus men. As long as he holds a PSV licence there is nothing to stop a driver working for a number of firms or working in a completely different occupation at night or during part of the day and then moonlighting as a driver for low wages and in bad conditions. Does the Secretary of State know the sort of wages that many private coach operators pay their drivers? The men are often paid pin-money wages in the hope that they can make up their wages in tips. These are the people who will be the first to jump at the pickings to be had from becoming privateers under this Bill.

Indeed, the Bill recognises that there will be lower standards. Clause 81(3), which deals with tendering for subsidised services, says quite specifically:

"An invitation to tender under this section may not include conditions with respect to the terms of employment of persons to be employed in providing any service to which the invitation to tender relates."

They must not even look at service and the conditions of the drivers in the particular industry.

I have already mentioned taxis and taxi drivers and hire cars. Clause 14 takes away powers which have existed for nearly 140 years to limit the number of taxis. What will be the effect of this on, for example, the owner-drivers so dear to the Conservative party? Many people in my constituency invest their redundancy pay in taxis. Are we to have unlimited numbers of taxis plying for hire on the roads? Many will go out of business. Their owners will lose their livelihoods and their businesses. That will be the effect on them of unbridled competition.

Some of the Bill's provisions are ludicrous. Let us take the provision in clause 9 that deals with carrying passengers at separate fares. As a result, needless competition with buses will be created. I ask hon. Members to imagine the situation at 11 pm on a Friday or Saturday night, when four people sharing a cab all want to go to different destinations. Who will be dropped off first? Who will be dropped off last? Who is going to pay what? Which direction will the taxi take first? After squabbling and fighting with one another, the passengers will probably all turn on the poor taxi driver. That is the effect that clause 9 will have.

By any standards this is a bad Bill. I agreed with the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) that even if the Secretary of State wished to pursue his mania for privatisation, he could have done so in a far better way. For example he could have considered franchising. I would not have supported that, but the fact remains that he should not have wiped out road service licensing, as he has done in the Bill. The only thing that gives me some comfort is that if the Bill is enacted it will come into operation on 1 October 1986. It will take six to 12 months for the chaos resulting from it to come home to the people, and the effects will particularly hit those in the rural and suburban areas. That means that their dissatisfaction will coincide with the date of the next general election. Conservative Members will have many difficult questions to answer in those constituencies affected, and will probably lose them as a result of going through the Lobby tonight.

7.50 pm

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): Whenever I listen to trade-union sponsored Opposition Members, I reflect on what their forebears would think of them. Those who came in in the late 19th century full of radical ideas that were right for their time have been succeeded by people who oppose every change and are the most conservative Members of Parliament.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has rightly chosen the most radical option open to him — the introduction of competition into an area that has become almost synonymous with monopoly. Slowly and imperceptibly over the past 50 years the bus services have come to be run for the benefit of the operators and their staff and not for the benefit of the customer. Too often timetables are suited to vehicle availability and not to consumer demand. Too often urban and rural bus routes owe much more to history than to present requirements.

Nor is it surprising that monopoly operators' costs are considerably higher than those of the private sector. There is no spur to efficiency. Whenever losses increase, they simply go back to their sponsoring councils and ask for an increase in their annual subsidies. For them there is no danger of lost jobs or of a visit to the bankruptcy court. For many years there has been no true competition.

It is not only the operators whom we must blame. Far too often councils of all political persuasions have forked out subsidies without proper scrutiny. For some councils, particularly in the municipal areas, a subsidised and inefficient public transport system has become part of their political creed and has become necessary for dogmatic reasons, at whatever cost. Others have either bowed to local political pressure on routes or have simply failed to compare the subsidy required by their operators per mile with those of similar operators in other parts of the country. They have simply failed to use sensible housekeeping techniques.

We cannot say with absolute certainty what will happen as a result of the Bill. Competition breeds uncertainty and the market's reaction is unpredictable. However, like

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

other hon. Members, I can say what is likely to happen. We know what happened with the deregulation of long-distance routes. We know that many new routes have come into being, that there has been a real fall in the level of fares and that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of passengers. We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) about the happy experience in the Hereford trial area. We know about the experience in Norfolk, where the same service was run for a considerably lower subsidy. We also know that the National Bus Company and other public sector operators have considerably higher costs per mile than their private sector competitors.

So the evidence is that there will be an increase in the services available and a decrease in the subsidies needed as a result of the Bill. Yet we must bear in mind that replicating the success of the Hereford trial area and of the long-distance coach deregulation depends crucially on the detailed implementation of the Bill. For example, there would be little point in simply denationalising the NBC as a whole. That would simply create a private sector monopoly where we previously had a public sector monopoly. If we are to obtain proper competition, the NBC must be split into a number of relatively small units. They must be small enough so that they can be bought by local management and employees, and so that their size and ability to absorb interim losses does not deter private sector operators from entering the market. Yet they must be big enough to compete with the municipal operators and the PTEs.

There is no ideal size for any one part of the country, but each different unit must be looked at from the standpoint of the market, and the competition in the area. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must make it clear to the management of the NBC that he will judge its proposals on its ability to increase competition alone.

My right hon. Friend must also be careful about the way in which he allows councils to tender for routes. We have seen evidence in the NHS of the way in which tendering terms can be rigged to favour the in-house work force. There is a danger that unless my right hon. Friend is extremely careful, the same sort of factors will operate in tendering for bus routes. Through the tendering process, my right hon. Friend must ensure that we maximise competition. He must not be afraid to react very quickly to enforce the splitting up of the large municipal operations and the PTEs where that would increase competition.

I firmly believe that the Bill will result in better services, lower fares and lower subsidies, and that it will be good for the consumer, the taxpayer and the ratepayer. But the passage of the Bill will not, in itself, guarantee that. I look to my right hon. Friend to ensure that he takes every decision with a view to increasing competition.

7.57 pm

Mr. Harry Cowans (Tyne Bridge): I apologise in advance to the House because I am a member of a Committee that is sitting upstairs and I shall not be here to listen to the Minister's concluding speech.

I would have found the speeches of many Conservative Members more credible if there had been some sign at the beginning that the reasoned amendment would be accepted. The Select Committee took evidence from passengers, operators and others involed right across the industry. The Secretary of State would have us believe that people really want the Bill. He could easily have proved that by accepting the reasoned amendment. All the evidence would then have been available to hon. Members, who could have made up their own minds on the matter. But the truth is radically different. If the Minister does not intend to accept the reasoned amendment, there is an onus on him to prove that the Bill will work.

On the balance of evidence presented to the Committee, at least there were expressions of grave concern, many of which came from bodies that normally support the Conservatives, and at worst there was outright opposition. But alternatives were proposed also. The amendment asks that the report of the Transport Committee be made available to all right hon. and hon. Members so that they can make up their minds on the evidence presented to it before the Bill is enacted. We are not asking for a great deal. I speak now as Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport. We worked long and hard and we took advice from everybody who asked to appear before us. The benefit of that evidence should be made available to the House.

What are we asking the House to do? The Committee will be in a position to present its report to the House within the next two weeks and all the evidence for and against could then be made available to hon. Members. That is all I wish to say as Chairman of the Committee.

If the Minster is not prepared to accept the amendment, I can draw only one conclusion, that he does not wish right hon. and hon. Members to have the benefit of this information before they make up their minds. When the Minister winds up, I hope that in his opening words he will say that he accepts the amendment.

I acknowledge that the Bill states that people can operate concessionary fare schemes. Of course they can. But what good is it to have a brand new pass tucked in one's top pocket or handbag if the service one wishes to use no longer runs? That is precisely what happened in Hereford. Five and six buses arrived together, with large gaps between the services. Conservative Members may laugh, but I shall quote one of their supporters, a busman who went to the other place. Referring to Hereford, he said:

> "There are not enough passengers to justify the number of buses which fill the narrow streets of Hereford, upsetting the shopkeepers and others. It is perfectly obvious that there is wasteful competition. The position is unstable and it must be a matter of surprise that it has continued in this way for so long."

That was one of the Government's supporters speaking, yet Conservative Members have the audacity to try to convince the Opposition of the rightness of their case. This same supporter said of the trial area in Hereford:

> "But, looked at as a prototype for the rest of Britain, scrutiny of this gem shows that it is no more than paste."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 October 1984; Vol. 456, c. 307.]

I think that we would all applaud that.

As to the Tyne and Wear metro, is it not ironic that there was a system that was the envy of the world—even the Minister and the Secretary of State thought that it was a marvellous concept, and have said so—yet the co-ordinated transport system which made it possible is to be removed from the local authority? Surely if one believes that something is marvellous, one does not remove the means of building it up.

There is no provision in the Bill to deal with the congestion that will occur in city centres. The objective of

private operators is to make a profit, and they will pick up the lucrative routes and operate at the peak times. As a result, there will be a massive build-up in city centres with no controlling provision in the Bill. This will lead to a free-for-all. If the Government are so worried about the consumer, they might give a passing thought to the pedestrian.

There is no sense to the Government's argument on the rural lines. The Conservatives forget that it was they who changed the legislation. It was they who made it easier for a person to obtain a licence by application to the traffic commissioners. The only criterion applied by the traffic commissioners under the previous legislation was that, as long as it was not against the public interest, the applicant could be granted a licence. If that is so, where are the queues of people making application under the provisions of that Conservative legislation? I was a member of the Standing Committee which considered that legislation in its passage through the House. At that time, the Conservatives claimed that people would flock to apply for licences. The Conservatives sponsored that legislation, yet they now have the audacity to complain about the lack of rural services. That legislation did not work, so it is back to the drawing board. But I have news for the Government: this Bill will not work either, and it will be back to the drawing board once more. In the meantime, the people whom the Government are allegedly looking after—the poor, the weak and the disabled—will be deprived of services.

Who on earth wants to run a bus service that does not make a profit? Conservative Members talk about free competition. It is an irony that it is all right for the local authority to subsidise those services on which it cannot make a fast buck, but the Government will not permit competition in a free market. The Bill is concerned with hiving off the lucrative runs for private enterprise, with the local taxpayer having to pick up the leavings.

Even the Minister did not claim, as did the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), that Hereford was a success. Nor, indeed, did the White Paper claim that it was a success. Does not the hon. Member for Enfield, North find it strange that not one trial was undertaken in a major conurbation, yet it is the major conurbations which will have these schemes thrust upon them?

I believe that, just as happened in the case of the Local Government Bill, it will not be long before this matter is back for consideration in the House when the Conservatives have mail bags full of complaints from people who cannot get buses, and once again it will be back to the drawing board.

It is not too late to amend the Bill and to consider the options that will emerge from a study of the report of the Select Committee. I have heard Conservative Members claim many times that they will put the country back on its feet. I did not realise that this was how they intended to do it.

8.10 pm

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): There were good reasons for the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans)—the Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport — not being able to visit Hereford and Worcester, and I do not criticise him for that. However, I went there and what I saw convinced me that the experiment in that area had been a terrific success.

I am a member of the Select Committee, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry). I do not think that it was right of him to talk about Hereford and Worcester in the way that he did and about the reservations that some people expressed about some of the effects of deregulation, without at least mentioning that everyone to whom we spoke who actually used buses was convinced that the experiment had improved matters and did not want to return to the previous system.

Mr. Stott: When the hon. Gentleman visited Hereford and Worcester, did he speak to the planning officer of the city of Hereford and obtain his views? I have met that gentleman on no less than three occasions, and he maintains that the experiment in the city has put back environmental improvement for at least 20 years. He said that the experiment was a total disaster.

Mr. Parris: Members of the Select Committee spoke to many members of the council, and I think that the planning officer was a member of the panel that we interviewed. I asked the panel members whether they used buses. Not one of them did, other than a Liberal councillor to whom the other members deferred for experience of how services had improved under deregulation.

I shall not vote against the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough, because I, too, regret the fact that the Government are going ahead with Second Reading before they have had time to see the report that the Select Committee will produce shortly. However, I shall not withold my support for the Second Reading of the Bill because I am sure that deregulation will bring real benefits to the bus industry and its passengers.

Let us imagine that Britain did not have a system of free competition for the sale of food and household goods. Let us imagine that county council policy — quite understandably—was to seek to ensure that each locality was served by one adequate licensed grocer's shop. In return for the award of an effective monopoly, the county council quite properly attached to the licence conditions relating to the range, quality and price of the goods and the hours of opening of the shop. The argument for monopolies—quite plausibly—would be that it would be inefficient to duplicate facilities. The argument for attaching conditions to a licence—equally plausibly—would be to prevent the abuse of monopoly.

Let us imagine that it was common practice to grant licences to operate groceries in profitable populated localities on condition that the grocer was prepared to accept groceries in unprofitable areas where the shops met a social need, but where no reasonable profit could be made. Let us imagine that the Government of the day proposed to deregulate that market, allowing people to set up groceries wherever they liked, often in competition with each other, some even—if I may make such a preposterous suggestion—next door to each other. What would be the reaction? I think that I would be right to assume that deep alarm would be felt on both sides of the House and throughout the country.

A Select Committee, genuinely anxious to hear from all who wished to testify either for or against the proposal, would have invited testimony. Learned men would have volunteered—professors and retailing consultants. They would have explained why the supposed benefits would not have materialised. They would have said that the demand for over-the-counter groceries was not elastic—

[Mr. Parris]

one either needed a bar of soap, or one did not. They would have concluded that prices ultimately would be pushed up, not down, as a finite volume of trade was spread over an expanding number of outlets and retailing hours.

The shop workers' union would have given evidence. The spectre of bucket shops, part-time grocers, amateur grocers and moonlighting grocers would have been raised. After that, the Committee would have taken evidence from the local authorities. It would have been genuine, earnestly felt evidence. The men who gave it would have been intelligent and hard-working people, convinced of the value of their labours. They would have told us how they were using their licensing powers creatively and imaginatively to promote standards of social provision, good practice, helpful service and adequate stocking.

Their evidence would have been persuasive. They would have told spine-chilling stories—true stories—of pirate corner shops overcharging, of cut-throat competition, of elderly people being confused about prices, weights and measures, and they would have raised the spectre of the get-rich-quick grocers creaming off the profitable passing trade in Tizer and fairy cakes, leaving the good old licensed stores to look after the old people, the housewife and the sale of pints of milk and loaves of bread where no easy profit could be maintained. They would have said that only a licensing system could sustain such practices. They would have assured us that it would be a mistake to put our faith in a free market for the sale of groceries.

Our faith would have been shaken further by a delegation from the Association of Trading Standards Officers. Its evidence would have been grave and sincere and full of foreboding. Disinfection, refrigeration, stock turnover and due respect for sell-by dates would all have been earnestly discussed. Salmonella would have been mentioned in passing. They would have suggested that food standards would be the first casualties in a trading war between grocers. They would have said that when the war was over the newcomers would revert to high prices and low standards, and the county would have lost its licensing authority to prevent that.

Hot on the trail of the counties would have come the metropolitan authorities. They would have explained the integrated retailing policy that they had developed in their areas — the right shops in the right places; shopper representation on the board of every store; consumer education to encourage wise purchasing policies by the shopper and a controlled distributive trade to ensure the minimum number of lorries to deliver efficiently. They would have detailed all those great benefits, and the eyes of the members of the Committee would have opened wide at the thought of all those great benefits being threatened by deregulation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough would have stepped forward, olive branch in hand and said, "Let us admit that all has not been as it might have been with the grocery trade. Let us confess that certain stores could be better run and that some supermarket chains have taken licensing authorities for a ride. But gentlemen, we can deal with that in a civilised way without all the vulgar instability of a free-for-all. Let franchising for the running of shops be put out to competitive tender. Let the bargaining and the cut and thrust of competition take place not on the streets with shoppers as the hostages, but in the smoking room, between county councils and the established grocers."

What would the Committee have concluded, having heard all that evidence? Would it be conservative and advocate the retention of the status quo, or would it have dared to be radical and recommend the excitement and uncertainty of competitive tendering for a grocer's licence? Only time will tell. All that can be said with confidence is that, having considered whether there should be a free-for-all in shopkeeping, with two or even three grocers competing for the same custom in the same area, the Committee would have heard little to convince it that such a regime could possibly be acceptable, and much to persuade it that it could not.

When members of the Select Committee were in Hereford and Worcester, seeing for themselves the effects of deregulation, as I came out of the meeting having heard an afternoon's evidence, a lady bus passenger asked me whether she could give evidence. I said that it was unlikely that the Committee would hear her unless she was part of a body or represented an organisation. She asked how she could tell the Select Committee that the bus passengers in the town approved of deregulation. I suggested that she asked people to sign a petition. She walked out of the hotel foyer, and in the next post to London came a petition with 100 signatures from people who used the bus service to that lady's council estate. All of them said that the service had improved immeasurably since Midland Red (West) Ltd. had lost its monopoly and that they did not want a return to the previous position.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State believes, as I do, in a free market, and I know that he has faith that the free market can bring benefits. One journalist says that he is batty. If to believe that human beings may not operate at their best when their efforts are not open to challenge by others makes one batty, I am proud to call myself batty, too, and to vote, as I shall, for the Bill's Second Reading.

8.19 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I wish to oppose the Bill. First, let me declare an interest as a sponsored member of the Transport and General Workers Union and a former bus worker. In addition, in my constituency there are two bus garages — Parkhead, which is one of the largest in Strathclyde PTE, and Baillieston, which is a Scottish Bus Group garage. Many hundreds of my constituents depend upon the bus industry for their livelihood. Thousands more depend upon public transport, as many of them do not possess or have access to a car. In parts of Glasgow, 70 to 80 per cent. of the population have no alternative to public transport if they want to go anywhere.

In my constituency, adult unemployment is over 30 per cent. and goodness only knows what the youth unemployment level is. Good, reliable, cheap public transport is an essential if people are to have a reasonable quality of life.

In his opening remarks the Secretary of State referred to my prediction of five years ago. What the then Secretary of State failed to do, the present Secretary of State seems determined to do with this Bill — to destroy public transport in Britain. My prediction may not be so far out. Only time will tell.

There is a simple reason for the decline in the use of public transport. People who have the use of a car prefer to use it and the vast majority will continue to do so, even if public transport is free. The car is the most popular form of transport and there is nothing wrong in that.

However, it is those who do not have access to a car whom we want to attract on to public transport, and we want them to make as many journeys as possible. It is the Government's economic policies which have created over 4 million unemployed, which has had the greatest effect on public transport, in the past five years. Unemployed people do not travel to work and have a greatly reduced need to travel for leisure, recreation, culture, shopping, visiting, and so on. That, in turn, affects the viability of many routes and services as well as the entire community. Get people back to work and we shall see great increases in the demand for public transport.

Let me pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of working men and women who operate public transport services of all kinds in this country—services which we all take for granted. Transport workers have a difficult job, working all sorts of hours in all sorts of conditions, such as the weather that we are presently experiencing, yet they seldom fail to operate the services. They face the continual stress and responsibility of driving in all kinds of conditions, serving the public, and, unfortunately, the ever-present threat of assault and abuse. In addition, most of them have to work overtime, including rest days, to earn a reasonable living. I should love to see the Secretary of State out at 4 am in freezing conditions or driving a bus until midnight on a Saturday and Sunday. It might even change his attitude to transport workers.

What is the Secretary of State's attitude to transport workers? What thanks are bus workers to get for providing over 50 years of relative stability in their industry? No thanks whatever. In fact, a kick in the teeth is much more likely. Clause 76 enables the Secretary of State to make regulations for compensating persons for loss of employment or loss or diminution of emoluments—in other words, redundancy or less pay and poorer conditions.

Privatisation will be a disaster for the bus industry. Proper co-ordination will become impossible, putting an end to integrated timetables, through ticketing, through services and nationwide marketing. Cross-subsidy will be impossible, so many services will be reduced or withdrawn. Over 50,000 bus workers will be transferred to the private sector without any choice as to who their new employers will be. Jobs will be lost, union agreements torn up, pension schemes, sick pay and holiday agreements put at risk, and hard-won terms and conditions of service thrown out of the window.

The sad thing is that all that is unnecessary. The National Bus Company is making a profit, has repaid Government loans and improved productivity. Its crime is that it is succeeding as a publicly owned company and that is unacceptable to the Secretary of State.

It is most unlikely that new small operators will purchase new buses. It is much more likely that they will buy reject old vehicles from the NBC or PTEs. However, if they do buy new vehicles they are more likely to be imported than is presently the case. Has the Secretary of State estimated the effects of the Bill on companies such as Leyland and Alexander's Coach Builders? How many jobs will be lost in that respect as a result of the Bill?

I wish to deal with some Scottish aspects of the Bill, in particular, the Scottish Bus Group and British Rail services within Strathclyde region and Strathclyde PTE. The Secretary of State has said that he has no plans to privatise the Scottish Bus Group at present. Everyone believes that it is only a matter of time before it will be privatised. Why does he not come clean and tell us his true intentions now? It is not in the best interests of the company, the work force or the passengers not to know how long the company will be allowed to operate as it is at present.

The Strathclyde rail review is the result of long negotiations between British Rail and Strathclyde region. The Bill could mean the disintegration of the review. That will lead to an adverse effect on British Rail's income so that it will have to find more and more ways of keeping costs down. Therefore, there will be more and more service reductions or withdrawals, especially in the evening. It will mean taking a new look at many services such as the electrification and investments proposed for the Glasgow to Ayrshire corridor. If the main routes between Ayr and Glasgow are to be ripped off by cowboy operators, what chance is there of improvement in real services? What is the point of British Rail spending millions of pounds if cowboy bus operators are to cream off all the profits?

There is also the unanswerable environmental aspect of the proposed electrification schemes. In addition, the A77 Glasgow to Ayr road is one of the most dangerous in Scotland and the last thing that we need are convoys of clapped out buses on that road. What will the Secretary of State for Scotland tell his constituents if the Ayr electrification scheme does not go ahead because of the Bill? It is most disappointing that he is not present in the House when matters affecting Scotland are being discussed.

Transport operators work from 4 am to midnight, not from 8 am to 6 pm as would be the case for many new operators. The effect on integration tickets, transcards, interlink services and feederlink services will be detrimental in Strathclyde.

If deregulation is the answer to all the transport problems, why is London being left out of the Bill? I am not arguing for it to be included, but is that not rather inconsistent? Or does not the Secretary of State believe in his own proposals? However, he is content to break up Strathclyde's transport system, and could conceivably cause 1,000 jobs to be lost in that area.

Strathclyde contains many uneconomic urban bus routes which will not attract the proposed subsidy for rural services. In October I asked the PTE for information on the costs of all its services in Glasgow. Let me quote from the director's reply:

"it is broadly fair to say that on the last available figures out of 67 services only 4 more than recovered their total costs, 4 were broadly break even while the balance required support. Of this balance of 59, 11 were of such a social nature that their revenue earned did not recover 50 per cent. of their costs."

What will happen to those services?

Strathclyde has the lowest level of bus support in conurbations throughout the United Kingdom. It is at the forefront of the development of microbuses in some of the largest housing schemes in Europe. Another new development is the swap body concept for rural transport. We also have the metroliner, new city buses and a door-to-door dial-a-bus service. Most important of all, it has the

[Mr. David Marshall]

first specifically designed double-deck vehicles capable of carrying disabled passengers and operating on regular day services.

Strathclyde has a comprehensive system of concessionary fares. It covers 5,000 square miles and serves half of Scotland's population. I can foresee that literally hundreds of new operators will emerge as a result of the Bill. It will not be possible to have a properly operated system of concessionary fares. The public are bound to suffer as a result. Many rail services and bus innovations are at the development stage and need protection from predators if they are to succeed. They need time to become established.

If London is to be excluded from the Bill because of special circumstances, an equally good case can be made out for Strathclyde. Why does not the Secretary of State exclude Strathclyde from the Bill for the time being to give it the same opportunities as London? Will he give the House an assurance that he will reconsider the position of Strathclyde?

There are three main objectives behind the Bill, none of them concerned with providing better services to the public. It seems to undermine trade union organisation and solidarity in the transport industry; to undermine local government even further and to cut public sector manpower and create further reductions in public expenditure at the expense of those less fortunate members of the community—the non-car-owner, the non-driver, the old and the young, the handicapped and the disabled, the unemployed and the poor.

I am grateful to Councillors Laing and Meldrum of Strathclyde region for providing me with a brief of the effects of the Bill on the disabled in Strathclyde. Presumably, the disabled face the same problems in other areas. Time allows me to quote only one paragraph, but I should be happy to let the Secretary of State have a copy of this three-page document. It says:

"With the development of an uncoordinated system of public transport, with many different types of vehicle being used, it will be difficult for a disabled individual to plan a journey. For example, a blind person may not know whether he enters the bus from the rear or the front; a person with a locomotor impairment may not know whether he can get back from a journey if the bus changes from a low floor coach to a high floor coach. There is also the problem for the mentally handicapped, who may have been on courses to familiarise themselves with the bus system. After privatisation, they may have to use a more unfriendly service which creates a more hostile and stressful environment."

I urge the House to oppose the Second Reading.

8.30 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I warmly welcome the Bill, and I shall confine my remarks to part I, which is concerned with bus deregulation.

Critics of the Bill argue that it will bring a loss of services. All that we have heard from Opposition Members today is that we must protect the status quo. We have heard nothing about how to improve rural, indeed any, services. Not even did the Liberal spokesman, the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross)—who has done the usual Liberal thing of making a short speech and scuttling off—want more than the status quo.

What is the status quo that Opposition Members want to perpetuate? Patronage of buses and coaches in Britain has halved since 1953, down from 82 billion to 40 billion passenger kilometres per annum. The demand between 1972 and 1982 fell by 30 per cent., that at a time when the overall demand for transport was increasing rapidly. During that time, subsidies rose enormously. As the editor of one of the two excellent newspapers in my constituency, the *Cumberland News*, wrote—*[Interruption.]* He wrote a balanced editorial and he would object to Labour Members suggesting that he edits a Tory newspaper, considering that he is the vice-chairman of the Guild of Newspaper Editors and will be at the House of Commons tomorrow night to lobby us on the question of VAT; Opposition Members can tackle him then, if they wish. He wrote in a balanced editorial:

"In fairness, the Government is facing reality. For even in these days when figures of money sound like telephone numbers, the increase in bus subsidy in 10 years, from £10 million to more than £50 million, is truly staggering—and it has not controlled fares."

I might add that it has not altered the decline in rural services, either.

Most criticism of the Bill has been about its effects on rural services. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) quoted the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Mrs. Anne Harrison, the chairman of that body, was quoted in my other excellent local newspaper, the *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*, last week as saying:

"We are concerned that this legislation sounds the death knell of the rural bus."

I respect the WI, but Mrs. Harrison's warning is 15 or 20 years too late. What rural bus is she speaking of? The newspaper reported her as saying:

"Commercial operators will swarm like bees round a honeypot to the busy town routes, leaving rural ones with no bus services at all."

I have the largest constituency in England, 1,200 square miles, and what she fears has happened already; large chunks of my constituency have no services, and those with services have completely inadequate ones.

Are our critics arguing that we should freeze matters at their present levels? That seems to have been what Opposition Members have been arguing today. They have not spoken of how to halt the decline in rural and city services, just that we should leave things alone and keep the jobs for the boys. Any hon. Member who is arguing in favour of the present system of regulation is inevitably arguing in favour of a system which will gradually lead to the complete disappearance of all rural routes.

One must speak to people of a much older generation than that to which I belong to find someone who has seen buses in rural areas on Sundays. I hear Opposition Members talking about Sunday buses being affected by the Bill. We have not had Sunday buses for years. They have all gone.

Opposition Members complain that there might not be an integrated transport system enabling people to get home at night when they come off the train at perhaps 10 o'clock or leave the cinema. In most parts of rural Cumbria we have not had late night buses for years. The present system has given us precious few rural routes, and those that exist charge exorbitant fares.

I respect Opposition Members having to toe the line of the Transport and General Workers Union. It is legitimate for them to defend the rights of their members, but they must not say that they are concerned with rural services and the decline in bus services generally and go on to make bogus arguments about safety, concessionary fares and so on.

When the trade unions and others say that we must not interfere with the present system, they mean that scores of villages in my constituency should be condemned to the present system of not having any buses, or those that have buses should continue to have inadequate services. I have in mind the beautiful little village of Kirkoswald, which even now has only one bus a day. However, that village is well off compared with the neighbouring village of Dufton, which has only one bus each Tuesday and one each Saturday. But even that is better than the village of Roadhead, which has only one bus each Wednesday, like the village of Newbiggin, which has one each Tuesday. Those who live in the village of Dundraw must walk a mile in the hope of getting a bus passing on the main road.

Mr. Peter Pike *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: I will not give way because I do not want to detain the House for more than a few minutes longer.

If Opposition Members are boasting that we are having the marvellous achievement of 50 years of regulation, since the 1930s, and that what we have is what state control and a fully integrated system has achieved, that is a hollow boast in my constituency—*[Interruption.]* I think I hear Opposition Members shouting that I shall not have my constituency for long. I assure them that my majority would have been 10 times larger had the Labour candidate not disappeared through the floor, so to speak, having lost his deposit.

We see the result of 50 years of regulation. Opposition Members should be ashamed of themselves for wanting to retain that. If the pattern of the last 10 years is repeated, most of the hamlets and villages in my constituency will not have any buses by 1995, even with massive subsidies, and the subsidy support over the years has been absolutely enormous.

In Cumbria, revenue support in 1974 was £115,000. In 1984 it was £2·345 million, an increase of 2,000 per cent. Even I do not condemn that per se. I would support an increase in subsidy of that extent, if it had worked and increased the number of passengers. However, in the same period the number of passengers using buses dropped by 23 per cent., from 88 million to 66 million, in the Ribble catchment area, which includes Cumbria.

Does anybody seriously suggest that that trend can be reversed? The answer is no. We have seen on the graphs how the number of people using the buses has declined: the line on the graph goes straight down. The line on the graph showing the number of passenger miles travelled also goes straight down. But the line showing the amount of subsidy support on an expotential curve goes straight upwards. Unless we take radical action now, we shall see the escalation of subsidies, fewer passengers and fewer jobs for bus drivers.

Cumbria has a population of 480,000, 26,000 of whom travel by bus to work. If the pattern from 1974 to 1984 was repeated over the next 10 years, by 1994 the bus subsidy for Cumbria would be £50 million. In other words, the subsidy given to each person travelling to work by bus would be £2,000 per person per annum. On that basis, it would be cheaper to buy each person a Mini Metro because over 10 years we should have given them £10,000 each to travel to work by bus.

Allowing for everybody else using buses, including those who travel socially, the subsidy would be £460 per person per annum. At that rate is would be cheaper to buy each of them one of Clive Sinclair's C5 trikes. Indeed, we could buy each bus traveller a new trike each year. It would be cheaper to do that than to pay the bus subsidy.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman should contain himself.

Another criticism of the Bill comes from vested interest groups. The Transport and General Workers Union claimed that safety would suffer when cowboy operators took to the roads. My constituents and I strongly resent that criticism of so-called cowboy operators. Private operators are already operating buses on school runs. If Opposition Members are calling them cowboys, perhaps they would care to come to my constituency, name names and allow the council to take action against the so-called dangerous cowboy operators. Critics of the Bill also refer to jobs. Of course jobs will be affected. But for how long do Opposition Members imagine that we can guarantee the job of every worker in the National Bus Company while the number of passengers that it carries continues to fall rapidly? We can only guarantee those jobs, and the jobs of others working in public transport, by persuading more customers to use the services.

The level of rural services has been declining and will continue to decline. The Government's plans for deregulation represent the last hope of safeguarding and improving our rural services. The decline has gone on for far too long. I will do my utmost to make sure that rural services are maintained and improved. The best way of doing that is to vote for the Bill, as I shall do. I urge all my hon. Friends to vote for it too.

8.42 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): My constituency has a strong interest in seeing the Bill defeated. I would have preferred the debate to take place on some other day as, ironically, I have had to cancel a driving test in order to speak in it. However, in Barnsley, East, being unable to drive is no great inconvenience, thanks to the cheap, efficient service provided by the south Yorkshire transport executive. The financing of that service has been made an issue by the Tories in many local elections, and they have been rebuffed by the vast majority of the local electors.

Three main issues affect my constituency. First, by choosing to put the Bill through, the Government are ignoring the will of the people. The electors of Barnsley, East have spelt out clearly their support for the present system. My constituents are aware of the dangers in a Bill that makes concessions to get-rich-quick cowboys and hives off the lucrative routes without any compassion for those using the less profitable routes. My constituents also know about the subsidies required to maintain services over all the routes, and in elections they have given those subsidies overwhelming support. My constituents are also aware of the benefits to the less well off that are obtained through the cheap fares policy of the south Yorkshire transport executive.

It is big businesses and the better off who scream for tax cuts and rate cuts, and it is they who are listened to by this uncaring and cynical Government whose policies in every field ensure that the rich become richer and the poor poorer. These are strange days for democracy, when the Government overrule the wishes of the majority of the people.

[Mr. Terry Patchett]

The second issue is the service itself. We have sensible fares that people can afford, free travel for pensioners, and real services in rural areas where, as the Government know, no private company would dream of providing them. Will the Minister explain how an out-patient who regularly has to attend hospital in town for treatment, but cannot afford a taxi, is to get to the hospital if the rural bus service is disbanded? Will the ever-increasing costs be borne by the county's ambulance services while the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security is gleefully cutting hospital services?

The south Yorkshire transport executive has special buses to enable the wheelchair-bound to get into town. Do the Government really believe that a private company will provide such a caring service?

Thirdly, there is the question of jobs. There are two main bus depots, one in Shafton and one in Wombwell. The depots employ several hundred people, whose jobs will be put at risk by the Bill. That will be another wound to a community in an area where the Government and the coal board are seeking to destroy the traditional mining jobs and where a disastrously high rate of unemployment is rising still higher. There will be an effect on jobs in the town centre as well, because of the infrequency of services and the higher fares that will be extracted for the benefit of private profit.

I am sure that other right hon. and hon. Members will tell us more about the issues in the Bill and the effect that it will have on the quality of their constituents' lives. I can only hope that the House will stop selling out to the greedy and start caring for the needy, by voting against the Bill.

8.45 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Buses are a vital form of transport. Many people depend upon a bus service, as four households out of every 10 lack the use of a car, and yet the story of the bus service has been one of decline. Bus fares have increased by 30 per cent. more than either motoring costs or the cost of living, while, at the same time, services have diminished by some 15 per cent. Because there are fewer services and higher fares, fewer people take the bus. That vicious cycle can and should be reversed. The Opposition have attacked the spirit of competition. They will not squarely face the challenge of public bus transport provision. The Government will not shirk that responsibility. I support the principles enshrined in the Bill.

In two respects, the Government have the success of deregulation on their side. The long-distance coaches, attacked by Labour, have been set free, and that has resulted in some 700 applications for new services. That fact has been referred to only briefly by my hon. Friends and not at all by the Opposition.

Secondly, local bus deregulation has been shown to have worked in the trial areas of Norfolk, Exeter, Hereford and Worcester. The present system is not good for the bus user or the taxpayer. The Opposition say nothing about the limits on resources. The subsidy is hidden, for no one can see how much financial help is given to any specific route. The subsidy jumped from £10 million in 1972 to more than £500 million in 1982. Surely it is far better that we should see where the taxpayers' money is going. The subsidy should be visible and should go to needy services. Those services should not be hidden through inefficiency.

The present system stifles competition. The need for each local bus route to be licensed dates from 1930—the year of birth of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). After 55 years, the hon. Lady should recognise that it is necessary to move with the times. The title of the popular song of that year seems appropriate. The hon. Lady may recall it—"Time on my hands". That is exactly what the hon. Lady will have, as she waits for service under the present system.

The Opposition have not made one constructive suggestion for reversing the present decline. They are devoid of ideas. They will shore up inefficient, loss-making, overmanned monopolies rather than allow competition. Route licensing acts like a straightjacket. The present mini-monopolies stifle initiative. In York, for instance, the West Yorkshire Road Car Company tried —though it failed—to block a new service for tourists wishing to visit that fine historic city. The present operators have an air of self-satisfaction. They try to prevent the extension of services. I want more routes, better servicing and better safety standards. Over one fifth of buses fail their inspection stage, and that shows that the latter is essential. The Bill should make all those aims possible.

Hon. Members should consider the hidden subsidy on their own local services. How many York electors and York bus users realise that the present restricted service is subsidised by the taxpayer? How many realise that the subsidy has more than doubled from £162,000 in 1983-84 to £361,000 in 1984-85? Those figures do not take account of the £320,000 for old-age pensioner concessions. How much better it would be to offer concessionary fares to all operators. The Opposition do not mention that. That would help senior citizens and the disabled.

We need more flexibility in public transport. York has a park-and-ride scheme—a Socialist sop to a council that will not provide adequate car parking or encourage more effective modes. Private taxis and minibuses would have cost York ratepayers less than the council's bus undertaking.

There is a major area of bus policy that is not recognised in the Bill—a duty to ensure public bus mobility for the disabled. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take this matter on board. When county councils issue tender documents, they should ask what provision bus operators have made for the disabled through improvements in vehicle design, in the provision of routes and in staff training. When a person gets on a bus, he is often confronted immediately by a high step or a lack of handrails. The layout of the bus might be unfamiliar and a blind or partially sighted person might not know how the seats are arranged. There should be greater use of the system in Coventry where tactile symbols on the bus entrance indicate the type of layout that passengers can expect inside.

We should encourage the low step to be found on some buses and training to assist the handicapped. The special funds that the Bill envisages will, after enactment, enable such steps to be taken to make life as normal as possible for the disabled. A switch to different varieties of transport should not be allowed to be a step backwards to older and less appropriate vehicles for the disabled. Present design improvements should be pursued, such as, from the point of view of visually handicapped people, the use of clear contrasting colours to help passengers find their way around bus layouts and good lighting and bells that can be

found without unnecessary difficulty. There should be a duty on operators to consider the needs of the disabled in bus design and route provision.

The provision for shared taxis in the Bill is good news for the disabled. It is another area in which concessionary fares will apply. Staff attitudes can be trained. Hon. Members should imagine the plight of a blind person waiting at a bus stop in an unfamiliar area. A bus sails past because it is a request stop and the blind person does not know. Things might be different if the driver is trained to stop at the sight of a waiting passenger with a white stick and if a notice with tactile symbols is posted on the stop.

Local authorities are responsible for bus stops and the commission that accrues from advertising. They should use special grants that are available to assist the disabled through aids such as the talking bus stops in Western-super-Mare which tell the time and the estimated arrival time of the next bus and announce its approach.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich said that no experienced operators support these proposals. She shows a complete lack of knowledge of the industry or no care for public transport by making such a statement. The hon. Lady prefers to talk to the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) than to hear the facts, but I shall nevertheless quote no less an authority than Mr. Stuart Appleby, the president of the Bus and Coach Council. He says:

"People have been dictated to far too long. The quality of service has been dictated by the operator."

In response to comments by the Transport and General Workers Union, he said:

"I understand their concern for rural transport but I do not think that they need worry. The services they were talking about will continue operating."

If the Opposition prefer the objective view of bus users, I shall quote the Welsh Consumer Council:

"The present public transport system cannot continue as it is very much longer . . . A new way forward is needed. The Government's proposals provide a framework within which we believe a new and better transport system can be built".

We should reverse the system that has produced declining services and increasing blanket subsidies. The machinery of state regulations of more than half a century ago is more than creaking. The time has come to ensure a proper service at a reasonable cost. That means competition with the safety valve for truly uneconomic but socially necessary routes. I welcome the Bill and ask all right hon. and hon. Members who truely care about the provision of public transport to support its Second Reading.

8.55 pm

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): I am a senior member of the Select Committee on Transport and recently went to Worcester and Hereford. The House has heard about Worcester and Hereford but nobody has yet mentioned the woman leader of the Tory minority on Hereford city council, which opposes the Bill because of the way that city has suffered. I understand that the council's planning officer has conveyed that view to hon. Members in preparation for today's debate. Hereford has had a ghastly experience, but that is not to say that lessons have not been learned or that the strengthening of the licensing system would not prevent some of the excesses that have been experienced in the Worcester and Hereford trial.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said that he had heard no constructive suggestions from the Opposition. He will get positive comments from the Select Committee report. We shall try to produce an objective report—that is why we have tabled the amendment. Every right-minded hon. Member, including Conservative Members, should consider the cruel logic of the amendment. It would enable the House to have the benefit of the enormous information collected by the Select Committee. The study has been exhaustive.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) made an outstanding speech. The House should learn from what he said as nobody doubts his great experience in these matters, especially in regard to buses because of his association with the National Bus Company. He mentioned how the small operator can easily be put out of business. The man who runs the highly acclaimed Primrose service in Hereford and Worcester says it is not sufficiently profitable and that he is thinking of pulling out. He told me that wear and tear of vehicles is far greater in the stage carriage business than on long runs. If it were possible the operator would prefer to confine his business to holiday runs to the south of France. All sorts of skullduggery has arisen from that competition. The Midland Red is running services that it did not provide previously to drive the innovative service off the road. There has been a scramble for the bus stop in the heart of town, and because the buses cannot get on the roadway, they have been using the pathway.

Hereford city centre is extremely attractive, and I was glad to be there. We talked to members of the city council. The woman leader of the Labour minority asked pertinently why the White Paper did not apply to London. As a Londoner I could tell her that all hell would be let loose under the Bill's crude proposals. I cannot imagine what members of my union, the Transport and General Workers Union who are London busmen, would do if there was complete privatisation of buses of all sorts, sizes and qualities.

Members of the Select Committee talked to the traffic commissioner there. Although he did not disagree with the Bill as a whole, he said that he was afraid that as takings decrease as a result of competition with bigger operators —there will be bigger operators if the NBC is privatised — and profits decrease, safety will suffer first. Regulations about the interior of buses, such as those forbidding loose carpets and loose panelling will be affected. The test on public service vehicles that carry passengers is more severe than that on commercial vehicles. Some commercial operators may think that they can switch to buses on the cheap, but they cannot as they will discover in time. The traffic commissioner admitted that the rigidity of the safety standards, which we all want to see, would go.

In Committee the excessive nature of the Bill will become clear. Most of it is false arid doctrine, not wet doctrine, which appears from time to time from hon. Members on the Benches below the Gangway. Those hon. Members will take over the Tory party before it faces the next general election.

The proposals in the Bill are mad. I hope that the Bill is trimmed down. We could ensure that, if the House had the benefit tonight of the Select Committee's massive evidence. No one with practical experience of transport seems to like the Bill. There is a conflicting attitude about the effects that it will have on rural services. Privateers will not run services in rural areas merely for the love of it, merely to break even, nor if it provides a small profit, but only if it provides a big profit. Those are the only

[Mr. Sydney Bidwell]

conditions acceptable to them. When they discover other forms of road vehicle operation they will suddenly pull out altogether and leave people stranded.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) talked lovingly of having met a woman who said that the experimental area had been a great success, and that buses were more frequent than previously. But in the end bigger operators will drive out smaller operators. They could even run buses free of charge for a period. Predatory pricing would go on under privatisation and the struggle of the public service operator. That is going on at present, and will continue into the future unless there is a one-owner-driver vehicle.

There will be problems such as moonlighting. Drivers will not receive adequate medical attention. At present taxi drivers in London and elsewhere must undergo a stringent medical test. There will not be the present level of supervision, or the same wages standards and conditions, including pension arrangements. That is not true competition.

The taxi trade does not like the Bill. Taxi drivers are flexible. Taxi drivers outside London and many in London, although they have mixed feelings, think that it is possible to have taxi sharing, but do not believe that it can be done under the present system of hailing a taxi at the roadside. They believe that filling a taxi must be done by prior arrangement, which can be done at present. They do not mind an increase in those arrangements. One of my hon. Friends mentioned the position of women out at night, many of whom wish to take taxis because they feel safer doing so. I do not know why the Bill includes a taxi provision. For a long time taxi drivers have wanted special regulations that would properly assess their costs. It is the only transport service that is not relieved of VAT, which is one reason why taxi fares tend to be high.

I cannot discuss every facet of the Bill tonight, and I am aware of the promise to be reasonably short. However, I should say that the MVA Consultancy document on Plymouth estimates that under the Bill's crude arrangements, the rates in that area—which is a Tory one—would have to increase by about 22 per cent.

The Association of District Councils has got it right, and it represents authorities of all political colours. I hope that the Standing Committee will have available to it the considerable evidence heard by the Select Committee. The House should have had that evidence before this debate. I hope that many hon. Members will accept the logic of the work of Select Committee. Why do we have them? If they are not to obtain agreement among the parties on matters of common sense, they mean nothing. The Leader of the House said that he was proud of the work of the Select Committees. The work of the Select Committee on Transport will have been snubbed unless the House carries the amendment of the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry). If it does, the Bill will have to stand still until we receive the Select Committee's report in about a week or two.

9.6 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) would have wished to be here this evening if he were not abroad on parliamentary business, because we have discussed the effects of the Bill on Nottingham on various occasions. What has come through from the debate is that we have not heard one solid counter proposal from the Opposition. There are always a hundred reasons for doing nothing. What has come through is their love for the nanny state and of bureaucratic control for its own sake. The present system is a typical example of the 1930 ideology of rationalisation. It did not work well before the war, and it led to a 30-year decline in the bus industry. Everyone knows that it has continued for 30 years, but when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State proposes to do something about it, the immediate reaction is that his proposals are wrong and radical. But something must be done if the industry is not to die.

We heard precisely the same arguments a few years ago about the inter-city bus routes, and we need only consider the benefits that competition has brought there to see what can be within our grasp.

The inflexibility of the present controlled system means that when problems arise, we look only for further controls. As politicians and bureaucrats control the system, they have a vested interest in further controls. Nottingham's history is an example of that. Apart from introducing the bus lanes which beset every large city as a means of squeezing cars off the roads and forcing people into buses, before 1976 the Labour-controlled Nottingham authority introduced a mad scheme called the "zone and collar scheme". The idea was that if the authority could reduce the access points into the city and control them with traffic lights, which were always at red, it would force everyone to get out of their cars and use the buses. Of course, it did not work and was rejected by the local electorate, but it cost £800,000. But it is not untypical of other lunatic schemes introduced from time to time by transport authorities.

The council also planned to increase the bus fleet from 360 to 600 buses. Those buses were not needed, but the council was slavishly devoted to the idea of publicly owned transport. Fortunately, the Labour party lost control there in 1976, so its plan was held up. The bus fleet was reduced to 360 buses, which could more than cope with the demand.

Despite that experience, Nottingham bus services are now mostly sensibly run. Therefore, taken in isolation, one could probably make the case that it did not need the Bill. It is a pity that Nottingham did not volunteer to be a trial area, because it would have been a better trial area than some of the others. It has a catchment area of about half a million people. Nottingham has the largest municipal bus undertaking with 360 buses, the largest private bus operator with 264 buses, one of the larger units of the National Bus Company in Trent and a medium sized private operator in south Nottinghamshire, which would have been a better system for a trial. When it comes to open competition, those four major operators would be able to cope with any small additional operators. Of course, others would come in round the fringes, but those operators should maintain a successful network, almost certainly at lower fares than we have now.

I suspect that the biggest effect could be on taxis. Although people say that this will grow slowly, I suspect that there will be a very quick development of the taxi system. It will have a dramatic effect. We have to accept that this system of control has failed. Siren voices always proclaim that the end of controls, rationing and

bureaucracy is dangerous and precipitate. They are right. Freedom is dangerous to a bureaucratic state. That is why I shall support the Government.

9.10 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): My right hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon) indicated in his speech that he would volunteer for the Standing Committee. I have to tell my right hon. Friend that we have an embarrassment of riches. My hon. Friends are queueing up to be members of the Standing Committee. It shows the importance we attach to this measure.

I should like to congratulate the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) upon his excellent speech. He gave the reasons that underlie his amendment. We should not be debating the Bill until the Select Committee has reported. His speech was delivered in a true House of Commons manner. It compared well with the lamentable performance of his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) who used the most fatuous example of grocer's shop economics that I have ever heard.

During the debate on the Local Government Bill on 4 December 1984 the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) described the contribution of the Secretary of State for Transport as

"a pathetic image of a speech." — [*Official Report*, 4 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 190.]

The speech made this afternoon by the Secretary of State for Transport was, if anything, even worse than that. He was totally unconvincing and unpersuasive. When the Bill reaches the Standing Committee we shall make sure that he is made very well aware of our view.

I am not complacent, nor is my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). Public transport is suffering. There has been a decline in public transport. There has been a decline in the provision of public transport in our rural areas. That decline began in 1979 when this Government came to power. Since 1979 there has been an acceleration in the decline of our transport system. An increasing number of people find themselves condemned to virtual isolation. That has been said by many hon. Members during this debate. In particular, women, children, the elderly, the low-paid and the unemployed who depend upon public transport to get to their jobs or to see their families and friends are being denied that essential service.

Where it is provided properly, that service is, in my view, one of the most emancipating elements in the lives of ordinary people. However, those services have declined as a consequence of the transport policies of this Government since 1979. Local authorities, in particular Labour-controlled authorities, have been subjected to ever tighter squeezes on expenditure and public transport has suffered as a direct consequence. The transport supplementary grant has been reduced not only this year but by 23 per cent. since this Government came to office. Across the country we see what has happened to public transport. The National Bus Company ran 80 million fewer miles in 1983 than it did in 1979 when this Government came to office. There has been a positive decline in public transport since this Government came to power. When democratically elected Labour councils have tried to support public transport, the Government have tried to stop them by introducing cuts in grant and attempting to impose spending limits. This has recently been reinforced by the rate-capping legislation.

Not content with this catalogue of disaster, the Secretary of State is now introducing his Bill to deregulate and privatise Britain's bus industry. He bases this legislation on his own theoretical experience and on a small and inconclusive experiment in Hereford and Worcester. We have heard about the Hereford and Worcester experiment from all sides of the House, and I have taken careful note of what people have told me about their experience of that scheme. As time is short, I cannot pay full attention to all the matters that have been raised in the debate, but I advise the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) to read the speech of Lord Teviot, a former busman, who, in the other place, described his experiences when he visited Hereford and Worcester. He concluded:

"The city council regard the trial area as a disaster".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 October 1984; Vol. 456, c. 307.]

Mr. Colin Shepherd *rose*——

Mr. Stott: I cannot give way because I have a lot to say.

The Hereford and Worcester trial has been a total disaster. It is the wrong premise upon which to deregulate stage carriage bus services, to break up the PTEs, to break down the municipal operators into smaller units, to prepare local authority bus services for private ownership and to prevent direct subsidy for network services.

The White Paper which preceded the Bill shows that the proposals are based on the assumption that deregulation will bring new operators to the industry, lower costs, reduce fares and provide scope for new services. A thorough examination of the Government's proposals, and the evidence claimed to support them, shows that they are based on a crude economic theory of free market forces. That distorts the cost comparisons between private and public sector operations, and between the PTEs and the National Bus Company. There is no logical reason on the evidence available to support the Government's assertion that subsidy leaks into higher operational costs or that the industry does not benefit from economies of scale.

The evidence quoted and experiences in the trial area and from abroad, are highly selective, incorrect and will not stand the test of scrutiny. Clauses 81 and 84 oblige local authorities that wish to subsidise bus services to go into open competitive tendering. Those proposals are impracticable in a totally unregulated framework of operation. If the conditions of the contracted services are not protected from competition there is no way in which the operator who enters into a contract can know how long that contract will remain viable.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Stott: No, I shall not give way. We have heard that argument from the hon. Member for Wellingborough and if Conservative Members are not prepared to believe me, they should at least give him the benefit of the doubt.

These proposals are really about reducing revenue support to meet public expenditure targets. A combination of the elimination of cross-subsidy, the cutting of revenue support and the other measures that have been put before us tonight will not work. They will not provide the services that the Secretary of State requires, but will do extremely severe damage to our bus industry. If hon. Members on the Government Benches refuse to believe what I say,

[Mr. Stott]

perhaps I could refer them to the evidence taken by the Select Committee. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) should not shake her head. I am referring to the evidence given by the National Bus Company. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier) was questioning two gentleman from the National Bus Company, and I would not impugn their integrity, even if the hon. Member for Hereford does. My hon. Friend asked them about the reduction in revenue support. Mr. Beetham answered:

"It would almost certainly lead to a very severe reduction in the level of revenue-supported services, which may be provided by operators."

My hon. Friend then asked:

"You mean increased fares or less services?"

He replied:

"Both. How far a county could, from its own resources, make up that reduction in central government funding is another aspect of the situation, but there the county might face difficulties in other aspects, like rate capping which would affect that. I think there would be grave difficulties."

Mr. Brook, the chairman of the National Bus Company, just appointed by the Secretary of State, came into the argument at that point:

"I would be loath to see increased fares as a solution to this problem, because the fares are at levels already which are hardly bearable. It would require very substantial increases in fares and we would encounter great passenger resistance. My option would be to go for reduced services."

That is what the chairman of the National Bus Company said about the provisions of the Bill; those are not my words but his.

So far no one has referred to section 20 of the Transport Act 1968, which gives the passenger transport executives the right to pay to keep local railway lines open. This is a very important issue, particularly in Greater Manchester and in Strathclyde. No one has referred in the debate to the problems that are likely to occur if the Bill goes through as drafted. The activities of registered operators will clearly have implications for local rail services, where there is irect competition between the two. Registered operators may well draw a proportion of passengers from the local rail network with the effect of undermining further the financial viability of individual lines. Faced with these difficulties and a declining availability of revenue support, the authority is likely to be forced to withdraw support, with closure of the lines as the most likely outcome. This could effectively prejudice major investment proposals designed to improve the public transport infrastructure. There is no doubt that the proposals in Greater Manchester for a system of light rapid transit could be a casualty of this process.

Putting aside the practical operational implications of deregulation, there will be major problems with the forecasting of demand for revenue and concessionary support. In advance of deregulation the authority will simply not know what its revenue support requirements will amount to. Even when this is known, the activities of registered operators are likely to produce an unstable pattern of service for a number of years. I have already mentioned this. Concessionary support raises substantial difficulties of its own, not least the bureaucracy that is likely to be involved in preserving a system of permits and passes for those entitled to benefit. Again, forecasting of the demand for support is awkward in the absence of firm knowledge of who will participate in any scheme.

This is a highly complex area but it is important to put it on the record now. The proposed arrangements for concessionary travel within the general rate support grant structure require attention. At the moment children's travel is deemed to be financed from general rate support. There will have to be adjustments between the grant-related expenditure assessment for revenue support and the GREA for concessionary support.

For 1984-85, the Greater Manchester passenger transport executive estimated that its revenue support is £49·2 million. Of this total, at least £15 million, on the basis of revenue forgone by the executive, is attributable to children. Bearing in mind that much of this travel takes place during the peak times when costs are at their highest, the estimate is probably an understatement of the true cost. To put this issue in context, the current GREA for elderly concessionary travel in Greater Manchester is about £10 million, but the cost of providing that travel is £22 million. I suspect that other PTEs have similar figures.

If we are getting locked into highly complicated calculations about rent support grants, GREAs and concessionary fare travel, I suggest to the Secretary of State that this is such a crucial issue that we shall have to spend a great deal of time in Committee getting assurances that concessionary fares will not be undermined. The Labour party feels that if these provisions are passed as they are, there will be severe damage to the concessionary fares in the PTE areas.

In totality, the proposals remove from passenger transport the long-held status of a strategic industry with integrated networks such as Tyne and Wear. It is being relegated to a "use it or lose it" industry. If the current Government thinking is correct, the rest of the world is wrong. No other Government of any developed country are prepared to place the business of moving millions of people daily at the mercy and the inconsistency of the free market forces. The Secretary of State knows that and that is why he has excluded London from the Bill, and will not extend its provisions to London.

To placate some of his Back Benchers who have grave doubts about the Bill, the Secretary of State has said that the contents of the Bill when it has been passed will not be operational until December 1986, or perhaps early 1987. However, whether the Bill's provisions become operational sooner or later, these issues will become an election issue next year in the county council elections, and in the general election. People will have a clear choice. They can believe in a Secretary of State for Transport who continues to inhabit the higher astral planes of lunacy, and who will be solely responsible for the destruction of our bus services if these measures go through, or, on the other hand, they can take our alternative. The Labour party will be campaigning in those elections, putting our alternative strategy and our alternative transport policy. We shall tell the people that we shall restore local democratic control over their own affairs and that we shall preserve their bus services.

My hon. Friends the Members for Crewe and Nantwich and for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and I have been addressing meetings up and down the country since the Secretary of State first produced his White Paper on the buses. I tell him and the House that these proposals do not have a friend anywhere——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Rubbish.

Mr. Stott: —apart from one or two sycophants on the Government Benches. The pity is that the municipal operators, the National Bus Company, the well-established private operators, the Taxi Drivers Association, the Bus and Coach Council, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, Transport 2000, Rural Voice, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils and the general public —the customer, the people who matter—have shown their objections to the Secretary of State's proposals.

The Secretary of State has displayed his usual characteristic of imitating the dodo. If one were to walk through the deepest recesses of his mind, one would not even get one's feet wet. The right hon. Gentleman has contemptously dismissed the voices of experience and reason. Before we are through with him, he will wish that he had never been born.

I know of no political commentator who has described the tenure of office so far of the Secretary of State as a howling success. The policies that the right hon. Gentleman has tried to pursue of late have hardly enhanced his reputation. In fact, they have merely confirmed what most of us believe—that the Secretary of State not only walks but thinks in concrete. As a consequence, he has shown a monumental display of incompetence in dealing with almost every aspect of policy he has so far put before the House.

The Secretary of State for Transport is a paradox. He possesses characteristics that are not necessarily exclusive to him, of being, on the one hand, intellectually stupid and, on the other hand, artistically brilliant. I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman should do us all the favour of doing what he does best and leaving transport to other people. If he does not, I guarantee that he will receive not only in the House, but in the other place, the biggest mauling of his political career. I invite hon. Members to join me this evening in starting that process.

9.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) has asked for a delay of the Standing Committee sitting until the Select Committee reports. The Select Committee has also asked for time to publish its evidence. I gather that the Select Committee can do that by 21 February. The Government are prepared to delay setting up the Committee until Thursday 21 February. I hope that that concession will satisfy my hon. Friend.

On 28 November 1984 the Chairman of the Select Committee wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and said that the Committee hoped to publish its report in early February.

Mr. Leadbitter: The hon. Gentleman is not providing a concession. The timetable which he has announced does not give hon. Members any time to study the Committee's report.

Mr. Mitchell: It certainly is a concession, because the Committee was due to sit on 19 February. There is, therefore, a delay. I think that it is likely that the Committee will be able to publish by then.

The Select Committee's Chairman expected to publish his report in early February. It is now near the middle of February, and I am sure that the Select Committee will agree that the Government are in no way responsible for any delay that has occurred.

Mr. Oakes: The hon. Gentleman says that the evidence will be produced on 19 February. That is the day on which the Select Committee meets. Will the report be available to us on that day?

Mr. Mitchell: That is up to the Select Committee. It would not be right for me to speak for it.

Mr. Parris: As a member of the Select Committee —the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) and the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) are not —may I say that my hon. Friend's concession will be greatly appreciated by all members of the Select Committee on Transport. We are extremely grateful to him.

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point.

The question of a Special Standing Committee is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I understand that the procedure is generally applied to non-controversial Bills. I doubt that the House would consider that that applied in this case. I hope that, in the light of this concession, my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough will feel able not to press his motion. I certainly would not be able to advise my hon. Friends to support him were he to do so.

Throughout this debate there has been very clear recognition of the enormous importance of buses to a large number of our fellow citizens. The elderly particularly, students, the lower-paid going to and from work, women, especially those isolated by their husbands' taking the car —all of these are enormously dependent on the bus for getting around, and 39 per cent. of households have no regular access to a car. Therefore, the quality of life for many of our fellow citizens very much depends upon the success of this industry, but it is in a state of decline.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) suggested that that decline started in 1979.

Mr. Stott: Accelerated.

Mr. Mitchell: I can tell him that it has been going on for 30 years. Thirty years ago 40 per cent. of all journeys were done by bus. It is now down to 8 per cent. and passenger mileage has come down by 50 per cent. in that period. Indeed, in the last 10 years, while fares have gone up 30 per cent. above the rate of inflation, there has been a 28 per cent. reduction in passenger journeys. So what we have here — and the House should realise this — is another sunset industry in the making if nothing is done to revitalise it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) was absolutely right when he said that no responsible Government could sit and do nothing while the situation continued to deteriorate. Subsidy has been tried as a solution. In 10 years it has gone from £10 million a year to no less than £522 million in revenue support. That has nothing to do with concessionary fares or other aspects. Nobody could claim that this huge increase has resulted in any significant improvement in the services provided to the public.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Can the hon. Gentleman rightly say that about south Yorkshire? For the last decade in every year there has been an increase

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

in the number of passengers carried, and by every objective test the operation has been shown to be the most cost-effective. Indeed, in 1982, when the Secretary of State's Department put into operation a survey, again it showed the most balanced approach to transport. We are now seeing over 350 million journeys each year for a population of 1·3 million in south Yorkshire. The operation has been shown by every objective test to be the most cost-effective.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman has his own views and quite clearly south Yorkshire is in many ways a law unto itself. He may think it is that good, but in south Yorkshire the costs per bus mile are among the highest of all PTEs in the country—over £2·07. They are 11 per cent. above those in the west midlands. The south Yorkshire PTE is alone in having more than 30 per cent. of its buses without one-man operation. In other words, it is not as efficient an operation as the hon. Gentleman is telling the House.

I could hardly recognise the Bill from some of the things which the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said about it. She suggested that 50,000 jobs would have to go. What she means is that 50,000 jobs will be transferred from the public to the private sector. So it is a half-truth, and a damaging one, which she is trying to peddle when she suggests that 50,000 jobs will go. She told the House that as a result of the White Paper the women's institutes were so fearful that a survey was conducted in Oxfordshire. I have to tell her that the survey in Oxfordshire predated the White Paper by a considerable time.

She says that in Hereford and Worcester the rural services were cut back as a result of the Government's trial area there. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), giving evidence to the House this evening, has already demonstrated that not only were they not cut, but they were extended by 2 per cent. That is a valuable improvement in the situation.

The Bill is not a charter for unscrupulous politicians to frighten old-age pensioners. I think, particularly, of the worries raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman). Only last week I was in Birmingham, and heard of thousands of old-age pensioners who had been frightened into believing that the Bill would do away with concessionary fares. But the Bill is not concerned in any way with concessionary fares other than to ensure that they are available to more citizens through allowing any operator to participate in the scheme.

Mr. Leadbitter: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend the Member for——

Mr. Leadbitter *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Leadbitter: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I have already given way several times. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough asked a sophisticated and thoughtful question, as did the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon). They asked whether it would be possible for concessionary fares to be provided without having to have tokens, through some system of bus passes and so on. I asked my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough what sort of numbers caused him concern. He wanted to know how people could manage if there were four or five operators in the scheme. I should point out that in Birmingham there are 32 operators in the scheme, and at present they do not use tokens. I hope that that will be of some reassurance to him.

Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) and for Wellingborough and the hon. Members for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) and for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) mentioned cross-subsidy. We tend to think about the beneficiaries of cross-subsidy and not to recognise that there are payers as well. Many constituents are being taken to the cleaners by the excess profits that are taken from the better routes. When the Bill is enacted, there will be lower fares and more services on the better used routes.

Thoughtful people will recognise that over-reliance on cross-subsidy has been a major factor in the industry's decline. For every 10 per cent. increase in fares, 3 per cent. of the passengers are lost. The industry is cross-subsidising to the detriment of its major potential customers on its better routes. That means that the blame for much of the industry's decline can be laid at the door of the system.

Mr. Leadbitter *rose——*

Mr. Colin Shepherd *rose——*

Mr. Mitchell: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Shepherd: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the ending of cross-subsidy will not lead to an increase in direct subsidies paid to operators of unprofitable routes at the expense of ratepayers?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall be happy to take the House through what will happen. First, a considerable degree of cross-subsidy will continue. But it will be commercial cross-subsidy and not the present form of cross-subsidy. That will go on because operators want to maintain their goodwill, to protect their brand image, to hold off competitors, to position vehicles and so on. Therefore, cross-subsidy will continue to provide the part of the network that is not viable. But any operator will admit that operators have nearly always got a large block of marginal routes. If nothing happened, those routes would drop off after three, four, five or 10 years, and areas might be left without any services if we allowed things to continue. On those marginal routes, once competition operates and the bus companies start to become more efficient, they will be able to operate those routes without making a loss. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford knows very well that the Midland Red bus company when faced with competition improved its productivity by no less than 25 per cent. That kind of improvement turns a marginal route into a profitable one.

Then there will be new operators who will come in with minibuses and such like, often not town-based services going out to the country but minibuses starting in country villages and running services into the towns.

Mr. Steen: When my hon. Friend visited South Hams last weekend, did he get the impression at the public meeting that he addressed that the constituents of South Hams were excited by the prospect of minibuses going from the country into the market towns or that they were disenchanted at the prospect of the application of the Bill to their area?

Mr. Mitchell: When I visited South Hams, there was a great deal of complaint about villages like Princetown which have no bus services but now see the prospect of having such services.

Finally, there will be those routes which will not be economic on any basis. For them, the subsidy available to the local authorities will be appropriate, but by means of competitive tender. By using competitive tender, they will find that their money goes much further than it does at present. What now takes place is a bilateral deal between the county council and the largest operator and nobody knows whether there is value for money. When this was put to competitive tender in Hereford, 38 per cent. of the ratepayers' money was saved. When it was attempted in Norfolk, the National Bus Company wanted £500,000 for a block of routes. When it was put out to competitive tender, it cost not £500,000 but £150,000, which was a huge saving for the ratepayer.

There is, of course, the option in the hands of the county council not to save money but to extend the network. Hon. Members who are worrying about the rural areas will realise that county councils will have plenty of opportunity to extend and maintain the network, if that is the wish of the people in the area concerned.

In addition, we are providing for the rural areas a £20 million transitional grant and £1 million a year for innovation.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Oh!

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Lady says "Oh", but that £20 million is in addition to the substantial sums included in the grant-related expenditure assessment to councils for expenditure on subsidising the services.

The attack of the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) would have some strength in it if there were no room for improved efficiency as a result of competition. But I have already mentioned that Midland Red, faced with competition, saved 25 per cent. by improving productivity. The National Bus Company's operating costs averaged 25 per cent. below theose of the passenger transport executive. The Leeds study of four current National Bus Company agreements demonstrated that the crew operating costs varied from 23 per cent. to 77 per cent. above the level in other areas. These are within current systems operating in the National Bus Company—huge opportunities for improved efficiency.

The private sector costs are even lower than those of the National Bus Company, that is, some 20 per cent. below, as the Guildford and Cranleigh studies show. In travelling round the country and listening to local councillors and transport undertakings, I have noted the enormous variations in costs, in efficiency and in load factors—in Manchester only 13 persons per bus — with great differences in miles driven per year by drivers and in manpower per bus.

Mr. Bidwell: The Midland Red said that it had been stimulated and shaken up by the competition. Its managing director accepted that. It is entering into some arrangements with private operators. That is not competition, but an arrangement. This applies particularly to the company to which I referred in my speech with regard to the run-in periods, sharing routes and so on. That is what it is getting up to, and it is not competition. The Minister is not giving an accurate description of matters. It is the scale of privatisation to which they are opposed.

Mr. Mitchell: In Hereford, Midland Red was able to concentrate a huge number of vehicles on one front in order deliberately to drive the competition into the ground. It even went as far as running free services. That will not happen when we apply deregulation to the country as a whole. No major operator will be able to concentrate on one front as it will be assailed on all fronts. That means that there will be a much more even balance of competition than in the trial area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough put the case for competitive franchises. That would be some improvement on the present position, but it has the inherent disadvantage that the pattern of services is decided by county transport planners, not by the market. Under franchising, we would never know how much the market could do on its own. The franchising system would lack flexibility and, worst of all, once a franchise was awarded the competitive pressure would be off. Therefore, although it would be some improvement, it would be nothing like enough to revitalise the industry.

I urge those thinking about the advantages of franchising to consider what would happen in, for example, Manchester if the NBC won the franchise and the PTE lost it. How many bus drivers and other people would be out of work as a result of that? Before advocating franchising I urge them to think carefully about how dangerous that course would be.

Throughout the debate we have heard complaints about safety. We have been told that there is a cowboys' charter. That was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Mansfield and the hon. Member for Hartlepool. The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said that thousands of people would be maimed. I have never heard such hysterical nonsense. There is no evidence to show that the private sector is any worse than the public sector in the safety of its vehicles. The annual tests show that the NCB has a pass rate of 60 per cent., the private sector a pass rate of 56 per cent.—a little worse, but not much—while the PTEs have a pass rate of only 49 per cent. and London Transport of only 47 per cent. Therefore, no one can say that the private sector is worse than the public sector.

I shall go further and say that recently a random check was made on 5 per cent. of London Transport buses, and 51 per cent. were put off the roads immediately with prohibition orders as unsafe. I hope that no one will suggest that public sector vehicles are safer than private sector vehicles.

Mr. Fry: Does my hon. Friend accept that two distinct sets of statistics published in *Hansard* were rather contradictory? Does he recall that I tabled a further parliamentary question, the answer to which showed that after some minor adjustments the public sector was able to pass a higher percentage of its vehicles than the private sector—and my hon. Friend answered that question.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is correct. The reason is that most of the public sector operators have their tests carried out on their premises while most of the private sector operators have to take their vehicles several miles to the testing stations. Therefore, if a light bulb does not work the fault can be repaired immediately on the premises when the tests are being carried out; and that facility is not generally available to the private operator.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough asked for an assurance on the number of inspectors. We are

[Mr. Mitchell]

recruiting more inspectors and we shall devote sufficient resources to ensure that there are enough to cover the extra number of operators.

When the House debated the deregulation of long-distance coaches we had all the arguments about cowboys, people being maimed, and so on. But since deregulation took place for long-distance coaches their accident involvement is down by 20 per cent.

My hon. Friend asked why we did not have the same financial requirements for a bus operator's licence as for an HGV licence. I can assure him and the House that we do. They are identical.

Eliza Doolittle, in that famous line, said

"In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire hurricanes hardly happen."

But in Hereford they certainly have, as has been made clear to the House. The county council found a 2 per cent. increase in rural mileage and a 38 per cent. saving in ratepayers' money. There were lower fares, more people travelled by bus and there was an end to the complaints which have been a recurring feature of the debate from many of my hon. Friends. Indeed, I wonder sometimes whether the story which appeared in *Marketing* on 17 November 1983 was entirely apocryphal:

"A local authority, told that its bus drivers were speeding past queues of people with a smile and wave of the hand, replied, 'It is impossible for drivers to keep to their timetables if they have to stop for passengers'."

One of the features that has become increasingly apparent as the debate has progressed is the change in attitude which is brought about by competition and that is one of the things which has become most clear in the case of Hereford. The town council complained about bus siting difficulties, fumes and congestion; but the passengers loved it. I have talked to many people there. For example, it has been said:

"They come in one heap—two Midland, one Primrose and another Midland Red;"

and

"I prefer Primrose, they are more entertaining, the drivers more friendly;"

and

"They are cheaper now. There is a bit of rivalry. It means the service is better;"

and

"They run to a schedule now, not just when they like."

A young man, visiting from west Yorkshire, said:

"Where I come from the buses do not run so late and they cost more. I do not use them often but it is cheap and the last bus is after 11 o'clock at night".

I could go on with example after example.

What I can say, without any risk of contradiction, is that there is no doubt that the people of Hereford, having tasted competition and the advantages which it has brought, do not want to go back to the old system of monopoly.

The hon. Member for Wigan said, wrongly, that these proposals are built on one trial area. That is not true. They are built on three principles—privatisation, opportunity and competition. I do not expect Labour Members to support privatisation, but Conservative Members believe fundamentally in spreading power, wealth and decision making throughout the community, not concentrating it in the hands of the state. This privatisation will give a lot more people a chance to be shareholders, participators and owners with a stake in Britain's wealth. It represents opportunity because it will provide for the removal of barriers to new bus operators and enable small businesses to be born and to grow, providing a service to the public. Competition is the surest way to improve service to the customer, which is what the Bill is for. I ask the House to give it full support tonight.

Mr. Fry: In view of the concession made by the Government—and as I have made my point on behalf of the Select Committee on Transport and on behalf of all Select Committees—I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: In view of that reaction, I must put the Question.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Housed divided: Ayes 210, Noes 290.

Division 99] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy

Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John Maxton.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neison, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew

Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 41 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 288, Noes 205.

Division No. 100] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*

Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John Maxton.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to Ways and Means may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. *—[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Transport Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Transport Bill, it is expedient to authorise the extinguishment of liabilities of the National Bus Company in respect of sums lent to it under section 20 of the Transport Act 1962 and the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenditure of the Secretary of State—
  (i) in connection with the dissolution of the National Bus Company;
  (ii) in respect of the salaries or remuneration of traffic commissioners and persons acting as their officers and servants;
  (iii) in respect of the remuneration of members of the Transport Tribunal and the other expenses of the tribunal;
  (iv) in making grants to persons operating or proposing to operate public passenger transport services in rural areas in Great Britain; and
  (v) in making grants to the British Railways Board in respect of their costs in securing the provision of bus substitution services;
(b) any increase in payments out of money so provided arising from any increase in administrative expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the provisions of that Act; and
(c) any increase in payments out of money so provided under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

10.27 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): In discussing this money resolution as a Welsh Member of this House, I should be remiss if I did not express the concern and consternation that is felt in Wales both among the employees of bus undertakings, local authorities and officials and among the elected representatives about the provisions of the Bill. They will increasingly affect ordinary members of the public.

As for the money resolution, it seems to me that the objective of the Secretary of State is to cut out subsidies altogether or severely to reduce them, entirely irrespective of their merit. It is a doctrinaire approach on the part of the Secretary of State.

There is a financial provision in the Bill, clause 89, which enables the Secretary of State to make grants to operators of public passenger transport in rural areas. The amount is fairly negligible and is certainly quite inadequate to meet the problem that will be confronted. Already a non-partisan body, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, has pointed out that the effect of deregulation on tendering will be disastrous for those people who live in rural areas. A small concession has been made, but presumably this is only because of the pressure exerted by bodies like the National Federation of Women's Institutes.

I think of the pensioner on the outskirts of Newport who wrote to me:

"I am a pensioner. I am also disabled. Our local council has done a wonderful job in the circumstances. Our bus service is excellent."

What a tribute, bearing in mind all the attacks that bus undertakings have received from the Secretary of State.

From my experience I endorse the sentiments of that pensioner. Where a local authority is providing a good bus service, surely it should be left alone. The local authorities have operated in difficult circumstances. They need every possible encouragement and not the punitive measures that are contained in the Bill.

The Secretary of State proposes to hive off local authority bus undertakings into separate companies. As I see it, the wish is to make them insolvent, so that they can then be sold off cheaply to private operators. As a result, undoubtedly it is the needy and the less affluent members of society who will suffer.

Another provision concerns the National Bus Company. The intention is to privatise it—or, rather, to split it into smaller units. That organisation has functioned successfully in difficult circumstances. How much does the nation stand to lose if it is sold off? I hope that the Minister will give us facts and figures tonight.

Another financial provision, contained in clause 90, empowers the Secretary of State to make regulations restricting the payment of grants towards duty charged on bus fuel to operators of local services. Likewise, clause 91 provides for a reduction of fuel duty grant where services are unregistered or unreliable. I do not doubt that there will be many unreliable services if the Secretary of State's proposals come to fruition.

When history is written, the Government will be known by the slogan, "If it moves, privatise it." This sort of policy is unsound politically and economically. Certainly it has done the country immense harm. Anyone who believes that the proposals in the Bill and the money resolution will provide a better bus service for the citizens of Britain must live in cloud-cuckoo-land.

10.34 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I wish to assist my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport by saying that I believe that this money resolution follows the Second Reading of one of the most exciting developments that is likely to occur in public transport. It is imaginative and visionary and gives new hope for the consumer and new scope for operators. The proposals will sweep away the rules and regulations, free the public monopoly and build up opportunities for competition.

The Bill is about deregulation of an industry, allowing it to revert to normal business practice without Government intervention. We know, that with public funds and finance, the more that the Government intervene, the more they distort. For example, Liverpool has been buffeted by successive Governments constantly pouring money into a city that has declined the more that that money has been poured in. The more money that is poured in, the greater has been the distortion that has taken place, and the more difficult it has been for private enterprise to flourish.

Through the Bill, the money that is being poured into the bus industry will be released, revived and altered so that the progressive decline will be halted. That is the message. More public money does not result in better services and better value for money. In the most subtle and enterprising way the Secretary of State is trying to stop the intervention that has resulted in the decline of bus services.

Where does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State see the role of the community bus? At the moment, this service gets a lot of help from the local authorities. It gets funding from the public sector by way of a bus, and then volunteers drive the bus. There is a good example of that in my constituency, the Coleridge bus, which serves Kingsbridge. The Exe Market Valley bus serves the Tiverton constituency, and the Tavistock community bus serves the elderly in Tavistock who face difficulties with

the steep hills in that area. All these services are non-profit-making, so will my right hon. Friend explain how this will work, because they have an important and valuable contribution to make?

What will be the financial implications for taxis? Taxi operators have, in many cases, spent large sums of money on their licence plates. It would be helpful if my right hon. Friend will say whether he believes that some transitional arrangements can be made so that those who have invested this money in the industry will not find themselves penniless. It would also be helpful if he said something about taxis operating as buses. Will there be any financial help for the taxi operators who want to develop their services, perhaps by getting larger taxis and running a bus service from some of the villages around the market towns? That would be welcomed in my constituency.

One of the criticisms of the financial provisions as they are set out concerns some of the big bus companies such as Western National, which have withdrawn some of their central services. One of the constant complaints is that Western National has withdrawn its coast service from Plymouth, Salcombe, Dartmouth and Exeter because it was not profitable. The money resolution will affect this company. Does my right hon. Friend see some of the small new enterprises starting in such a way that the people of these towns can look forward to a new, entreprenurial service running along the coast? Is my right hon. Friend thinking of issuing directions on planning regulations to the district councils so that those who start one or two-man businesses from their homes will not be prevented from doing so by district councils saying "You are running a small firm, and you need planning consent." Some opportunities must be provided in that respect.

Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say something about the marginal and fat routes? The fat routes will attract competition. We must be careful to ensure that that competition does not result in closed shops, with the operators doing deals with each other. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend ensured that private enterprise is allowed to develop and compete and ensured that deals are not struck between operators on the fat routes. Unless the operators on the thin routes are given a chance to compete on the fat routes, they may not survive.

The Bill is a cracker. It will crack the monopolies. It will awaken a moribund sunset industry. It will crack restrictive practices. It will crack artificially high fares by allowing healthy competition and the operation of market forces. The Bill will breathe new life into the transport industry and herald a new era for all those wishing to use a better, more flexible and more competitive bus service.

10.41 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Probably every hon. Member knows that transport fares in south Yorkshire are extremely low. For the past 10 or 12 years, the county council's policy has been to transport people around the county in a convenient and attractive way. This model has been developed with the consent of the broad spectrum of the people in south Yorkshire.

The fare for a two-mile journey in south Yorkshire is 5p, in Manchester and Leeds it is 30p, and in Birmingham, it is 32p. The fare for a 10-mile journey in south Yorkshire is 15p and in Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham it is 70p.

The Secretary of State has said that the number of passengers has declined. The latest available figures for south Yorkshire show that there are 350 million journeys a year, 264 million of which are provided by the PTE. The population of south Yorkshire is 1·3 million. There has been an increase year on year in the number of passengers carried by the PTE. I believe that the call of the industry is, "The object is to put bums on seats." We have been extremely successful in doing that.

A substantial part of the Government's case for the introduction of the Transport Bill, as outlined in the White Paper and ministerial statements, is based on allegations that the large public operations in general, and PTEs in particular, cause an unreasonable demand for massive increases in subsidies, their operations being inefficient and showing no economies of scale and south Yorkshire being an outstanding example.

Many studies of the bus industry have been made to determine its overall efficiency and the related efficiency of individual units in that industry. The studies include "The Efficiency of British Urban Bus Operators", Transport Studies Group research report No. 8, which was published in December 1982; the Transport and Road Research Laboratory's reports; the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on stage carrier services; and the annual inter-PTE comparisons. These have revealed numerous yardsticks by which the industry can be measured. The efficiency of the industry—which has come under some criticism, to say the least, from the Government Benches this evening — ought to be considered very seriously when we draw these comparisons. Of all these yardsticks, the best for comparing similar types of bus operation is the cost per journey. The total cost per journey includes traffic operation, servicing, repairs and maintenance, management, welfare, training and asset utilisation. The south Yorkshire PTE's cost per journey on this basis is 26·4p, which compares with the average for other PTEs of 30·3p. The costs used to calculate these figures come from the inter-PTE comparisons 1983-84.

The Secretary of State for Transport claims that the cost of PTE operations is rising rapidly. The total direct operating costs for south Yorkshire rose from £67·35 million in 1982-83 to £69·64 million in 1983-84, an increase of 3·4 per cent., which is less than the rate of inflation for this period. The real cost of direct operations has, therefore, fallen. In the case of London, which, ironically, is excluded from the delicensing and tendering provisions of this Bill, the increase in direct operation costs was 5·1 per cent.

Developments are taking place in manpower productivity and vehicle maintenance organisation which will produce further savings. The service, repair and maintenance costs in south Yorkshire have been reduced from 48·1p per vehicle mile in 1982-83 to 46·4p per vehicle mile in 1983-84. With the exception of Tyne and Wear, south Yorkshire's costs in this area are the lowest of the PTEs—81 per cent. of London's costs.

The buses White Paper attaches considerable importance to unfavourable comparisons of PTE costs with those of the National Bus Company. A careful study of the appendix to the White Paper shows that the percentage figures quoted are derived from national cost per mile statistics. This is a ridiculous basis of comparison since it involves a massive rural mileage—there was plenty of reference to this in the earlier debate this evening—run by the National Bus Company, where costs per mile are

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

inevitably very low compared with costs per mile in urban centres where average traffic speeds are low and bus stops are much closer together.

The only true basis on which NBC and PTE costs can be compared is where both are run in the same territory. A comparison on this basis can be obtained from the inter-PTE comparisons summary of county operations 1982-83. This shows that in south Yorkshire PTE direct bus operations costs were 5·46p per passenger mile, while NBC costs were 5·78p per passenger mile. If the Secretary of State continues to insist that the comparison with NBC costs is a useful yardstick of efficiency, it should be pointed out that in the London Transport operating area London Transport's direct bus operation costs more than twice as much per passenger mile as NBC's costs; and London, I say once again, is excluded from the Bill.

A particular criticism made by the Secretary of State is that south Yorkshire spends too much in subsidising cheap fares in relation to the amount it spends on improving its services. An attempt to produce some scientific justification for this criticism of PTEs in general and south Yorkshire in particular was made by the Department of Transport—the Secretary of State's own Department—where work was carried out by the Economics Local Roads and Transport Division using a model developed by Dr. Stephen Glaister of the LSE. The report of this study was published by the Department of Transport in December 1982 and was entitled "Urban transport subsidies: an economic assessment of value for money"—something that I know is very dear to the Secretary of State's heart. This shows the changes in fares and services required so that subsidies could be more effectively employed in the PTE areas and in London.

It is notable that south Yorkshire was the only PTE which was shown to have a correct balance between fares and subsidies, and indeed services. In London, in order to obtain the best use of the subsidy then being provided, a reduction of 11 per cent. in fares and an increase of 19 per cent. in expenditure on services would be required.

The Government attempted to devalue the Glaister model as a means of comparing the efficiency of south Yorkshire's policy with that of some other areas by reducing the fares elasticity factor used in the formula from 0·3 to 0·15 elasticity. They sought to justify this by claiming that at lower fare levels there was lower elasticity. However, the Transport and Road Research Laboratory's study of fares elasticity could not find a corelationship between fare level and demand elasticity that was required to justify this. It could not be disproved that south Yorkshire had the right balance. The Department's 1982 study probably stands as an authoritative justification of the south Yorkshire policy in terms of cost-benefit analysis.

I ask the Secretary of State seriously to consider the south Yorkshire model, which has existed for more than 10 years. We have heard a former Member of the European Parliament speaking tonight from the Conservative Benches. Even the European Parliament's publication held up the south Yorkshire model as one to be followed, as a cost-effective benefit for transportation. I ask the Secretary of State to take on board the contributions from south Yorkshire Members and to use the south Yorkshire model when he is costing his policy.

10.50 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): No one can say with certainty that the Bill will produce enormous savings, dramatically increase public usage and be responsive to all customer demands. However, we can say with conviction that the current system is expensive, inefficient and largely unresponsive to what the public require. Therefore, change is necessary.

Revenue support in Avon has increased over the past 10 years from £66,000 to over £4·5 million, an increase of 6,800 per cent., or 21 times in real terms. At the same time services have been declining. Given the necessity for change, it is essential that we have a system that rewards the making of savings, increases public usage, introduces lower fares and provides services where they are wanted. If it is not implemented, the improvements to bus and taxi services that we all wish to see will not happen. Like it or not—I recognise that some Opposition Members do not like it—the system of reward that is called profit is the cost effective method yet devised for encouraging success.

The essential thrust of the Bill is right. By creating smaller service units, each as a profit centre geared by commercial necessity to public demand, we ensure that what is wanted prospers and what is inefficient, expensive or incompetently run fails.

I am less sure about some of the details of the Bill and the consequent revenue implications. It is essential to get the detail right because insufficient attention to detail will ruin a good and necessary measure.

First, I turn to the taxi provisions and the revenue implications. My right hon. Friend has already heard my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) talking about the problems of taxi drivers. Owner drivers have spent either considerable time or money in obtaining their licences. In Bristol, for example, it takes about seven years to obtain a licence. In other places it will cost about £7,000 to obtain one. It seems that when the Bill is enacted that investment of time or money will count for nought. Indeed, the Bill will penalise the professional and encourage the amateur taxi driver. Under clause 14*(2)*, a district council will be extremely limited in its ability to refuse licences. For instance, a district council will not be able to demand that a taxi driver knows the area before he plies for hire. The Bill will permit a man who has driven the maximum permissible hours in an HGV transporting baked beans round the country to get into a taxi cab and start driving people round the country.

The Bill as drafted will destroy the livelihood of the full-time cabbie because it will allow the part-timer to get into a car which will not necessarily be of the required standard, to take that part of the day which is profitable and to leave the less profitable part to be covered by the professional full-time cabbie.

Mr. Steen: Would my hon. Friend agree that the taxi driver will be able to use his taxi as a bus and therefore that some of the taxis may well develop into small bus services, leaving more room for others, which may be a profitable development?

Mr. Sayeed: What my hon. Friend says is correct, but a longer transitional period is needed in which to allow him to develop that type of expertise. In my hon. Friend's constituency, as, indeed, in the constituencies of most hon. Members, professional cabbies have to work long hours to make a livelihood. We must be careful not to destroy that at a stroke.

I therefore favour the extension of the use of taxis, and I am sure that the current provisions are far too tight. I am sure also that the provisions in the Bill are far too lax. These lax provisions will undermine the fundamental aim of the Bill by adversely affecting the professional driver financially, thus destroying the ability of cabbies to earn a living and to move to larger vehicles and to provide a bus/taxi service.

I deal next with the Hereford and Worcester experiment, which has certain revenue implications. It has been a success, but not a totally unqualified one. First, it is important to recognise that three out of four of the new operators have had their licences revoked at one time or another.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): That demonstrates clearly that the inspectors are doing their job in identifying faulty vehicles. That is what they are paid to do, and it is what they will continue to do.

Mr. Sayeed: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having made that point, and I will deal with it now. We cannot all be as satisfied as she is.

Even with the present limited number of bus companies, passenger service vehicles are not being inspected in accordance with the law. I should like to know the revenue implications, and how my right hon. Friend seeks to ensure that, when there are more vehicles on the road, with more companies and more depots—some of which might be hard to find, to put it politely—they will be adequately inspected. I suggest that there is a good case on the grounds of safety alone—in addition to protecting passengers from the unprofessional operator who many have charged, and been paid for, season tickets for his service—for ensuring that the asset backing of any company wishing to take on a route is reasonable in relation to the operation that he seeks to run.

My hon. Friend has argued that cross-subsidies allow inefficiency to flourish. He is quite correct. Currently bus companies do not know how much they are losing on a route, and it is obviously essential that they quantify this. If one does not know how much one is losing, one cannot determine the necessary measures to take.

I am not convinced that the proposal to couple deregulation with tendering will assist in providing long-term and efficient services. There needs to be a sensible degree of control over the route licences issued. I ask my right hon. Friend to look at that matter again and determine the revenue implications.

An operator may tender for a route from 6 am to 11 pm and be paid £5,000, but someone operating a school bus takes the profitable part in the morning and evening and destroys the tendering basis of the person who tenders for the whole day. We need some regulation to maintain necessary services. We also need contract terms of sufficient length to encourage investment in modern equipment. Were there the time, I would want to know about bus stations, the construction of bus stops, about timetables and through ticketing services.

The Bill is a good measure. Previously we have had pious hopes and exhortation, which have failed—but not through want of trying. Legislation is necessary, but there needs to be some amendment before Third Reading.

11.1 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Will the Secretary of State say a few words about the position in Tyne and Wear? We have heard a great deal about the experiment in Hereford and Worcester. It is about time that a tribute was paid to the experiments not only in south Yorkshire but in my area of Tyne and Wear.

The Bill will effectively destroy £283 million investment in an integrated, modern public transport system in Tyne and Wear, with a metro system that is the envy of the world. How on earth can we run a concessionary travel system, when passes go through metro barriers, with any number of different operators? How can we operate a system of through ticketing—we call them transfers—from bus to metro? Fifty-eight per cent. of passengers on the metro use a bus before or after their journey on the metro. How can that system be run with any number of different operators?

For several years, at great but worth while expense, Tyne and Wear has pursued a policy to integrate, integrate, integrate. This Bill will disintegrate the public transport system. A quarter of a million people signed a petition the last time that the Government tried to destroy public transport in that area—out of a total population of only 1 million. They wanted to keep their system. Conservative Members spoke of petitions from rural areas signed by 100 people. It is an insult to the people of Tyne and Wear, who want to maintain the integrated system, that the Secretary of State cannot explain why he is introducing a Bill that will destroy the years and years of patient work and negotiation, when the NBC and the PTE have got the workers to learn new ways and about new machines, and with all the investment in the new ticketing system.

I wish to protest in the strongest possible terms that we have heard more about areas such as Hereford and Worcester than about Tyne and Wear, south Yorkshire, west Yorkshire, the west Midlands and the cities where the mass of our people live.

11.4 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The Secretary of State showed in our earlier debate that he is quite unaware of the disastrous effect that the Bill will have on public transport, especially for the elderly, those in rural areas and those who depend on off-peak and Sunday services. He has also failed to understand the financial consequences of the Bill.

The Government propose to break up the National Bus Company into separate companies. In doing so they will not get the full valuation of that undertaking, which is based on its integrated services throughout the country.

The Government have failed to estimate and understand the financial implications of ensuring that the pension provisions of the employees of the National Bus Company are adequately safeguarded. If the Secretary of State considers the serious financial implications to the Government of the privatisation of the royal ordnance factories for which legislation was enacted in the last parliamentary session to the detriment of employees' pensions and conditions of employment he will see that they will also apply to the National Bus Company.

The Secretary of State has failed to realise the Bill's implications for concessionary fares. They are important to the elderly and disabled people who depend on them and it is not good enough to say that local government will have the right to continue to provide concessionary fares when the reorganisation takes place.

Once the Bill is enacted, the present system of passes which is operated in most areas will cease to exist and

[Mr. Peter Pike]

tokens will be introduced which will give a much lower value to the people receiving that concession. If fewer tokens are given there will be serious financial implications for the transport undertakings.

Tendering will be based on low wages and bad conditions. The ending of cross-subsidy and deregulation make it difficult to understand which companies will bid for routes of which they will not have exclusive use.

The Secretary of State must tell us the financial implications of redundancies for local authority transport undertakings. Every service that is lost will mean a reduction in employment. That will have implications for pension contributions and the maintenance of superannuation schemes and will have serious financial implications in the years ahead both on transport undertakings and local authorities.

I regret that I was unable to speak in the previous debate. All aspects of the Bill that the Government are forcing through have serious financial implications.

11.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): In the brief time that is available to me I shall try to answer as many of the points that have been raised as possible. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), although describing this as a "punitive" measure, could not explain why the people of Hereford seemed to enjoy it quite so much, but he did ask the likely value of the National Bus Company, as did the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). The debt of the NBC to the Government is currently £128 million. If the various parts are sold for more than that, there will be a net profit. If the various parts are sold for less than that, there will be a net loss. I am not at all sure that it would have been possible to float the National Bus Company in its present form before even the White Paper was published because it would not have been attractive to the stock market.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) asked about community buses. I can assure him that I too have an excellent community bus in my constituency, called the villager bus. Such buses will in future probably be eligible for innovation grants, and for the rural bus grant, and they will most likely be able to tender for subsidised services to the county council. However, my villager bus operates without subsidy and provides and excellent service to a large number of villages. It is the most wonderful new form of innovative village transport, which we want to see spread and encouraged. There will be nothing but help, assistance and encouragement to such arrangements under the provisions of this measure.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) and for South Hams asked about taxi plates. Clause 14 sets out the conditions under which a local authority may or may not grant an extra licence. Exactly how long it will take for a taxi plate to reduce under those conditions is not easy to predict. It will reduce over time, not immediately.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East should note that there are licensing requirements. If a local authority exercises its power to license taxies—some do and some do not—it will also have power to supervise the quality of the vehicle and the driver in the sense to which my hon. Friend referred, of knowing the geography of the city and so on. Some local authorities do not restrict taxi licences or have a licensing system; of course, they lose the power to control and supervise. It is a matter for local discretion and I believe that it is right to leave it that way.

I was asked about taxis operating as buses. That will be possible under the Bill. They will be able to register services, in which event they will have to comply with all the requirements of a registered stage service. If they are in country districts, they will be eligible for the various forms of assistance in the Bill. They become, to all intents and purposes, buses.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) and——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 183.

Division No. 101] **[11.11 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.

Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter

Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. Roger Thomas and
Mr. Austin Mitchell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Transport Bill, it is expedient to authorise the extinguishment of liabilities of the National Bus Company in respect of sums lent to it under section 20 of the Transport Act 1962 and the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenditure of the Secretary of State—

(i) in connection with the dissolution of the National Bus Company;

(ii) in respect of the salaries or remuneration of traffic commissioners and persons acting as their officers and servants;

(iii) in respect of the remuneration of members of the Transport Tribunal and the other expenses of the tribunal;

(iv) in making grants to persons operating or proposing to operate public passenger transport services in rural areas in Great Britain; and

(v) in making grants to the British Railways Board in respect of their costs in securing the provision of bus substitution services;

(b) any increase in payments out of money so provided arising from any increase in administrative expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the provisions of that Act; and

(c) any increase in payments out of money so provided under any other enactment.

WAYS AND MEANS

Transport

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That any Act resulting from the Transport Bill ("the Transport Act") may provide—

(a) that section 16(1)*(a)* of the Finance Act 1970 (which excludes precept income and grants in computing the profits of a Passenger Transport Executive chargeable to corporation tax) shall not apply with respect to any accounting period beginning on or after the passing of the Transport Act;

(b) that, in computing for the purposes of the Corporation Tax Acts the profit or loss of a Passenger Transport Executive for any accounting period beginning on or after the passing of the Transport Act, the loss of any earlier accounting period shall be computed as if section 16(1)*(a)* of the Finance Act 1970 had not been enacted; and

(c) for the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund and for increased payments into the Consolidated Fund under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

11.23 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I shall not detain the House for long. That is not a promise to the Secretary of State but a threat, because we expect him to answer quite a number of questions which were not dealt with earlier on Second Reading. If the Secretary of State does not give those matters attention now, I assure him that the debate could well exceed three hours.

The ways and means resolution is rather tightly drawn but touches on several major and important issues. The first is the level of fares with the implications of clause 105 which cuts tax relief resulting from section 16(1)*(a)* of the Finance Act 1970. Other important issues concern the assets and disposal of the National Bus Company. The Secretary of State touched on that this afternoon in terms of the outstanding debt, but we should like to know more about how the NBC will be broken up and disposed of for sale. Thirdly, the resolution affects the break-up of the passenger transport executives. Again there are considerable implications for various parts of the United Kingdom, not least Strathclyde. It is important that the Secretary of State should give more details to the House about the effects that that will have.

The provisions seem to suggest that the Secretary of State is more interested in helping the Treasury than the travelling public. The cost of transport will increase, notwithstanding the introduction of more competition and privatisation. When comments were made earlier about the availability of bus transport, I thought that the remarks of the late R. A. Butler were apt. He said that those who miss the bus must resign themselves to walking. In many areas the travelling public will have no choice.

What is the effect of clause 105(1), which makes provision to cut tax relief? If it is removed, there will clearly be an extra charge. When the Minister replies, will he tell us what that will cost? The Government have made a great deal of the importance of rate-capping legislation. It is important that the Minister tells us how the Government will keep down bus fares, which have a considerable effect on the social and economic life of the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) spoke earlier about dependence on public transport, which exists in areas such as

Strathclyde and especially in Glasgow, where 70 per cent. of households have no car. It is essential that the Minister clarifies those arrangements.

Under clause 51, the Secretary of State will have powers to extinguish past loans to the NBC, and to use the proceeds of sales to repay debts. The Government have been singularly unsuccessful so far in their attempts to push parts of the NBC into the private sector. It will be useful if the Minister tells us what restructuring lies ahead. As a Scotsman, I am bound to say that listening to some comments made by English colleagues, there could be a not inconsiderable change in many parts of the country.

Moreover, it would be useful to know what is meant by the maximisation of the proceeds to the Treasury. It is the Chancellor of the Exchequer rather than the consumer who will benefit from the sale of the assets of the National Bus Company. I understand that the NBC board will be required to submit a disposal programme to the Department of Transport. I wonder whether the Secretary of State would enlighten the House as to what discussions have taken place so far, and how he sees the hara-kiri ahead in terms of the dismemberment of the National Bus Company.

The Secretary of State might also comment on what will happen with the break-up of the passenger transport executives. The shattering of the structures, which is ostensibly intended to assist the travelling public in those PTE areas, carries with it an ominous message of higher fares and redundancies, and a worse service in many communities. I want a little more information from the Secretary of State on that, and on what will happen to the money from fees and fines that is received by the traffic commissioners.

Earlier this evening, the Under-Secretary of State gave us elocution lessons and referred to "Pygmalion", but as he was talking what came to mind was the word "chameleon". I listened to the speeches of some Conservative Members, and although in principle they had some good things to say about the Bill, they always had qualifications. They always asked the Secretary of State to protect this, or reimburse that. It did not surprise me that not one Scottish Tory Back-Bench Member had a good word to say about the Bill, because not one of them spoke in the debate, and precious few of them were here this afternoon.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): Yes they were.

Mr. Craigen: The Whip obviously does not know all the Scottish Back-Bench Members, or he would not have made that statement.

I know the Secretary of State only too well, and he may recall that in a previous incarnation, when he was Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, he was planning to sent me on a long boat trip to St. Helena to carry out an employment exercise. However, it was impossible to go there because of the poor boat service. This afternoon, when he was telling the bus industry that its motto should be "Take a bus", I thought that the Secretary of State was taking the House for a ride. The Bill will not do much for the travelling public — *[Interruption.]* It did not surprise me when I read the appendix — I hope that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who I believe comes from Glasgow, also read the appendix—that the Department of Transport had to search for information in Australia to prove its case on the privatisation of buses. Page 61—I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows it chapter and verse —states:

"While there is no direct UK evidence, some guidance can be obtained by considering a study of private urban bus operators in Australia, in towns where they accounted for 46 per cent. of buses in use."

I do not know whether the Department had to go to Alice Springs to obtain the information that the Department believes will be relevant to the running of bus services of the United Kingdom, but when I looked at the serried ranks on the Government Back Benches, I thought, "There cannot be a body of men and women who know less about travelling on buses than that lot over there." The Scottish Office Minister who is responsible for buses travelled recently on a bus. He did so only because the convener of Lothian regional council had been chasing him all over the place saying that the Bill would be disastrous for Lothian regional transport.

The Secretary of State must address himself to these significant points, or we shall keep him here for quite a long time, although not for quite so long a time as he was going to send me to St. Helena. However, we shall expect the kind of answers that he did not give the travelling public this afternoon when he introduced the Bill.

11.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I am delighted to try to assist the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) by answering some of his questions. I may find it easier than I did on the previous money resolution when I believe I had four minutes in which to answer the points made by a number of hon. Members.

First, the hon. Gentleman asked about clause 105, which contains the tax provisions that are being effected in relation to the passenger transport executives. The clause does three things. First, it removes the exemptions which the PTEs currently enjoy whereby the income which the PTEs receive from the passenger transport authorities is excluded in computing the profits of the PTEs for corporation tax purposes. As they were two public bodies, the grants from PTAs to PTEs were not treated as income and taxable in the hands of PTEs. When they become arm's length companies and normal commercial rules apply, any income they receive—the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will be steeped in the fact that it will only be income received through the tendering process and not through direct subsidy—will be part of income, and if they make a profit their profits will be subject to corporation tax, just like those of any other company.

Secondly, clause 105 removes the accumulated tax losses which have resulted in the past from this exemption. We had the example of south Yorkshire in the previous debate which is now receiving £69 million a year from the PTA. That is an accumulated tax loss of £69 million a year. Perhaps by now it is hundreds of millions of pounds just for one metropolitan county. There would be little merit in allowing these tax losses to pass into the period when the PTEs become companies because they could be of value to them in making money by completely extraneous purposes, as there has been a tendency to happen already.

Thirdly, it prevents the liabilities for capital gains tax and development land tax from arising on transactions

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

which are to be brought about by the provisions in the Bill and which involve no significant change in ownership. Just because a PTE becomes a company, it will not in any sense be liable for capital gains or development land tax. Those provisions make the position entirely fair both as regards the transition and as between the PTE companies and private sector companies when they are competing with one another in the open market.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman asked me for details of the break-up of the National Bus Company. I have written to the board of the National Bus Company asking it to prepare a number of options which will have to bear in mind the need for obtaining competitiveness and at the same time the possibilities for sale and the lively proceeds of sale as well as the management of the company in the meanwhile.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the right hon. Gentleman also bear in mind the viability and the size of the units? Will this be an element, or is he simply intent on forcing them into the private sector without regard to whether the companies concerned are viable units?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady may have misheard me. I said that I asked the National Bus Company to work out options—three, four, five, two, one; I do not know how many—which it believes will meet the criteria which I put in my letter to the company. One of those criteria is competition; another is the return to the Exchequer; a third is the ability to manage. The hon. Lady will find it all in *Hansard*. If a company is to be saleable, it must be viable. Nobody will buy a company if it is not thought to be viable.

The hon. Member for Maryhill also asked about the maximisation of proceeds from the sale of the National Bus Company subsidiaries. This will be very much part of the consideration in deciding between the options. As I said on a previous occasion, I am not certain that the National Bus Company is saleable as an entity. I suspect that we will get a different type of offer by selling it in smaller units. I hope that offers will come from managers and employees working on employee buy-out schemes, as happened with the National Freight Corporation.

Mr. Craigen: Does that mean that when the Minister is taking a decision it will be the highest return to the Treasury rather than the greatest service to the local community that will be the deciding factor?

Mr. Ridley: Both the letter which I wrote to the chairman of the National Bus Company and the priorities in the clause in the Bill, which he should read carefully, set out that the prime consideration is that a competitive situation should result from the sale of the assets so that when the National Bus Company subsidiaries are sold they are neither too dominant nor too small to be able to compete with the private sector, the PTEs and the municipal undertakings. That is the prime consideration.

Mr. Craigen: That does not answer the question.

Mr. Ridley: It answers the question entirely. The main priority in the sale of the subsidiaries will be competition. It is clearly set out in the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the PTEs. He will notice that the first priority in the Bill is that the PTE bus operations should be put into an arm's length state as separate companies. If a PTE is thought to be too large and dominant to make for proper competition, there is power in the Bill for me to ask it to put forward a scheme to break up the operation into smaller units. It does not follow that in all cases or in any case we will do that. It will depend on the competitive situation which will result from the making of the companies. Some PTEs may want to do that of their own volition; some may not.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I am most interested in what my right hon. Friend has said. Is he aware that there are more than 3,000 buses in Manchester? Is it not right to give an indication to the House that there will not be in Greater Manchester one organisation with that large number of vehicles if he is to insist in all other parts of the country that units of the NBC or other PTEs will be split up? Is it not right to make it clear whether 3,000 will be too many? If he accepts it in Manchester, he should accept it elsewhere.

Mr. Ridley: We must first see whether Manchester PTE puts forward proposals to restructure its own operation which might well fit in with the criteria. Manchester may not do that, in which case we will indeed have to do as my hon. Friend suggests. I hardly think that it is right to design a new scheme for the Manchester PTE companies on the Ways and Means resolution, as it is not entirely relevant to whether we should pay money from these various operations into the Consolidated Fund.

The hon. Gentleman asked me what would happen to fees and fines raised by the traffic commissioners. The answer is that they will be paid into the Consolidated Fund.

The hon. Gentleman quoted the words of the late Lord Butler. "Those who miss the bus will have to walk". However, the situation has changed and now those who miss the bus will take the car. There is competition, and the bus service has to be able to win back that traffic. One way in which that will be done is the way about which he asked me—by keeping fares down. There are two ways to do that: first, by subsidy, which is how it is done in south Yorkshire; secondly, by competition. When subsidies are used, money has to be taken out of other people's pockets. When competition is used, the efficiency of the operators does it. That is what will happen to fares—they will come down. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 236, Noes 167.

Division No 102] **[11.48 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Best, Keith
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Amess, David	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Ancram, Michael	Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Arnold, Tom	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Ashby, David	Bright, Graham
Aspinwall, Jack	Brinton, Tim
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Brooke, Hon Peter
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Bryan, Sir Paul
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Buck, Sir Antony
Baldry, Tony	Budgen, Nick
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Bulmer, Esmond
Begg, Roy	Burt, Alistair
Bellingham, Henry	Butler, Hon Adam
Bendall, Vivian	Butterfill, John
Benyon, William	Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*

Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Egger, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cheyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John

Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That any Act resulting from the Transport Bill ("the Transport Act") may provide—

(a) that section 16(1)*(a)* of the Finance Act 1970 (which excludes precept income and grants in computing the profits of a Passenger Transport Executive chargeable to corporation tax) shall not apply with respect to any accounting period beginning on or after the passing of the Transport Act;

(b) that, in computing for the purposes of the Corporation Tax Acts the profit or loss of a Passenger Transport Executive for any accounting period beginning on or after the passing of the Transport Act, the loss of any earlier accounting period shall be computed as if section 16(1)*(a)* of the Finance Act 1970 had not been enacted; and

(c) for the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund and for increased payments into the Consolidated Fund under any other enactment.

London Regional Transport (Levy)

11.55 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I beg to move,

That the draft London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 17 December, be approved.

I think I should first explain to the House some of the detail of this draft levy order.

London's ratepayers are being asked to contribute £212 million towards the estimated grants to LRT of £323 million for the financial year 1985-86. Two hundred and twelve million pounds is equivalent to a rate of 10·8p. Of course, those who get a rate rebate also get a rebate on this amount.

The Government's approach is certainly in stark contrast to that of London Transport's old masters. They thought that by taking more and more money from the ratepayer they could conceal from passengers the rising real costs of providing public transport services in London. Between 1970 and 1983, the total grant from taxpayers and ratepayers rose from £6·5 million to £400 million, including the concessionary fare grants. Despite this, fares were over 30 per cent. higher in real terms after the GLC's last fares change in May 1983 than they were at the beginning of 1970, when the GLC was first given responsibility for London Transport.

The first step that we took on taking control of London Regional Transport last summer was to signal an end to the upward spiral of costs and subsidies, and we made an early start. On 20 July, three weeks after LRT came under Government control, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the chairman of LRT setting out clear objectives for the next few years. He made it clear that there had to be a limit on the amount of public resources under the transport system but within the total available there should be a substantial shift away from revenue subsidy into productive capital investment, to enable lasting improvements in public transport facilities to be made and to make the system more efficient.

Accordingly, my right hon. Friend set two specific targets for LRT. The first target was to reduce unit costs by at least 2·5 per cent. a year in real terms and, secondly, to reduce the level of revenue support required from £190 million in 1984-85 to £95 million cash in 1987-88. This is less than 40 per cent. of the level of revenue support proposed by the GLC under its plan for 1987-88. At the same time, we made it clear that the Government were prepared to provide for a substantial programme of capital investment to save costs and improve facilities for passengers, including the interchanges between modes.

I am pleased to acknowledge the progress which LRT management has already made under Keith Bright in transforming the outlook for LRT. LRT's annual business plan for 1985-86 makes encouraging reading. I know that some Opposition Members will be disappointed, because they like to claim that efficiency improvements are a pipe dream and that passengers will have to pay a heavy price if subsidies are reduced. However, the annual business plan utterly refutes this defeatist attitude and I recommend it to any hon. Member who wants to know what is now going on.

Instead of the swingeing fares increases which we were accused of plotting, LRT has raised fares by 9 per cent. on average from 6 January. That 9 per cent. puts it back

to the same level in real terms as in May 1983 after the GLC's last fares changes. In fact, fares are 10 per cent. lower now than they were in 1981, when the present GLC took office. LRT has introduced the new Capitalcard which extends the benefits of the very popular LT Travelcard to include British Rail's services in the London area.

Hon. Members who have studied the annual business plan will be aware that there are encouraging developments in passenger services. London Regional Transport has improved bus service reliability in 1984-85 and hopes to achieve further improvements in the coming year. As a result, it forecasts that average waiting times will show some improvement in 1985-86 despite a slight reduction in total bus mileage and that service levels will still be substantially above the proposals in LT's 1983 plan.

In his introduction to the business plan, the chairman of LRT states:

"Total public transport mileage by road in London might, in fact, increase if demand can be stimulated by the development of new routes and different kinds of services, operated by London buses or other operators under contract to LRT."

So the future has some bright prospects, with good management.

A slight increase in total operated mileage is forecast for the underground system. The Heathrow terminal 4 extension is scheduled to open towards the end of 1985. There are no proposals for station or line closures and LRT plans to continue with its ambitious programme of station modernisation.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): The move towards one-person operated buses has been much greater under LRT than under the GLC. Will this not adversely affect the reliability of bus services for passengers, on the ground that these buses take longer to complete their journeys for the obvious reason that there is only one person to handle the operation and not two?

Mrs. Chalker: From the information that I have to hand from different places round the country, some of which already have 100 per cent. one-person operation, I do not find that to be true. I do not have any information to that effect; if I did, I would tell the hon. Member. If I discover any information, I will let him know.

The one–person operated buses, once people are used to the operation, do not have the same hold-ups as are involved in getting both members of the crew to start off or the purely operational problems that sometimes occur with a conductor and a driver as opposed to one person doing the entire job.

LRT's annual business plan shows that it has made a good start towards better services for less subsidy. It has managed to reduce the revenue support requirement from £190 million this year under the GLC to about £130 million for 1985-86, a reduction of nearly one third, but without a large increase in fares or major cuts in services. This achievement is attributable partly to the continuing success of its marketing policies, especially Travelcard. But a key factor is the improving efficiency. LRT now expects to exceed its budgeted unit cost reduction target this year by a wide margin as a result of the initiatives agreed by the new board to improve productivity across the whole range of LRT's operations. In 1985-86, it expects to reduce unit costs by a further 2·8 per cent., which is significantly better than the target of 2·5 per cent. which my right hon. Friend has set.

This progress has enabled LRT to achieve a dramatic switch of resources into worthwhile capital investment, which I believe all hon. Members should welcome. Examples include the modernisation of bus and rail engineering facilities, increasing automation of ticket sales and collection on the underground and progressive conversion of the bus and train fleets to one-person operation, as the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) mentioned. In addition, nearly one third of underground investment for 1985-86 will be devoted to an expanding station modernisation programme.

In sum, LRT's plan shows that in 1985-86 it will have made a good start on the way towards better services for less subsidy. It is odd then, even if predictable, that the latest message from across the river is that ratepayers will be worse off financially under the new arrangements. It is worth my taking a few minutes to examine the credentials of that claim.

It was of course the GLC's high-spending policies which led to it receiving no block grant in 1984-85, so the only contribution from the taxpayer towards the GLC's grants to London Transport came by way of the transport supplementary grant. On a pro rata apportionment of the transport supplementary grant between the various items of accepted expenditure, the GLC received under £80 million of transport supplementary grant this year towards the total budgeted to London Transport of £340 million. Over three quarters of the GLC's grants, therefore, fell to be met by ratepayers in the financial year 1984-85. By contrast, the levy order before the House for 1985-86, which I ask hon. Members to approve, provides for a rate payers' contribution of less than two thirds, and the total grant has been reduced from £340 million to £323 million. I ask any hon. Member who is good with a pencil and paper or a calculator at this hour: how can two thirds of £323 million be more than three quarters of £340 million? Hon. Members may well ask. The answer is that, from across the river we have had a new form of maths—I dare not call it new maths, because that would be unfair to new maths—by which it seeks to prove its figures.

Until just over a year ago, the GLC was funding capital investment by LRT on a pay-as-you-go basis. This is a method appropriate for investment which is unlikely to generate sufficient profits to cover even borrowing charges. On this basis, the share of the GLC's budget for London Transport this year, which was not covered by Government grants was £263 million—£50 million, or some 2½p in the pound more than the Government's proposed levy for 1985-86.

Because that shows the GLC's policies in a bad light, the GLC has been desperately trying to demonstrate that it has borrowed to finance LT's capital grants. In order to provide some basis for that claim, the GLC switched an arbitrary £300 million of external debt from housing to public transport in December 1983, when the London Regional Transport Bill was at Second Reading stage in this House. Hon. Members will not be fooled by this ruse; nor will ratepayers. To make it worse, not only does the GLC claim that it has kept its rates down by spreading the costs of its policies over future years; at the same time it seeks to blame the Government for the £70 million of debt charges that are now attributed to public transport as a result of its own transfer of that £300 million from housing to public transport. I am not surprised that that is happening, but we will not have the wool pulled over our

[Mrs. Chalker]

eyes or over ratepayers' eyes. I must say, accustomed as I am to the sort of stories which are cooked up in county hall, that that one really takes some beating.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I want to understand the Minister. I do not want to be a party to dealing in false figures. Will she tell the House whether the debt charges of £69 million are debt charges on previous London Transport borrowing? In cash terms, how many million pounds are being contributed by ratepayers to London Regional Transport?

Mrs. Chalker: The answer to the first question is no, and to the second is the figure that I have already mentioned—£212 million of grant, almost two thirds of the total of £323 million.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We can become blinded by figures. The Minister could helpfully tell the House what percentage in the coming year of total money spent on LRT will come from the ratepayer, as opposed to the current year, which, subject to certain alterations, is under the control of the GLC. It is always the proportion between rate contribution and central taxpayers' contribution that people can most easily perceive, rather than the figures given by the Minister.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall return to the figures when I reply to the debate, but off the top of my head I believe them to be 65·6 per cent. and 75 per cent.

In closing my remarks, I need do no more than draw the attention of the House to the GLC's policy to increase the revenue subsidy for LT alone to £245 million by 1987-88 — more than two and half times the level proposed by the Government. In contrast, our policies, which have already begun to deliver substantial savings for London ratepayers in the first few months of LRT are beginning to bear fruit. The outlook is that those savings will increase. Furthermore, our approach, with the backing of the LRT management, will bring very substantial benefits for the whole community in terms of improved services and facilities for less money. That is a far cry from the decay and neglect that was predicted by our opponents following the Government's takeover of LRT. The prospects for London's public transport system, those who use the popular Capitalcard and those who pay for it through the rate levy order have never been better. I commend the draft order to the House.

12.14 am

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is a disgrace that a major order, which is putting an extra cost on to London ratepayers, should be taken at this hour of the morning. The Government are perfectly well aware that such a measure will be unpopular and they are anxious that it should not receive too much publicity.

It is enlightening that the Secretary of State has not moved the order. I notice that that task has now been downgraded to the province of Minister of State — I have no desire to be rude to the hon. Lady—whereas before the right hon. Gentleman was at least prepared to come here and wave his arms about in an attempt to defend some of the decisions that he has taken.

It is clear that there is a basic inconsistency in the right hon. Gentleman's political ethos. We have just spent one parliamentary day debating the fact that the right hon. Gentleman wishes to set free the transport system throughout the rest of the United Kingdom, yet now he is operating in a completely different way in relation to London Regional Transport.

The right hon. Gentleman got himself into this situation because he levied an amount on the GLC, which, according to the judge who tried the case, was illegal and irresponsible. He is now anxious that we should push forward this levy tonight because as soon as the London ratepayers suddenly realise how much they have been conned they will add to the voices raised in the House not only against the abolition of the GLC but against the arbitrary way in which the right hon. Gentleman has now taken London transport into his pocket to run like some personal little train set round and round his office table.

I am perfectly prepared to stand here tonight and bandy the most complicated statistics with the Minister of State if she seriously thinks that that will in any way enlighten ratepayers. It is frightening that Conservative Members should come here at the behest of the Secretary of State, who has been found guilty of asking for more money than he legally has a right to, and then talk to us about creative accounting. We are told that the GLC has been fixing the figures because it has used creative accounting to shift through an entire book-keeping operation, money out of one vote and into another and that that is why LRT is faced with such difficulties. That is nonsense and the Minister of State knows that.

The purpose of the order is to levy a 10·8p precept on London boroughs to pay for part of the cost of financing public transport in London. As long as that is realised, and as long as we have a little plain talking so that we do not pretend that somehow or other some magic accounting procedure has left LRT with debts which it did not expect and was not supposed to hold, we shall get somewhere near talking about the reality behind this levy.

We are told by the Minister that the Government are charging far less than happened under the GLC. That is not the way the ratepayers of London will see it. They will see it in a much simpler way. They believe that the 9 per cent. rise in fares that has taken place since the LRT took over is an extra imposition. They believe that not only the increase in the levy but the clear sign that some of the ways in which the payment is operating across the capital are manifestly unfair, since the outer areas are not contributing the proper percentage of the moneys, and are worse than the situation that existed under the previous London Transport. They do not intend to be in some way persuaded that they are getting a much better system and that, although they will have to pay more and have worse services, that is part of some cloud of misunderstanding on their part, a miasma created by the wicked people across the river in the GLC.

The Minister has come here late at night to levy on Londoners a tax for a transport system run not by elected councillors—not by those over whom they have some control — and not even by those who pretend to demonstrate a certain expertise, but by a quango that will decide not only the rate of fares and developments but the effect on staffing and services.

Does the Minister really believe that the people of London do not understand that? They may not be expert at creative accounting. They may not have the right Etonian-type accents when they complain about the removal of services which they desperately need. But one fact they understand clearly. While the Secretary of State

says that the rest of the United Kingdom must have competition, he wants London's services to be run by a quango, which he controls from Whitehall. What is worse, he wants to charge the ratepayers of London more for the privilege of having their services run by one of the most ill-informed Secretaries of State for Transport that this country has had or is likely to have.

12.21 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have sat through many debates at county hall when the budget has been under discussion. Compared with those debates, it is a travesty tonight to witness the way in which matters affecting the services and costs of London transport are being decided.

Throughout our deliberations on the London Regional Transport Bill, we were continually told by Ministers that the democratic accountablility of LRT would be assured through the means of the debate on the levy order. We are now undertaking that exercise, but it is a miserable replacement for the GLC's lengthy debates of all matters concerning London transport.

It was not a question of Tory members of the GLC bandying statistics before the transport committee. Papers were circulated and the figures were worked out. All the necessary information was available for all to see, and, what is more, the opposition could move amendments, whereas we are faced with an unamendable order and we have one and half miserable, rotten, stinking hours in which to debate it at gone midnight.

Who is here to discuss it? At the GLC there was a great deal of press interest in the lively debates about the future levels of London Transport services and fares. In the Chamber tonight we have perhaps a dozen hon. Members who represent London constituencies. I am not suggesting that this side of the House is any better than the Government side in that respect.

It is clear that hon. Members have become so fed up to the back teeth with being dragged into the day-to-day running of local government that they are voting with their feet, staying in the bars and disappearing into the night, leaving a few of us to debate issues for which we should have no responsibility and about which few of us have real knowledge.

There is no point in quoting many statistics, and I assure the Minister that I am not trying to score cheap points, but when she replies to the debate, will she explain how my information is incorrect, if it is? My figures, coming from county hall, do not accord with her statistics, coming from her advisers. I understand that this precept represents a 35 per cent. increase for London ratepayers. I will explain how I have arrived at that figure, and perhaps she will explain how I have got it wrong, if I have. Let us compare the 1984-85 transport budget with LRT's budget for 1985-86.

First, there was revenue support direct to London Transport of £190 million. Added to that were debt charges of £59 million, paid from the GLC precept, giving a sub-total of £249 million. To be deducted from that sub-total was £41 million received in the transport supplementary grant from central Government. Therefore, in 1984-85 the total burden on the London ratepayers was £208 million. I can gladly provide those figures; they are not secret. They were produced by the advisers to the GLC transport committee.

As the Minister correctly says, the total subsidy to London Regional Transport is £323 million. The hon. Lady also correctly says that the ratepayers will contribute £212 million of that through the LRT levy. That is already more than the £208 million that they paid last year, but one must add to it another £69 million for debt charges on previous London Transport borrowing, paid for through the GLC precept. Therefore, in 1985-86 the total burden on the ratepayers will be £281 million compared with £208 million in 1984-85, an increase of 35 per cent. Will the Minister please tell me, and the House, where my figures disagree with hers?

Why are the ratepayers of London being asked to pay that larger precept? The main reason is that Ministers have changed the way in which London Regional Transport pays for its capital spending. London Transport used to pay for capital expenditure by borrowing. That method was perfectly reasonable. It spread the cost of improvements over a number of years. London Regional Transport, on the other hand, is now required by Ministers to load the whole cost of capital equipment on to the year in which it is purchased. In 1985-86 there is a large hike in the cost to ratepayers consequent upon that change in policy.

The new policy makes neither good financial sense nor good economic sense. As in the case of water provision, the Government have asked for increased capital expenditure and they have also asked that all the expenditure should be financed in the year in which is incurred. That is a complete change from the way in which local authorities and nationalised industries have normally dealt with their own capital expenditure.

The new policy makes no sense, because future Governments might want substantially to increase the capital spending of London Regional Transport. If the present accounting system is maintained, London ratepayers will pay dearly for capital investment that will benefit subsequent generations of ratepayers as well as themselves.

Mr. Deakins: In the case of both water and public transport in London, is not the Government's aim to make a profit for themselves rather than to relieve the burden on the ratepayers?

Mr. Banks: The Government certainly appear now to be using charging in nationalised industries as a way of increasing indirect taxation. That is a dishonest and behind-the-scenes way of doing things.

One of the benefits to the Government is that few people realise that the sleight of hand has taken place. When one is faced with a whole range of precepts and bills, it is difficult to work out what is going on. The Government are seeking to throw sand in the eyes of the ratepayers and taxpayers. In doing so they hope to get away with a massive switch from direct to indirect taxation. The ratepayers of London are being asked to pay more for a much worse service.

The Secretary of State has set several targets that will lead to a deterioration of services in London. There has been a proposed reduction in the level of revenue support from a budgeted £190 million by the GLC in 1984-85, to £95 million in cash terms by 1987-88, which is £82 million in 1984-85 prices, assuming 5 per cent. inflation. There is a proposed reduction of 2·5 per cent. in unit costs in real terms each year during the next few years and the

[Mr. Banks]

Secretary of State has confirmed the setting up of separate bus and rail subsidiaries to be operational by 1 April 1985. He has also given LRT responsibility for people with disabilities. That is fine, but we need to know the costs involved.

We have witnessed fare changes which, as the Minister rightly said, rose by an average of 9 per cent. on 6 January 1985. I welcome the fact that she also said that fare levels now are still 10 per cent. in real terms below what they were in 1981. The GLC can be thanked for that. It was that part of the GLC's policy which proved popular with ratepayers in 1981 and, were we to have an election in 1985, would prove so again. There will be no election, of course, so we shall never be able to put the matter to the test. No doubt the Government are greatly relieved at that.

The fare increases from January hide several factors that the Minister did not bother to touch on. The biggest increases were for short distances. The short hop fare, which accounts for 30 per cent. of all fares, rose by 25 per cent., from 20p to 25p. The two-zone travel card increased by 17 per cent. and children's fares rose by 50 per cent., from 10p to 15p. The Minister should not try to throw sand in our eyes as well by trying to suggest that this modest 9 per cent. increase, which is double the rate of inflation at the moment, does not hide a far more serious series of larger increases that affect certain groups of people.

I notice that the fares to Heathrow remained unchanged or were reduced. Why? Can the Minister give a reason? Those are the types of question that the transport chair at the GLC would have had to answer. He would not have been able to get away with it by trekking through a summing up, hoping that we would all go away satisfied. The chair would have been held to account by the committee and the opposition.

The Minister made great play of the success of Capitalcard. I think that she is anticipating something. Capitalcard, despite its fetching jingle that we hear every morning on Capital radio and LBC, has been operating for only a short time. I think that she has got it confused with Travelcard, which was the major reason for the GLC ensuring that LT produced a £35 million operating surplus last year. Capitalcard has only just started and will not be as successful as Travelcard. Let me tell the Minister why. First, it is different from the GLC's scheme, for which £5 million was provided in the London Transport Executive budget for 1984-85. The GLC's proposal was to extend Travelcard to British Rail users at no extra cost.

Mrs. Chalker: At no extra cost to whom?

Mr. Banks: At no extra cost to those who bought the travel card.

Mrs. Chalker: Ah!

Mr. Banks: Of course. There is no such thing as a free lunch, even for Conservative Members. I understand that, and an awful lot of free lunches are eaten in this place. At least the ratepayers of London were able to decide through their elected representatives and the ballot box whether their rates should be used to subsidise cheap travel in London. The Minister knows that it was electorally popular and successful. All the records show that. I admit that it was not free, because there is no such thing as something free in this world. I am sure that if the Government could tax the air they would do it.

In contrast to Travelcard, Capitalcard prices are set at a premium. — *[Interruption.]* I am delighted that the invisible man has paid us a visit. The Secretary of State may be interested to know that I was trying to explain to the Minister the difference between Capitalcard and Travelcard as she seems to get them confused. He has probably not heard of either.

Capitalcard prices are set at a premium above both Travelcard and the British Rail season ticket rate. Obviously that limits its application to passengers who previously used LRT and BR. Capitalcard is up to 37 per cent. more expensive than the GLC's proposals. It is unlikely to attract many takers because of the premium, and is likely to achieve only limited operating improvements and efficiencies. The Minister must acknowledge those facts. It is no good claiming that Capitalcard will be or is a great success when it has not been operating long enough to be evaluated. She must also accept that it is considerably more expensive than Travelcard, and therefore likely to prove that much more unpopular.

I realise that I am going into great detail, but this is how we used to conduct debates about London transport at county hall. I admit that we had only five minutes in which to put points, but we could return to the subject. Moreover, large numbers of people could make points, and we had a transport committee. Now we have no way of questioning officers and members about policies because our time has been reduced to an hour and a half's debate late on an evening that the Government choose.

There have been many service changes since July 1984. There have been changes to 38 bus routes, and some improvements to the night bus network, which are welcomed. However, major bus service changes are planned for February, and service reductions of 2 per cent. have been announced in LRT's business plan for 1985-86, despite an increase in patronage of 10 per cent. Why on earth LRT plans reductions of 2 per cent. when patronage is increasing, I cannot fathom. Perhaps the Minister will explain when she replies.

The GLC plan for bus mileage in 1985-86 was to be 168 million, but LRT's business plan for 1985-86 envisaged only 164 million. If the GLC had been allowed to continue, bus mileage in the 1987-88 would have increased to 170 million, but LRT's business plan envisages only 159 million. Therefore, there will be a constant reduction in bus mileage in London. That cannot be good news for London's ratepayers. They are faced with a 35 per cent. increase in charges for transport next year, and can look forward to fares increasing by what the Minister called a modest 9 per cent. No doubt it will be a modest 15 per cent. later and a modest 20 per cent. after that—and all the time bus mileages are decreasing.

Finally, when we had a transport Committee where we could discuss such matters, we could also get details of the day-to-day running of London transport. How can we find that out now? The Minister refuses to answer questions about it because it is normal practice for nationalised industries. How is that good for ratepayers and hon. Members? How can we possibly have the democratic accountability that the Secretary of State promised us during discussions on the London Regional Transport Act 1984 if we cannot ask about the day-to-day services of LRT?

Our constituents ask us about bus frequencies—about what has happened to the number 25 or the night service

—and we cannot answer their questions, because the Secretary of State and London Regional Transport refuse to answer such questions. The press and the public used to be able to attend the GLC transport committee's meetings. They could listen to what was said and questions could be asked. Will London Regional Transport let the press and the ratepayers attend its meetings? Of course not. In Committee on the London Regional Transport Bill, the Secretary of State would not accept an amendment to allow the press and the public to attend LRT's meetings.

The Minister should not try to kid us that this miserable, squalid one-and-a-half-hour debate that the Government have so generously provided is any substitute for the democratic accountability of London Transport as it used to be run under the wisdom, the good guidance and the economic efficiency of the Greater London council.

12.40 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): This is a funny business indeed. When one considers the figures—I have examined the Minister's contributions in Committee on the London Regional Transport Act—one discovers that, last year, the Minister said that the ratepayers' contribution to the subsidy to London Transport was about 70 per cent. This year, under this order, the ratepayers' contribution will decrease to 65·63 per cent. Those percentages are directly comparable. However, to a great extent, the ratepayer is the user, and the fares will increase by 9 per cent. We are always being told that the total budget of London Regional Transport is decreasing, yet we are told that the service of London Regional Transport is increasing and that the contribution is producing a better return. The figures do not make sense.

This is another example of the House not being told clearly what the position is, and of the Minister and her Department adding another sorry chapter to the saga of their muddled dealings with London Regional Transport. My party and I have opposed from the beginning the concept of taking London Transport, uniquely in Britain, out of local democratic accountability into the hands of the Government, thus making a nationalised industry out of a local transport system. We opposed the Bill in Committee. We did not defend uncritically the position of London Transport, but at least it was run by people who were elected to run the service. We could have sacked the transport authority if we did not like what it was doing. In 1981, when the elections for the GLC were last held, transport was a major issue and the cheap fares policy was a determining factor in the success of the present administration.

Under the new situation, I am one of the people who reside in London boroughs whose rate will be levied by the Secretary of State, not by a group of councillors whom I can elect. I have no power to elect or to sack the Secretary of State. Therefore, I will be taxed, as will other hon. Members who are London ratepayers, by the Secretary of State. He will add to my burden as a ratepayer. I already have one such burden because of an historical anomaly —I must pay money for the Metropolitan police through an official on its behalf. Again, I have no say in that. I pay my rates to other authorities after democratic decision and, inasmuch as the Government have not inhibited it, democratic debate.

There are no other ways than this debate in which we can express our views. We cannot amend the proposals. We either take them or leave them. There is no option. The problem over that is that there is no real accountability or any real responsiveness to the needs of the consumer and the ratepayers. But what is far worse is that we are being asked to decide on the budget for the next financial year before the Secretary of State has sorted out his budget for this year. Next week we were to debate the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, yet the Secretary of State is still sorting out, because of a mistake he made, the budget for this year. How one can calculate, plan and organise the budget for next year when one does not know what this year's budget is may strike some hon. Members as somewhat bizarre. Even most creative accountants might find that difficult to comprehend.

The reality is that the Secretary of State went to court, where the judge declared that he had acted illegally and had exceeded his powers. He did things that he could have avoided doing if he had taken our advice in Committee, but he chose not to do so because he and his colleagues knew best. Even though the Secretary of State gave notice that he was going to appeal against that decision, eventually he backed down. It is an important constitutional principle that the Secretary of State should not come before this House to request it to pass this order assuming, when he has no constitutional right to do so, that the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill will be passed.

I seem to remember that the same Secretary of State introduced the Civil Aviation Bill. It did not appear to get very far. It failed on take-off. It might just be that his little London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill does not get through this House and the other place unamended. It could be that hon. Members do not like the idea of retrospective legislation—to correct mistakes that only the Secretary of State and his Department have made. If that is the case, we shall tonight be deciding on a budget for next year when no budget has been finalised for this year. As has been said, this is unconstitutional and, in London Transport terms, without precedent. In the past we went through a democratic procedure. We were able to look at figures and to listen to debate which has been open to the public. We did not have a little draft order which provided no explanation and no relevant figures. We are being asked to give a blank cheque to the Secretary of State without knowing the state of his current account.

I ask the Secretary of State, or his Minister of State, whether they might not accept that in law, order and constitutional propriety they should withdraw this draft order until they have been able to get through Parliament other legislation relating to this year's budget. If they get that legislation through the House—I hope they do not —then let them come back with the order that we are considering tonight.

I have already made the point that this is taxation without representation, which as a matter of principle, is unsatisfactory. It is also pretty high taxation. It will increase the amount that ratepayers will be contributing to London Regional Transport. On the other hand, we are being asked to pay more in fares. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and other hon. Members will be aware that the figures do not add up. By this order, the Secretary of State will levy £212 million from ratepayers. He is also going to add the £69 million, as the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, that the GLC will have to find to cover their outstanding debt resulting from capital projects, debt

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

which the Government would not take over, although they wanted to nationalise London Transport. They would take over the advantages but they would not take over the disadvantages.

Therefore the bill, as has been said, will be £281 million. This is higher than the bill would have been if the Greater London Council were running London Transport. It had a three-year plan and announced its figures. Therefore the Secretary of State is planning to outspend the council that he decided to replace. Unless the Secretary of State intends to practise more creative accounting, the cost is increasing, even though in Committee day after day, week after week, month after month he kept saying that the Government were going to make London Regional Transport more cost-effective. All I can say is that, if that is the way London Regional Transport is to go on, it does not say much for its accounting or for its level of service.

The future of London Regional Transport is shrouded in the normal mist that surrounds all the activities of the Department of Transport under this Administration. The business plan for London Regional Transport is good as far as it goes. I might remind the Secretary of State that if it had not been for pressure from Opposition Members in Committee there would not have been a business plan, because we were not to have such a series of documents with figures when the matter was originally proposed in Committee. There was to be no accountability in advance.

We are also entitled to know what sort of budget is planned for future years. Is it to be a slippery slope downwards with fewer services, more costs and higher fares, or is there to be a turning of one of the corners that the Government seem to reply upon to fulfil their best expectations? *[Interruption.]* Yes, indeed, they may have to rely on the exchange rate to enable them to do something.

The plan in the business document envisages a cut in revenue support over the next few years from about £190 million to £95 million or £85 million—a substantial cut. Yet we are being told that there will be minimal service reductions and fares increases consistent only with inflation. Nobody has been able to show how that equation can be made, and where the efficiency savings will be found remains fundamentally unclear. It looks as if the Secretary of State and his Department will claim that they will be able to square the circle, but they are not willing to come up with the evidence to support that claim.

London Transport, particularly in the area that I represent, is grossly under-funded. It does not need cuts or higher fares. People need to be charged less so that more people can use the services to generate more revenue so that we can have more capital investment for better public transport, fewer cars, less clogging of our capital city, a better service and generally a city that works.

The signs are that this doubly incompetent start by the Department has no good news for Londoners, whether ratepayers or passengers, and that there is no secure long-term plan for London Transport. If the Secretary of State is determined to go on with this half budget and creative accounting, I must place on record the fact that he does so against all constitutional standards of decency and propriety and without even coming to the House to tell us his reasons.

Unless we hear his reasons before the end of the debate, not only will we have to vote against the order tonight but we will be required to point out to the public that the arguments advanced last year were a con and that the Secretary of State has not done any of the things that he maintained he would achieve in his stewardship for London Transport and its users.

12.53 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) explained vividly the difference between the review of London Transport's activities and its future prospects that one might expect in a debate in county hall and in this brief debate. What he did not mention—I make no complaint about it—is that the supervisory function has passed from professionals responsible to councillors at county hall to civil servants in Whitehall accountable to the Secretary of State, who is accountable to the House.

I recall asking a question when the London Regional Transport Act 1984 was being debated about the number of people additional to those already in the Department of Transport who would be needed to administer the affairs of London Regional Transport. If I recollect correctly, the answer was in excess of 20 and perhaps up to 50. Perhaps the Minister will tell us the number. I think the answer was that the equivalent of at least 20 full-time people would be required in Marsham street.

I wish to emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend about the effect of the capital arrangements. He said that the Minister is requiring London Transport to get its capital requirements out of money levied by rates. If that is true, and the Minister must either deny it or agree to it, it means that there is a tax on transport in London paid by the ratepayers because they are paying more than they would under alternative methods of paying for that capital. If I have it wrong, I am sure that the Minister will correct me, but is she cannot, and if the Secretary of State for Transport is doing what the Secretary of State for the Environment is doing to sewerage and water supply, we are having to pay more for transport than we should be doing. This is the Government who say that they wish to reduce rates. Therefore the Government are being double-faced, if that is their position.

The Minister mentioned improvements to interchange. I warn her that if London Regional Transport or others trumpet the improvements for interchange such as that trumpeted in a recent article in the Sunday press, saying that there will be through-running between, for example, Paddington and the City, they should bear in mind that when that railway was built well over 100 years ago, it was built with through-running in mind. Such improvements are not improving absolutely, but only reverting to services of yesteryear. Any puffed-up, jumped-up exaggerations such as this will be viewed for what they are worth.

London Regional Transport and the Minister will have to face a major problem in the next few years, which hitherto has not received the attention that it deserves. That is the trend of employment in central London, and the effect that that will have on London transport, its finances and the quality of life in London. Some time ago, I asked the Department of the Environment to estimate the amount of empty office space in the Cities of London and Westminster, and in the rest of the GLC area. It did not reply because it said that such figures were not collected, and it would not collect them.

Another Bill, which we are considering in Committee, will destroy the strategic planning responsibility of the GLC, and put in its place an advisory planning commission to the Department of the Environment. I invite the Minister, the Secretary of State for Transport, and the Secretary of State for the Environment to have a look around the City and the West End to see the number of boards up saying, "To Let" and "For Sale". They are extraordinary and unnerving in number. There have not been such boards in the City of London in living memory, and they are now sprouting in every back and main street in the City and the West End. There is a rapid emptying of office space, which means that the numbers of people working there, and the numbers of people travelling to work, are going down, quite apart from the electronic revolution, about which we have all heard, and the effects that that will have. This will mean that there will be much less use of work journeys on London Transport in the coming years. All this will make a great difference, as it will change the income that LRT derives from this important source. Inadequate machinery will have to face this challenge. In wishing to break up the GLC—the Secretary of State may not achieve this aim — its strategic planning function and the interlocked relationship with the administration of London Transport, we shall be in great difficulty. I am not convinced that the Government's plans, as instanced by Capitalcard, will help. We could have had a good scheme with the Capitalcard, because London's railways operate for between 15 and 18 hours a day, irrespective of demand. It would have been beneficial to have costed that card in a way that would have enabled the transport system to be used to its maximum capacity. I believe that the Minister of State and the Secretary of State should at least modify their structural plans so that the flight of work from central London and the West End is reversed, so that it is worth while for people to work in and sometimes to live in central London, and so that our capital resources are used to the maximum extent. Unless the Ministers do this, they will not use the existing resources to their maximum and will not encourage all aspects of London — be it shopping, entertainment, leisure or visits to friends and relations—to the maximum extent. We shall, therefore, not use the facilities that were available in pre-1914 London to the maximum extent. The relationship between transport and social use makes public transport what it should be.

This debate is an instrument to deal with the finances of, and matters involved in London Transport. I have sketched out the strategic problem only briefly. I believe that the Minister of State should examine these aspects, because, although we deplore the Government's policies, at least, with a bit of warning, we should be able to examine this matter so that when we consider the next levy order in a year's time, we shall not only comment on and oppose the order but examine how well Ministers are discharging their trust and responsibility for the type of methods that I have outlined.

1.1 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I should like to endorse the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that it is undemocratic for London's transport matters to be decided in an hour-and-a-half debate when Conservative Members do not represent London constituencies and chatter their way through the debate. If they wish to continue their discussions, the bars are still open, and I am sure that the bars would welcome the trade. The issue of democracy in London transport deserves far greater attention in the House that it is likely to receive tonight or at any other time.

I refer to the points that many hon. Members made day after day, week after week, during the Committee stage of the London Regional Transport Bill. We pointed out that about 55 per cent. of households in London owned cars. In the poorer areas of London, which are represented by the Opposition the rate of car ownership falls to 40 per cent., 30 per cent. and, in some cases, to less than 25 per cent. That means that often 75 per cent. of all households rely on public transport for their transport needs. In those households that have access to a car, usually one person —a man—has access to the car. Women are, therefore, reliant entirely on public transport. Those arguments washed completely over the Secretary of State. He did not seem to comprehend what we were talking about.

We suggested to the Secretary of State that membership of the London Regional Transport Authority should reflect the high percentage of women users of transport, and the needs of the disabled, the minority ethnic communities and the elderly. The right hon. Gentleman dismissed those ideas out of hand. On taking over London Regional Transport, the right hon. Gentleman's first act was to sack most members of the board, especially those who had been appointed by the GLC because they represented specifically those types of interests. At one stroke he showed his contempt for the majority of the people of London who are users of London Regional Transport Authority services.

There is a further inadequacy about this type of debate. While we are discussing the London regional transport levy for the forthcoming financial year we ought to be discussing the Secretary of State's other plans for transport in London. It is inextricably linked with road planning, lorry bands, ring ways, motorways and airport development. But, no, we are restricted to discussing the London Regional Transport Authority levy while the same Secretary of State has cast a pall and a blight over a very large part of London by his proposals for studies for new road building schemes through east London, north London, south London and other places. These issues ought to be debated along with the levy.

We are going down a ludicrous path in London, contrary to the movements in transport thinking in every other city in the world. We seem to be blessed with a Secretary of State——

Mr. Tony Banks: Cursed.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend says "cursed" and he is quite right. We are cursed with a Secretary of State who has no vision whatsoever of how most people live and work in London; who has not the slightest understanding of how people get around and, judging by his various idiotic remarks about one-way systems which should be abolished, traffic lights which should all be permanently on green and parking meters which should all be taken away, seems to think that one can continue to encourage commuter motoring in and out of central London and then be surprised that there are traffic jams and when people suggest to him that it is not such a good idea to demolish homes and businesses to make way for roads but is much

[Mr. Corbyn]

more efficient to put people on buses and trains at a price they can afford, as was happening when the Greater London council had control of London's transport but is not happening now.

There was a short period after the Fares Fair scheme was introduced when the use of buses in London increased for the first time for many years, the number of people travelling on the underground increased and the number of people interchanging on to British Rail increased. But the Secretary of State could not stomach that, so he passed his nasty little Bill, which brought great danger to the streets of London and encouraged more cars and more lorries to come on to the streets of London. So we end up with the sort of ludicrous position that we are in tonight.

I hope that when the Minister replies—if he or she can be bothered to listen to some of the questions that are being put, because their attitude shows that they hold a lot of Londoners in great contempt—he or she will answer some specific questions.

First, how many bus routes will be cut during the next year from the London Regional Transport Authority's timetable? Secondly, how many miles of bus route will be lost in the forthcoming year? Thirdly, will they give us an undertaking as to what the fare increases will be in the forthcoming year and the year after? Will they also tell us what estimate they have made of the cost to the public purse of bringing in one-person-operated buses? With his rather curious ideas of efficiency, the Secretary of State seems to believe that it is more efficient to sack the bus conductors in order to make the buses slower, thereby creating a greater traffic jam and also making the buses considerably more dangerous, particularly for women passengers at night. It is something that he might not understand because I do not suppose that he or the hon. Lady travels on the buses late at night or at any other time. I suggest, however, that they consider the fear that is going through the minds of many people who are employed by the London Regional Transport Authority at the moment: those conductors who are about to lose their jobs—550 in the next month; the 3,800 jobs on London Transport that are due to go by the end of 1987; and the threat of privatisation that hangs over the London Regional Transport workshops, the maintenance gangs, the building department and all the other departments that have loyally served London Transport and given us a very good and potentially extremely efficient transport system throughout London.

But the Secretary of State flies in the face of all logic about London's transport needs, road planning requirements and the future needs of Londoners. He seems hell bent on driving more roads and motorways through London, taking buses off the roads and taking trains off the rails. He wants to cease to give the support that is needed to British Rail and to London Transport trains.

The elderly suffer who cannot find a bus to travel on while they still have a bus pass. The Government might tell us what plans they have for the bus pass for the elderly and whether they intend to extend the concession to British Rail trains. Another group which suffers are those who live in inner city areas who have no possibility of being able to buy a car or of being able to travel on any form of public transport other than buses. They have to rely on LRT and they are being treated to every-decreasing services, ever-lengthening bus queues and an ever-more expensive service. In the end it is not the Secretary of State or other Ministers who suffer, for they ride around in chauffeur-driven cars—*[Interruption.]* This is an example of the sort of debate that ensues when a group of public school hooligans, who find that they have nothing else to do, wander into the Chamber in the middle of the night merely to demonstrate their contempt for those who cannot afford to buy and run a car and who need a bus service to allow them to travel in London.

The evil days of this Tory Government are numbered. When the Government have been removed from office, a democratically elected Government will take their place. A Government will be elected who are determined to provide for the needs of all the people in London and our other major cities by establishing a decent, cheap and safe public transport system. The Secretary of State and his sidekick have shown themselves completely unfitted, unsuited and incapable of providing such a system.

1.12 am

Mrs. Chalker: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply to the debate. I have rarely heard such a lot of clap-trap as that which came from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). In that respect he even put the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) in the shade.

A number of false remarks have been made, as one would expect in this debate. I exclude the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) from that remark, because he made an important contribution on future strategic planning. He asked me to consider what he said, which, as he knows, I shall do most carefully. He knows as well as I do, however, that no one can look into a crystal ball to ascertain the form of future transport planning. Instead, we can examine the developments that are taking place and put resources and capital investment into schemes such as the docklands light railway, which is being undertaken by LRT with the London Docklands Development Corporation. We can provide for those areas that are to be expanded in future. That is exactly what LRT is required to do and is doing. Indeed, it is progressing ahead of its schedule.

I shall not go wider than that because on this order—the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich seemed to believe that it was part of a Bill which is to be brought before the House next week—there is a good deal to be said. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Lady that the order is complicated. However, it is important to get the basis of fact absolutely right, and that I shall seek to do in my answers to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

First, I ask the House to remember something that I said in my opening remarks. Between 1970—when the GLC first became responsible for the running of London Transport—and 1985, total grant from taxpayers and ratepayers rose from £6·5 million to £400 million. That is where the problem had to be tackled. We were faced with a problem of upward spiralling costs with no great improvement in the service for those who needed to travel. We must also understand in this difficult calculation what figures we are considering. I shall try to follow through on the same figures that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West used, and explain where and why we differ.

First, he was busy claiming that the precept by the GLC for London Transport for 1984-85 was a total of £208 million, which was lower than the Government's proposed

levy of £212 million from the ratepayers for the coming financial year. Let me explain why the GLC's calculation is different from the Government's in two important respects. The hon. Gentleman claimed that 35 per cent. more would be paid by ratepayers in the following year, but this is wrong. The GLC has assumed debt financing for capital investment rather than the pay-as-you-go financing that LRT will use. The GLC has also allocated a disproportionate amount of transport supplementary grant to London Transport as compared with other transport services. The effect of doing that is to use debt financing to spread the costs of capital investments over a longer period. The charge on the ratepayer is reduced in the current year when the GLC is responsible for the precept, but in the long run the large debt charges incurred are met in future when the levy is raised by the Government on the London ratepayer through the London Regional Transport legislation. In the longer term, the borrowing thus becomes more costly.

The GLC this year has claimed the credit for keeping down the transport precept. How has it done this? It switched that £300 million of external debt from housing to transport in December 1983. Now it seeks to blame the Government for the debt charges that have resulted from the policy.

The GLC cannot have it both ways. If it says that it borrowed to finance LRT, it has to bear full responsibility for landing ratepayers with debt charges to finance unprofitable investment. That is in marked contrast to the debt-free condition in which London Transport was transferred to the GLC in 1970.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to the Minister for taking time to explain the difference. She has not said that the GLC's figures are wrong, but that there is a difference. The big difference is the way in which the Government now want to finance capital borrowing. It is normal, in local government she must accept for one to spread capital costs over a period of years rather than to pay for them all in the one year. Who would buy a house and pay for it in one year? Some Conservative Members might be able to afford to do so, but the majority of ordinary people do not finance their borrowing in that way.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman can argue as hard as he likes about this, but what the GLC would do by its manner of financing is to put up the overall cost of borrowing, and that is an additional cost that would have to be paid for by the ratepayers of London in the years ahead.

In addition, the GLC has also attributed £100 million of the total transport supplementary grant of £142 million in the current year to London Transport. That is disproportionate, given its responsibilities. That is why I said earlier that, on a pro rata basis of allocation of transport supplementary grant between LT and the other services, the GLC received roughly £76 million towards its total budgeted grants to LT of £339 million. The remaining £263 million fell to be funded by the ratepayers. That is about £50 million more than the proposed levy for the 1985-86 equivalent of a 2·5p rate.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West went on to ask about the £69 million to service the historic debt for London Transport in addition to the new Government levy. This is all part of the GLC's total historic debt. It is that which the GLC has recently chosen conveniently to call public transport. That is the £300 million of which I spoke a moment ago. It is the only institution of which I can think that could possibly seek to hold someone else responsible for the debts that it has incurred.

The hon. Gentleman then claimed that because there was a £208 million rate precept in 1984-85 that meant there was a 35 per cent. increase in the coming year. Since the new board of LRT took over we have managed to allow the capital grant provision to be increased by about £45 million at a time when the revenue support has been reduced by the productivity and efficiency of LRT. That has brought the total grant down by more than £15 million. On a comparable basis, that is why I have said before and say again tonight that the proposed levy is £50 million less than the GLC's budgeted grant to LRT in 1984-85, which fell to the London ratepayers to finance.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of remarks—and attributed things to me that I have not said, but that is not unusual—about Capitalcard. He sought to say that the fare changes in January were unreasonable. I said that Capitalcard is better and cheaper than the alternative——

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to draw any unfavourable comparisons, but in a debate on London Transport in county hall the chairman of the council would have drawn to order members who were shouting so that one could not hear the speaker.

Mrs. Chalker: Capitalcard is cheaper than the alternative British Rail point-to-point season combined with LRT's Travelcard. I have never said, on a one-for-one basis, that the Travelcard was not a good idea. Of course, it gives good value. The point is that the Capitalcard, which gives good value for money, is already proving popular and will, I am sure, continue to be a great success. It preserves the element of public choice and ensures that the costs are borne by those who benefit. The new card was introduced as an additional facility for the benefit of travellers at no additional cost to the ratepayers and taxpayers, which was unlike the proposal that the GLC was considering.

A number of hon. Members have made other claims about fares. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) did not agree with the figures that I gave in response to his intervention. Those figures were correct. The percentage contributed by the ratepayers through the GLC grants to LRT was 75 per cent. out of a total of £340 million. In the next year, 1985-86, London ratepayers will contribute 65·6 per cent. out of a total of £323 million. When the hon. Gentleman reads the record he will see why and how my earlier figures were correct.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West commented on short hops on buses being more expensive than the 9 per cent. overall increase. Where there is fare staging in 5p and 10 stages, obviously some increases will be greater than the specific 9 per cent. That is why I have always said an average of 9 per cent. Some will increase by more than others, some will remain steady, while some will increase by less than the average. The Government have asked LRT—and I am confident that it can maintain this—to keep peak fares broadly in line with prices generally and with fares on British Rail's London services. It shows every sign of doing that and giving the passenger a good return.

The demand for bus services is expected to decline, not because of the short-term effect of the fares increase but

[Mrs. Chalker]

because of the long-term changes in the market. There are shifts in car ownership and population. Wherever a service seeks to meet the demands on the ground there will be changes.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West asked about specific bus changes. A maximum 2 per cent. in service levels for 1985-86 will reflect the decline in demand but the encouragement for new types of services and the bidding for provision of services under the London Regional Transport Act is encouraging. We shall see total public transport mileage by road increase provided that demand is stimulated by flexibility and the development of new routes as well as new kinds of services.

Measures to improve service reliability are important. That means that we must get rid of the lost mileage and LRT says that it can reduce lost mileage from 5·1 to 4·8 per cent. Therefore, there will be an improvement in the average waiting times, which is much wanted. The hon. Gentleman also compared the three-year plan and LRT's annual business plan. The provision of information, both through the annual plan and the other methods, is plentiful. In addition, plenty of information is available through the London regional passenger committee.

We have sought, in presenting the levy to the House, to be fair to ratepayers in London because it represents good value for money and LRT's management is now on course to giving passengers and ratepayers better value in the future. That is in sharp contrast to what has occurred. The GLC's policies would have meant presenting London ratepayers with a bill for £245 million for revenue support alone in 1987-88 before any grant for capital had been allowed for.

I know that hon. Members are concerned about the interests of those who use LRT's services and those who help to finance them. We need to see a balance between those who are paying the fares and those who are paying the rates and taxes. I commend the draft order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 198, Noes 138.

Division No. 103] **[1.27 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Straff'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Dr. Roger Thomas.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 17th December, be approved.

PETITION

Human Embryos

1.37 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg leave to present, on behalf of nearly 1,500 residents of my constituency and neighbouring areas, a petition for the protection of the human embryo. It was presented to me recently at one of my advice centres by a large number of the people whose names are appended to it. It is signed by many of my constituents, including many people associated with local churches and with hospitals, including Guy's hospital, and many personal friends of mine.

The petitioners affirm their belief that the newly fertilised human embryo is a real, living, individual human being. They oppose all practices that discriminate against the embryo and violate his or her human dignity and right to life.

I know that this petition is one of many, and that all the petitioners are looking forward to the debate on the subject that will take place at the end of the week. Therefore, the petition is presented at an especially opportune time.

The petition ends:

Wherefore Your Petitioners Pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment . . . And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

International Fraud

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

1.39 am

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): The major international commercial and maritime frauds of the 1970s and 1980s have shown up the alarming deficiencies in the criminal codes of the countries involved. The codes were drawn up before the explosion in modern technology, especially in communications, and have proved to be woefully inadequate in bringing offenders to trial and ensuring that justice is done and seen to be done.

There is no doubt that international marine fraud has been carried out worldwide, the primary victims being less sophisticated Third world countries. It is now reaching epidemic proportions. A few years ago, Lloyd's estimated that marine frauds cost it £100 million a year. Figures released by the International Maritime Bureau this week show that the maritime nations have been defrauded of $13 billion a year—more than the cost of Trident, about which there is so much hullabaloo and the cost of which is spread over 20 years.

It has been asserted that the major reason for maritime fraud being the nearly perfect crime is its international nature. I should like to quote Mr. Eric Ellen, the chief executive of the International Maritime Bureau who has said:

"The diversity in today's fraud affects virtually all parties to an international trade transaction, with the involvement of anything between four and ten countries, thus hampering investigation, extradition and prosecution of offenders."

Maritime fraud takes many forms. There is documentary fraud, involving payments made on forged documents, charter party fraud, in which the fraudster disappears with freight, simple deviation of a ship to sell a cargo in a remote port and fraudulent insurance claims. International non-marine fraud is just as devious, crossing international frontiers and going through many bank accounts, often aided by new technology which makes the task of detection, let alone prosecution, more difficult.

It has become blindingly obvious to me that there are extreme deficiencies in international codes for bringing the perpetrators of these frauds to trial, either through inherent limitations on national police and prosecution forces or by legal immunities nationally or internationally. Fortunately, the world has woken up to the epidemic proportions of the difficulties. In February last year, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development convened a conference in Geneva to get to grips with the problem. After a few initial difficulties, there was an unusually harmonious meeting. The agreed final resolution called for action on a national, international and international organisation basis. Although the international organisations are taking positive steps to get to grips with the problem, I should like to concentrate on the contribution that Governments can make on the national and international front.

The first part of the UNCTAD resolution called on national Governments to tighten their legislation to ensure that effective measures are available to prevent maritime fraud, to investigate such fraudulent acts and to prosecute persons who commit such fraud. In that regard, I have three suggestions. First, the Home Office should look [illegible] greater national co-ordination of regional police forces. If a major maritime fraud is unearthed in a remote port, the regional police force investigates. Without any disrespect to the regional police force, there is often too little local expertise in investigation of major frauds. There is no central co-ordination such as there is in anti-drug-running organisations. Serious consideration should be given to establishing a federal agency to fight crimes of this type.

Secondly, there are deficiencies in our prosecuting policy. Although not officially admitted, it seems to be the policy of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to bring actions against criminals engaged in fraud when they are foreign nationals and when the victims are also foreign nationals. It was reported in the press only recently that German nationals in the United Kingdom are soliciting investors in Germany, then defrauding them of their money when they invest it over here and that the DPP is not prosecuting those fraudsters, because Germans are fleecing Germans. It seems that the only steps that the police are prepared to take are those necessary to hold them for extradition purposes. With Germany, that is a possibility, but with Spain and many other countries with which we have no extradition treaties, that is impossible.

The matter boils down to a simple question, which is whether we are prepared to prosecute other people's criminals. There is one overwhelming reason why we should. The City of London is the financial service centre of the world. With the decline of our manufacturing industry, the contribution it makes to the economy in its invisible exports and earnings is now significant. I do not blame the DPP for his present attitude, because he does not have the money to investigate crimes committed overseas, as the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States has. However, the Government should consider using some of their mammoth earnings from the City to step up policing, in a serious attempt to eradicate from these shores those who see the United Kingdom as a haven from prosecution, whatever their nationality. I am sad to say that in the recent White Paper on investor protection the difficulty of international operations and protecting overseas investors was ignored.

There is a substantial lacuna in our law of jurisdiction. In many cases the DPP, even if he wanted to commence a prosecution and could prosecute an offender in the United Kingdom, could not bring a prosecution because of the location. If the Minister and I were to conspire to commit a crime in the United Kingdom we would be prosecuted whether we committed it or not. However, if we conspired to sink an over-insured vessel outside territorial waters and to claim against Spanish underwriters, it would not be a crime. As we do not have an extradition treaty with Spain, the Spanish authorities cannot extradite us to Spain.

In the past, jurisdiction laws have been found to be inadequate. As a result of certain conventions, universal jurisdiction is now claimed for crimes against international order, such as terrorism. Similar claims have been made in respect of specific crimes such as drug trafficking. In the circumstances I hope that the Minister will refer that point to the Law Commission for review. After all, to quote the words of a leading judge:

"It would be of no benefit to this country if it became a sanctuary for conspirators provided only that they concluded their unlawful plots abroad."

The second part of the UNCTAD resolution calls for [illegible] at intergovernmental level to examine in depth the various proposals put forward before and during the UNCTAD meeting, which included the possibilities for

international co-operation in the investigation of fraud and subsequent legal action. If any progress is to be made at that level, the only satisfactory solution would be an international convention on maritime fraud and a parallel international convention on jurisdiction and extradition.

The United Kingdom does not have a good reputation for extradition. The difficulties and frustrations that some foreign states experience when they request surrender of a fugitive from the United Kingdom is exemplified in the case of Spain, which recently tore up a treaty entered into in 1977. Substantial improvements have been made in the extradition climate with the 1984 House of Lords decision in the Government of Denmark v. Neilson, and the Government of the United States v. McCaffery.

Despite those recent decisions, our reputation for extradition is so bad that it is the firm opinion of many leading authorities on extradition that we should sign the European convention on extradition. We stand apart with only Malta, as one of the two countries that have failed to sign and ratify it.

The United Kingdom's reluctance to sign and ratify the convention is due to the requirement of a requesting state that it does no more than submit to the requested state a statement of the offences commited, their legal descriptions, and a description of the person claimed. Englis?. extradition law has always required that a requesting state adduces evidence in support of its request of a standard that would warrant committal for trial of an accused, if his offence had been committed in the United Kingdom.

That is a commendable attitude and is in line with that of many states that are reluctant to surrender their own nationals without proper evidence and which have been able to sign the European convention. On signing the convention they take advantage of article 26 by making a reservation that the state requesting the surrender of a fugitive must submit sufficient evidence to establish a prima facie case. Countries such as Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Israel have made such a reservation and their municipal law retains the prima facie case requirement. I understand that a Green Paper on extradition will shortly be published, and I hope that that point will be recognised in the paper and that Britain will be able to sign and ratify the convention. However, signature of the European convention must only be an interim measure. We should work with UNCTAD towards a convention on jurisdiction and extradition for maritime fraud.

It is clear from what I have said that many problems exist and that the current laws on jurisdiction and extradition are inadequate to deal with international maritime fraud. Consideration should be given to linking the extradition obligations to any expanded jurisdiction capabilities so that a state must either prosecute an offender in its custody or extradite him to the requesting state. With such an alternative obligation, the risk of offenders finding refuge from prosecution for lack of jurisdiction, and extradition because of being a national of the state of custody, would be eliminated.

Although at first sight such a suggestion for an international convention on maritime fraud may appear extraordinary, clear precedents can be found in existing conventions designed to cover specific acts. For example, the spate of aeroplane hijacking in the 1960s resulted in the convention for the suppression of unlawful seizure of aircraft in 1970. Some may submit that if a convention on jurisdiction and extradition for maritime fraud is justified, it cannot be developed in sufficient time to provide relief. In this respect, I draw the attention of the House to the hijacking convention, on which work began in 1969. The diplomatic conference for its adoption took place in 1970, and it came into force in October 1971.

There are many other proposals for combating maritime fraud which an international convention might embrace. The international nature of the problem must be recognised and the national police forces must work together. In this sense, the nations of the world must put together an international co-ordinating organisation. Agencies such as Interpol, while doing an excellent job, are little more than communications centres. We need an international co-ordinating centre which acts as a fast communications base, an international information exchange, an international register of shipowners and ship movements, and an organisation that will work with national groups towards the elimination of international maritime fraud.

Tonight I have only touched on the tip of the iceberg of this massive subject. The points that I have raised require action from the Lord Chancellor's Department on jurisdiction, from the Department of Trade and Industry on investor protection, from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on extradition, and last, but certainly not least, from the Home Office on policing. I hope that they will all appreciate that we are fighting a worldwide problem that needs a worldwide organisation to cope with it. The United Nations Conference for Trade and Development deserves a response to its proposals, and I hope that at least the Departments can get together to discuss them.

1.51 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): Notwithstanding the late hour, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway) for raising in such a cogent way what is plainly an important subject. Although he represents—unless my geography has wholly deserted me — a landlocked constituency, he has properly drawn our attention to problems on the high seas. Those who read his remarks will be as troubled as he is by some of the points that he made. As I have no doubt his constituents are aware, my hon. Friend is an experienced maritime lawyer, and we have good reason to be grateful to him for bringing his expertise not just to his speech but to the valuable study of maritime fraud that has been carried out under the aegis of the Society of Conservative Lawyers and under my hon. Friend's chairmanship.

My hon. Friend clearly demonstrated many of the problems and said that frauds take various forms, ranging from the purely documentary to the extreme case of scuttling a ship at sea. The illegal act may be the forging of a bill of lading, when the intending buyer of goods discovers that he has purchased a non-existent cargo. Alternatively, the cargo may simply be stolen. I understand that a familiar device is that a ship, instead of going to its destination port, is diverted and the cargo sold at another port. The ship's name is then changed, and it thus becomes untraceable. In some extreme cases, the ships involved in deviation frauds may be reported as sunk, and a further fraud is committed by making a claim on the insurance for the ship and its cargo.

Hon. Members will recall the notorious Salem incident, which was perhaps the most blatant example of that

[Mr. David Mellor]

practice. The ship was chartered to carry crude oil from Kuwait to Genoa on behalf of an Italian trading company which sold the entire shipment to Shell International in mid-voyage. Instead of proceeding to the Mediterranean, the cargo was sold in South Africa and was replaced by sea water to give the impression that the ship was laden. The Salem was then sunk by the crew off the coast of Senegal. It does not take much imagination to see that there is in such criminal activities the potential for very large profits indeed. Certainly when one gets into the position of scuttling a ship and claiming its full insurance value one is dealing with very large sums indeed.

Even recognising that, it still comes as something of a shock to hear, as my hon. Friend rightly reminded the House, that the International Maritime Bureau, a very responsible body, points out that known losses perhaps amounted to as much as £12 billion last year. That is a truly staggering figure. British interests are very much at risk, because particularly in the insurance industry, British interests have been among the worst victims. However, a more insidious factor that may have grave financial consequences is confidence. It has been alleged that a number of these frauds have been engineered partly through the mechanisms of the London markets. Even though in most cases British subjects are not criminally involved, we must be aware of the risk of damage to the City's international reputation.

My hon. Friend referred in particular to the contribution of UNCTAD. Maritime fraud does of course affect trade and we therefore very much welcome the interest that UNCTAD has shown in combating this problem. Its paper analysed the various forms of maritime fraud and the various means of combating it. Its paper formed the basis of a useful discussion by an intergovernmental group which unanimously agreed a number of resolutions calling on Governments and commercial interests to co-operate with each other, exchange information and review laws and law enforcement procedures. We already liaise with the industry on this problem, but the Government will do all in their power to help to provide the information that will be required for the various studies that are being undertaken by UNCTAD.

However, as the resolutions recognise, self-regulation by the commercial interests concerned must play an important and perhaps crucial role in combating fraud. I know that the industry takes this problem seriously and has done a lot of work to try to minimise maritime fraud. The setting up of the International Maritime Bureau is a case in point. I know that the bureau has already played a valuable role—I believe my hon. Friend is of the same opinion—in combating maritime fraud. I am sure it is only when all the parties concerned can get together to consider this problem that maritime fraud will be turned back. It is the provision of a forum in which such parties can meet that has been the most useful role performed by UNCTAD.

As I have said, I have looked with interest at the report of the sub-committee of the Society of Conservative Lawyers which was chaired by my hon. Friend. I have looked with particular interest at those sections directly involving Home Office responsibilities. I see that in its second proposal the sub-committee suggests that the Law Commission should review whether conspiracy in this country to commit a crime overseas should become a criminal offence in this country. In fact, the Law Commission is engaged at the moment on an extensive review of the law relating to conspiracy to defraud and will present its findings in due course. I hope that the commission will take careful note of what my hon. Friend has said and of the report of his committee before giving us the benefit of its conclusions.

On the general question of conspiracy to commit a crime overseas, and without wanting to pre-empt the Law Commission's findings in any way, I wish to make two points. First, there are considerable evidential difficulties involved in detecting any conspiracy, because clever plots are not hatched in meticulously kept records. Secondly, the law already provides that a conspiracy is indictable in this country when conspirators in England agree to do an unlawful act in England with intent to defraud persons abroad. To that extent, there is not a hiatus in the law. At least, that is my understanding of the case of Regina *v.* Hornett in 1975, although I appreciate that there is still some difference of view between the committee and Hornett on the ambit of the law and that the committee would wish the law to go further.

I want to take up three other points that were raised by my hon. Friend. Perhaps I should properly begin with police action. It may help if I set out briefly the arrangements for the investigation of fraud by the police and the liaison which exists to assist them. Often there is an interest in the United Kingdom in the investigation of a suspected maritime fraud because of the insurance aspect. Both commissioners of police for the City of London and the metropolis take most seriously indeed their personal responsibility to investigate fraud affecting London's financial institutions. There exists in London a joint fraud squad for the two forces, under the command of a metropolitan police commander. This commercial fraud department has a strength of 204 officers, of whom the 56 City police officers represent nearly half the City police criminal investigation department. This reflects the importance attached in the City to the investigation of fraud where fraud squad officers can be expected to serve in the squad for a seven to eight year period and thus maximise the experience they gain.

One of the difficulties in the successful investigation of fraud—this does not apply just to maritime fraud—is the often complicated nature of the offences. This results in long and resource-consuming investigations, with cases often taking years to come to trial. The House will see the disadvantage of this not only in terms of deterrence but in the difficulties of presenting a successful prosecution case if the evidence is stale and witnesses' recollections are not what they would have been earlier.

To counter this, fraud investigation groups were set up in 1981 on an ad hoc basis in London only, because the majority of commercial frauds occur in the capital. As one of the measures intended to combat commercial fraud, fraud investigation groups were put on a permanent basis and extended to cover the whole of England and Wales with effect from the beginning of the year.

The essential characteristics of fraud investigation groups are simple. Based in the department of the Director of Public Prosecutions, fraud investigation groups have available senior officials from that department, together with those from the Department of Trade and Industry who are concerned with the investigation of offences under companies legislation. They work in co-operation with the police who will be made available as necessary by their

chief officer. Their independence from the main body of FIG provides an operational advantage to the police, in that they retain their full powers as officers under the Crown.

By means of early and continuing liaison between the DPP, DTI and police interests, FIG enables an investigation to be concentrated on the direction which appears most likely to lead to evidence which will meet the needs of the court instead of, as often happened before, each body continuing parallel but separate investigations. With FIG, lines of investigation which are considered to be less likely to succeed are, therefore, better able to be identified at an early stage, dismissed and the investigation concentrated on those lines which appear most likely to produce a manageable and speedily resolved case.

Notwithstanding this development, I think that my hon. Friend may be underestimating the capability of individual forces to respond to maritime frauds reported to them. Our understanding from our contacts with forces around the country is that reports of maritime fraud involving ships physically at United Kingdom ports are fortunately very few: the emphasis is rather on City institutions where insurance is arranged or involving the presentation of false bills of lading. As I have already said the fraud department has a considerable wealth of experience in dealing with such cases, but even if a fraud occurs in a provincial force area we have to recognise that our police forces today are sizeable organisations, most of which have their own fraud squad and who are well aware that it is always open to them to consult the DPP through that office's FIG and fraud divisions for early advice and assistance in the investigation of fraud.

The internationalism of all fraud and particularly of maritime fraud is an acknowledged feature and close liaison on co-operation internationally between police forces is crucial. The International Maritime Bureau and the Commonwealth Secretariat Fraud Unit are two bodies which have a particular interest in such liaison. I am sure that these are valuable initiatives and the self-help which the shipping trade can provide is reflected in the support and success of the International Maritime Bureau; equally the Commonwealth Secretariat Unit can, by virtue of its Commonwealth-wide remit, give assistance through a wide range of countries.

I should also mention the role of Interpol, which has a valuable contribution to make, not only because its membership covers 140 countries throughout the world, but its communication links through its headquarters in Paris to all member countries and the tradition of police to police co-operation on criminal investigation matters which it has over the years built up give the potential for virtually world-wide assistance. Interpol additionally holds regular conferences and working seminars where trends in fraud and the means whereby police action can be improved are discussed and disseminated to all member countries.

My hon. Friend raised important questions of prosecution and enforcement. On prosecution policy, allegations have been made about the reluctance of the Director of Public Prosecutions to bring actions against criminals in this country if the person engaged in fraud is a foreign national and his victims are also foreign nationals. This means that the offender may escape any risk of prosecution in the country where his victims live, because that country may not have any jurisdiction to deal with crimes committed in this country. The DPP's policy is a matter for him and not for me, but such criticisms do not take full account of the extreme practical and legal difficulties encountered in international crime.

To prosecute in such cases, it is usually necessary to obtain statements from foreign nationals or foreign banks. There is no form of international subpoena by which witnesses may be required to travel to this country to give evidence and it is an extremely difficult task to secure the attendance as a witness in this country of a foreign banker. When there is no loser in this country, it is difficult to secure the evidence here. This does not mean that the DPP is reluctant to act, but it does mean that the difficulties must not be underestimated and the presence of a clear public interest justification for prosecution does not make the director's task any easier.

My hon. Friend rightly spent a great deal of time on the subject of extradition, which is causing us considerable interest at the moment. As he said, international crime has to be tackled internationally, and extradition is an important weapon. It is true that our older extradition treaties are framed in terms that implicitly acknowledge only offences that are committed within the territorial boundaries of countries that are party to the agreements. Our more recent treaties, however, are framed in terms of the respective jurisdiction of the judicial authorities of the parties. As I have endeavoured to explain, the concept of extraterritorial jurisdiction causes difficulties in our law, but our general lack of such jurisdiction does not inevitably make for an enforcement loophole, because in this country we have no objection to extraditing our own nationals, provided that the normal extradition arrangements are met. For the most part, our extradition arrangements are based on bilateral treaties that set out in detail the conditions governing surrender to and from the United Kingdom. At present, there are 43 bilateral treaties in force.

My hon. Friend has pointed out a number of difficulties about our extradition arrangements. He is not alone in his criticisms. He knows that we are taking them seriously, and that is why we shall be publishing a Green Paper shortly. He will be pleased when he sees it, because it canvasses fully and invites opinions, including opinions from himself, and some of the people with whom he has been collaborating on this venture, and he will let us know his views on some of the points at issue.

Plainly, it all centres around the prima facie requirement. It is interesting that my hon. Friend thinks, not that this requirement should be dropped but that we should adopt an alternative way by means of a derogation to sign the European convention. The arrangements reflected in such treaties must be put into effect by application of our law, and the principal statute is the Extradition Act 1870. One of its requirements is that the requesting state has to produce evidence of a standard that would justify the committal for trial of the accused if the alleged crime had been committed in England. This is the centrepiece of the 1870 Act, but its continuation on the statute book causes difficulties in relation to countries such as Spain, which abrogated its treaty with us a few years ago because of frustration at not being able to get extradition of criminals wanted from Spain.

It was said that our standards of proof are too high when not only the nature of the charge is based on Spanish law but the whole means of preparing a case for trial is quite different from our own. That matter will have to be looked

[Mr. David Mellor]

at carefully, not only in the Green Paper but in consideration of representations that will be made as a result of it.

My hon. Friend made an important point about the European convention that he said we should ratify. As he pointed out, we have to consider whether the prima facie requirement is an obstacle to ratification. I know that my hon. Friend considers that ratification would enhance the international community's ability to deal with serious international fraud by bringing London—an important centre for this type of fraud — within the uniform arrangements of a multilateral treaty. My hon. Friend explained his case well, and we shall want to examine that aspect. Although we have not signed the convention, we have taken an active part in its negotiation. The main obstacle to our accession has been the difficulty of reconciling our criminal law procedures with those of continental countries. To draw closer to foreign practice would entail some fundamental changes in our law. I can offer my hon. Friend the encouragement that a forthcoming Green Paper will discuss the scope for and implications of such changes.

I could say a good deal more. I regret that I have not been able to delve as fully as I would wish into some of my hon. Friend's interesting points. This has been a worthwhile debate, and I hope that some of the points will be taken up in due course, especially those in relation to extradition which will be the subject of intense public debate in the months ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Public Expenditure

1. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implications for Scottish education of the White Paper on public expenditure.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): Further information on the implications for Scottish education of the White Paper on public expenditure will be published shortly in the "Scottish Commentary".

Mr. Bruce: Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that the £61 million cut in the Scottish education budget is a severe blow to education in Scotland? Does he further acknowledge that suggestions about the teachers' pay dispute are not worth a docken, unless he is prepared to make money available to meet any sensible settlement? Will he admit to the House that the White Paper simply makes a wrong decision which should be reversed?

Mr. Younger: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman is wrong on both counts. The reduction in education expenditure is smaller than the reduction in the number of pupils. Therefore, the sum provided for education in Scotland is more in real terms, per pupil, than ever before. I have spent a great deal of time and energy in recent weeks trying to get across to everybody—I have obviously failed, even with the hon. Gentleman—that if the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee suggests a good package of pay and conditions for teachers I am prepared to see whether I can find some money within my budget to deal with it. If that was not clear to the hon. Gentleman, I hope it is clear now.

Mr. Henderson: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that although falling pupil numbers has resulted in more money per pupil being spent than before, there has been no comparable drop in the number of people in non-teaching posts dealing with the administration of education? Should not that aspect be examined further?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. His views are backed by the figures. At constant prices, expenditure per pupil in real terms in 1979-80 was £1,042, and in 1983-84 £1,151.

Mr. Strang: Does the Secretary of State recognise that a substantial amount of new money will have to be found if the current industrial crisis in our schools is to be resolved? Will he stop pretending that the SJNC proposal has the support of the management side and is being considered by the unions? Will he bring forward a new initiative to resolve the dispute?

Mr. Younger: The views of all parties are clear. The teachers have made it clear that they would prefer an independent review of their pay. The management side has made it equally clear that, although it would prefer an independent review of pay and conditions, it is prepared to co-operate in discussing pay and conditions. I have made a clear offer. If a proper package of pay and conditions is put forward, I shall try to find some means of implementing it. That is a fair way out of a nasty situation.

Mr. Robert Hughes: If everything is so rosy in the education system, can the right hon. Gentleman explain why the teacher-pupil ratio has gone up? Will he define what he means by a "proper package"?

Mr. Younger: I cannot explain why the pupil-teacher ratio has gone up, because it has not. It is at its best level ever. By that I mean that we have the lowest number of pupils per teacher ever. That is a fact which no amount of head shaking will shake away.

Mr. Dewar: As the Secretary of State will guess, we have all been reading with interest the speculation in the Scottish press this morning about a new initiative. I have now had the opportunity to see the letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), which seems to offer a lot less than the press speculation. It is important that we should know exactly what the Secretary of State has in mind. If the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee decides to set up an independent review body to look at pay and conditions, will he approve of such a move? Does he accept that it should be properly independent and able, as Houghton did, to study comparable salary levels in the groupings that it thinks relevant? Will the Secretary of State undertake that if that exercise is carried out he will accept the findings?

Mr. Younger: As I think the letter to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) makes clear, none of that is for me. I was asked whether the SJNC could, if it wished, undertake an independent review of pay and conditions. The answer is that it has the right to carry out its functions in any way that it thinks fit. I have said that any package of proposals that comes to me must come from the SJNC. If it does, I shall see whether I can find a way to meet it.

Economic Situation

2. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the Scottish Confederation of British Industry to discuss the economic situation.

Mr. Younger: I receive regular reports from the Scottish Confederation of British Industry on a range of economic matters. I have no formal plans at present to meet the Scottish CBI to discuss the economic situation.

Mr. Hamilton: When the right hon. Gentleman next meets the CBI, will he discuss with it his intentions about

the stagnation of the construction industry, bearing in mind that thousands of craftsmen are at present unemployed? Will he further tell the CBI how he stands in relation to the proposed closure of the skillcentres and annexes which are vital for training people for the future?

Mr. Younger: On the first point, I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about unemployment in the construction industry. I have managed to keep capital spending in the Scottish Office budget steady over the past five years. In fact, it is still slightly up in real terms on what it was in 1979-80. I accept that that is helpful, and I shall try to keep it that way if I can. Within the next week or two the Government will be announcing their reaction to the MSC's proposals for the closure of some skillcentres in Scotland. As I understand the proposals, skill training in Scotland will be going up, not down, whether or not the skillcentres are closed.

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend will have noticed representations from the CBI about investment in the infrastructure. Can he confirm that those proposals have one difference compared with any put forward by the Opposition—namely, that they imply that there must be savings in other sectors before that investment can take place?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right. That has been a constant theme of discussions that I have had with various bodies, including local authorities, over the past five years. It would be desirable to keep up capital spending, but to reduce current spending because it does not have the same good effect on the economy. I agree with my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. Maclennan: By the time that he next meets the CBI, will the Secretary of State be able to say that when he has completed his period as the longest serving Secretary of State for Scotland he will have succeeded in bringing down unemployment?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure whether that is a question or a statement. Unemployment has been and remains the main problem facing our economy. The efforts that the Government have made to counter the economic problems that have caused it have led in recent months to an increase in the number of people in employment in Scotland, and that is welcome.

Limited List Prescribing

3. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement following his meeting with the British Medical Association, Scotland, to discuss the restricted list of medicines that will be available for prescription on the National Health Service.

10. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of organisations in Scotland which have made representations on the proposals for limited list prescribing; how many he has met; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I have met representatives of the Scottish Council of the British Medical Association and the Pharmaceutical General Council (Scotland). In addition, by the end of the consultation period we had received representations from some 60 organisations, and I shall list those in the *Official Report*. Our proposals cover only some 10 per cent. of the drugs bill. The drugs that will remain available for prescription on the NHS will be sufficient to meet all clinical needs in the areas in question.

Mr. Ewing: How does the Minister know that the drugs that will remain available on the restricted list will be sufficient to meet the needs of NHS patients? How many of the 60 representations that he has received were in favour of his proposals, and how many were against? Does he understand the anxiety that is now being expressed throughout the medical profession and by patients in Scotland about the Government's proposals? Will he give an assurance that when the final list is published it will be more extensive than the rather restricted list with which we originally started?

Mr. MacKay: We received a considerable range of representations, and most conceded the need for and our ability to make savings on the drugs bill. Many were in favour of a limited list, but representations were made on drugs that should be on that list. As the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has a committee of experts advising him on the list. When the House hears his statement on the final list, it will appreciate that the clinical needs of patients have been met.

Mr. Brown: Everyone in the House will agree with the need to keep down costs of prescriptions in the Health Service and to get value for money, so that is just a cliché. If the Government say that essential drugs will be made available under the NHS, who will decide—the general practitioner or somebody in St. Andrew's House?

Mr. MacKay: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the people whom my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has as his advisers, he will see that we are taking the advice of some very senior medical people. It is not just civil servants in St. Andrew's House or the Elephant and Castle who are advising my right hon. Friend. We are considering one of the suggestions that has come to us. If a doctor decides, for clinical reasons, to prescribe a drug that is on the banned list, we are considering ways in which that might be done. However, I advise the hon. Gentleman to await my right hon. Friend's announcement.

Mrs. McCurley: Will my hon. Friend utterly condemn the scare tactics of the BMA over the limited list, but bear in mind some of its manifestly sound judgments on the limited list in relation to chronic arthritic and elderly patients?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. I have read with great interest the sensible suggestions that have been made by doctors, even doctors who are implacably opposed to the scheme. However, many doctors have been absolutely unfair to their elderly patients in scaring them into thinking that they will not get suitable drugs after 1 April. To make matters worse, some doctors have made that suggestion about drugs that are not even in the therapeutic groups under consideration.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my hon. Friend clear up the misunderstanding between prescribing and dispensing doctors, bearing in mind that dispensing practitioners have a particular role to fill in rural Scotland, where chemists' shops are not readily available?

Mr. MacKay: I think that my hon. Friend is referring to a misunderstanding of a reply by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health the other day, when he said that prescribing general medical practitioners would not be permitted to sell drugs to their National Health Service patients. We are considering the representations that have been made to us on behalf of dispensing doctors in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom on whether they should be able to sell to their patients drugs that are on the banned list.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware of the overwhelming opposition to the whole scheme on the ground that it undermines one of the basic principles of the NHS? Will he now reply to the point raised by his hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and turn his mind to the problem of rural doctors who not only prescribe but dispense drugs? How can it be right that they may be required to charge patients for certain drugs?

Mr. MacKay: I thought that I had already answered that point, but obviously the hon. Gentleman was not listening, as usual. I said that we were considering the matter of dispensing doctors, and that will be part of the statement that will be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. Many hospitals in Scotland already operate a limited list over the whole range of drugs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Stirling the local health council, using funds provided by his Department, is putting leaflets through letter boxes and organising public meetings telling elderly people that they will not be able to get their drugs because they will have to pay for them in future, when the health council does not even know what the list will contain and when the position has been clearly explained? Will my hon. Friend look into the matter and take it up with the health council, which is supposed to be there to serve the community, not to indulge in political propaganda?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. It is irresponsible of the health council to do that sort of thing. We have made it clear all along that the drugs that will remain prescribable under the NHS will meet all the clinical needs of patients.

Mr. Johnston: Will the Minister explain to me and the many doctors and constituents who have written to me — not necessarily those who are opposed to generic prescribing — why, in drawing up the original list, he apparently took no medical advice? Was this not both insensitive and possibly arrogant?

Mr. MacKay: The process of consultation lasted from the middle of November to the end of January. As I have explained, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services set up a committee of very experienced medical people. I have been taking the advice of my medical officials, and we have been taking into consideration the representations of doctors. I thought that that was the proper way to consult.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend note the hyprocisy of the Opposition, who are anxious that the drug companies should not cream off huge profits and that doctors should dispense properly for their patients?

Mr. MacKay: The Opposition's hyprocisy extends even further than that. As I understand it, they approve of generic prescribing, which is opposed by the drugs industry and the BMA.

Mr. O' Neill: Is the Minister aware that the Greenfield report, which inspired the so-called banned list, to use the hon. Gentleman's expression, has been around for some considerable time? The Government's ham-fisted approach caused an inadequate list to be produced in the first instance, and they are now having to scurry back and forth between doctors and pharmaceutical companies to secure their agreement before the list can be implemented. That is the scandal and that is what is causing great anxiety among our constituents.

Mr. MacKay: When the hon. Gentleman sees the final list he will recognise — I have said this three or four times — that it will meet clinical needs. The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point about the Greenfield report. We have been discussing ways to reduce the drugs bill for some time. The Government decided that it was time to stop the discussions and to make concrete suggestions.

Mr. McQuarrie: I wish to press my hon. Friend on his meeting with the BMA. Did he discuss with the BMA the serious situation that will arise in rural areas where general practitioners prescribe and dispense? Will he bear in mind that those doctors should be entitled to consider brand names rather than to implement the Government's proposals for generic medicines?

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. McQuarrie: Will my hon. Friend ensure that our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services bears in mind the problems that will be faced in rural areas of Scotland, which are inhabited mainly by the elderly?

Mr. MacKay: I think that I have already replied to my hon. Friend's question in answer to a previous question. I can confirm that I discussed the matter with the BMA. A fair number of doctors have made their position clear to me in the course of making their representations. The role of dispensing doctors is one of the matters that is now under consideration.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The Minister should not get too excited about trying to defend the indefensible. Does he realise that this is another step on the slippery slope down which the Government are leading the Health Service? Will he give a guarantee that the elderly and the poorer people who will be affected by the list which he has published will not suffer when the final list is put forward by the Government?

Mr. MacKay: I have already given that guarantee, and I am happy to give it again. We are taking the best advice possible to ensure that the list as it emerges, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services makes his statement, will be sufficient to meet all the clinical needs of patients.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I shall raise my point of order at the end of Question time.

Later——

Mr. Hamilton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On earlier occasions you have explained to me how you group

oral questions for the purpose of calling hon. Members to ask supplementary questions. I am sure that you will have noticed that today there were five questions—all asked by Opposition Members — on the proposals of the Government in relation to prescription charges, mine being one of them. The other four hon. Members were called to ask their supplementary questions; you called at least four hon. Members from the Government Benches, none of whom had a question down on the subject; and you called two hon. Members from the Opposition Benches to ask supplementary questions, although neither of them had a question down on the subject. I was the only one in that list who was not called. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I want to know whether this is a new principle of victimisation of poor souls such as me.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I assure the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) absolutely that there was no question of victimisation. I had regard to the fact that I called him on exactly the same question yesterday, when questions were down to the Secretary of State for Social Services, and I thought it only fair to give other hon. Members a chance today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Later——

Mr. Hamilton: Further to your original ruling, Mr. Speaker. You said that you did not call me because I had asked a question on this matter yesterday, presumably the Secretary of State for Social Services. You will understand, Mr. Speaker, that the Health Service in Scotland is separate from the Health Service in England. It is well known that, at the moment, the Scottish Minister is in violent conflict on this very matter with the Secretary of State for Social Services. You should not have presumed, as you did, Mr. Speaker, that the question I asked yesterday was the same question I was going to put to the Scottish Minister today.

Mr. Speaker: I try to be as fair as possible. I hope that when the hon. Member studies the Order Paper tomorrow he will note that, of those hon. Members who tabled questions that were not reached, no fewer than 12 were called today. I am sorry that the hon. Member was not among those hon. Members who were called. If he had risen on another question, I would have tried to get him in.

Following is the information:

Limited list of drugs organisations which made representations up to 31 January 1985

The British Medical Association
The British Medical Association, Scottish Council
Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (Scottish Department)
Pharmaceutical General Council (Scotland)
The British Dental Association

Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow

Borders Health Board
Highland Health Board

British Medical Association (Wigtown Division)
British Medical Association (Ayrshire and Arran Division)

Local Dental Committee of Greater Glasgow Health Board

Grampian Local Medical Committee
Borders Local Medical Committee
Fife Local Medical Committee
Shetland Local Medical Committee
Highland Area Local Medical Committee

Hospital Paediatric Services Advisory Group
Glasgow Terminal Care Group
Keith Patient Participation Group
Scottish Spina Bifida Association

Association of Scottish Health Councils
City of Aberdeen Local Health Council
Argyll and Bute Local Health Council
Edinburgh Local Health Council
North East Fife Local Health Council
South Ayrshire Local Health Council
Kincardine and Deeside Local Health Council
West Fife Local Health Council
Greater Glasgow East Local Health Council
Orkney Local Health Council

City of Edinburgh District Council
Aithsting and Standsting Community Council
Whalsay and Skerries Community Council
Pollock Community Council
Tingwall, Whiteness and Weisdale Community Council
Burra and Trondra Community Council
Lerwick Community Council
Kilmeny Community Council
Iona Community Council
Rannoch and Tummel Community Council
Mull Community Council
Baillieston Community Council
Stepps and District Community Council
Northmavine Community Council
Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council

East Sutherland Council of Social Service
Harris Council of Social Service

Guild of Hospital Pharmacists
Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff
National and Local Government Officers Association (Kyle and Carrick District Branch)
Paisley and District Trades Council
Orkney Labour Party Executive
Ayr Constituency Labour Party

Old Pollock Tenants Association
Age Concern Scotland
National Federation of Old Age Pensioners' Association
Pennyghael Community Association
Wester Hailes Good Neighbourhood Scheme for Information and Social Help

Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association Ltd.

Total 60 organisations.

Job Creation

4. **Mr. Malone** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been created in Scotland in the past 12 months.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): During 1984 nearly 15,000 new jobs were associated with offers of selective financial assistance for projects in Scotland. In net terms there was an overall increase in employees in employment of 14,000 in the year to September 1984.

Mr. Malone: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Can he confirm that many of those jobs were created in oil-related industries? Is he aware that the Leader of the Opposition has made the clear statement that, if he is put into office, he will implement a policy of controlling oil

depletion in the North sea? Does my hon. Friend agree that if that policy were to be implemented it would drive investment from the North sea and jobs from Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's point in relation to what the Leader of the Opposition said. I confirm that exploration in the North sea continues at record levels. As my hon. Friend will be aware, last week plans were approved for the development of Shell-Esso's Tern field, which it is estimated will create 3,000 new jobs. I can tell my hon. Friend that I have today authorised the Scottish Development Agency to invest more than £500,000 in a new oil rig repair base at Dales Voe near Lerwick, which will widen the capability of Scottish firms in that area and provide 150 new jobs.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Minister aware that in the Invergordon to Dingwall travel-to-work area in my constituency, adult male unemployment is at present 25 per cent.? On Monday, this week I visited a distillery in Alness, which is due to close as a result of a decision by the Distillers Company. Incidentally, that effects to an even greater extent the constituency of the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock). Will the Minister use the opportunity before the Budget to impress upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer the need to introduce further tax advantages or to reduce the tax burden on the distillery and whisky industry to try to improve the climate in which so many jobs are being lost?

Mr. Stewart: No doubt my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will read the hon. Gentleman's comments. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman of our commitment to the rural areas. We recently announced a new initiative —the programme for rural initiatives and developments —through the Scottish Development Agency. In the areas that serve the oil industry there will be substantial and increasing opportunities for employment if companies can provide competitive services.

Mr. Eadie: Is the Minister aware that when I fought the constituency represented by the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1959, the jobless total in Scotland was 70,000? During that election campaign Lord Stockton chastised the STUC for not coming to see him quickly enough, because he believed that the jobless total was too high. As the jobless total in Scotland is now more than 300,000, what is the message from the Minister's right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the STUC about unemployment in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that unemployment in Scotland doubled under the Labour Government. Unemployment is a difficult problem, and the Government's policies are designed to create a competitive economy to provide real and lasting jobs. My message to the STUC is that it should take fully into account the need for British companies to be competitive if they are to expand and provide new jobs.

Mr. Henderson: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the creation of new jobs. Will he ensure that those concerned with this crucial activity are not discouraged by the self-inflicted wounds created by striking miners, which have had especially disastrous consequences in Fife?

Mr. Stewart: The whole House will be aware of the serious position that has arisen in Fife as a result of the strike. It is important that Scotland does not inflict such wounds on itself. However, there are several encouraging signs, including the improved performance of manufacturing industry. During the first half of 1984 manufacturing output was 5 per cent. above the level a year earlier.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Minister accept that, very sadly, he is sounding more and more like one of his press handouts? Is it not insufferable complacency for the Minister to appear at the Dispatch Box and claim that his Government's policy has been a success? Will he accept that more than 160,000 manufacturing jobs have gone since 1979, that the index of industrial production is about 11 per cent. below what it was in 1979 and that unemployment is at a record level, with 360,000 people in the dole queues? Surely the Minister ought to do a great deal more and look at the reality of the crisis in Scotland —for example, at the appalling potential job losses that are being faced at the BREL works in Springburn?

Mr. Stewart: Nobody seeks to deny that there is a serious unemployment problem, but the Government's policies are designed to create the type of economy that will provide employment in the long term. I am very surprised that in his list of the alleged problems facing the Scottish economy the hon. Gentleman did not mention the miners' strike and the damage that it is doing to the coal industry and to the coalmining communities.

Mr. Steel: Is it not the case that during the last 12 months the number of job losses has exceeded the number of new jobs, as a result of which unemployment in Scotland has increased by 10,000?

Mr. Stewart: The total labour force is rising, as the right hon. Gentleman must be aware. He will also be aware that in the service sector employment increased by 23,000 jobs in the year to September 1984. I am sure he will agree that that is very encouraging.

Natural Woodland

5. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to safeguard Britain's remaining natural woodland.

8. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends meeting representatives of the Forestry Commission to discuss the consultative document, "Broadleaves in Britain".

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission makes a presumption against the clearance of woodland for conversion to agriculture or, in the case of broadleaves, to coniferous woodland.

The commission is considering the responses to its consultative paper "Broadleaves in Britain," and my right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement on broadleaved woodland policy before the summer recess.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister accept that the decline in Britain's natural woodlands is now so serious as to deserve urgent consideration and greater attention to management agreements and planning control? While I am reluctant to intervene in Scottish Questions, may I ask the Minister whether, as an alternative, he will soon convene a meeting of farming, forestry and conservation interests so that they can reach agreement on sensible policies upon which British woodland policy can be based?

Mr. MacKay: As the hon. Member perhaps realises, the Forestry Commission is engaged upon discussions with many of the bodies mentioned by him and with other bodies. A seminar is to be held later in the year. Once these consultations are over, the Forestry Commission will come to my right hon. Friend, who will look carefully into these matters.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister accept that there has to be a consensus between all the parties that are interested in conservation? If that is the case, will he seek a meeting with the Forestry Commission to explain to it that, having met representatives of the landowning community and of the agriculture and timber-producing industries, it would now be proper for it to have discussions with those bodies which represent conservation interests before the seminar to which he has referred is held? Does he accept that it would be quite inappropriate for him merely to present those conservation bodies with a fait accompli?

Mr. MacKay: In addition to all the bodies that are directly interested in timber planting and timber growing, the Forestry Commission, as the forestry authority for Great Britain, is in close contact with the various conservation groups, foremost among which is the Nature Conservancy Council, on this important matter of preserving ancient broadleaved woodlands and attempting to increase the acreage of broadleaved woodland in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: Knowing my hon. Friend's interest in the matter, when he next meets the Forestry Commission may I ask him to ensure that it is aware of the serious river pollution that is occurring as a result of the drainage from newly planted forestry? Will he press the Forestry Commission to continue its researches?

Mr. MacKay: I have a great deal of sympathy with what my hon. Friend says and I shall certainly draw that to the attention of the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Kirkwood: In anticipation of the seminar and statement that the Minister has announced this afternoon, will he give us an assurance that in the interim there will be no clearing of ancient forests for agricultural purposes? In the course of his consideration of the issue, will he review the important practice of the Forestry Commission of selling off prime tracts of forest in Scotland to anonymous owners for undisclosed prices?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman will know that, as I said in my original answer, the Forestry Commission looks carefully at any proposal to fell broadleaved woodland either for planting coniferous trees or for agriculturel purposes. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the possibility of tightening up the regulations is being considered by the Forestry Commission in the context of its current review.

International Youth Year

6. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will have discussions with the representatives of the United Nations Association and the City of Edinburgh district council, co-partners in the project, on funding of the International Youth Year Edinburgh Gathering, 9 to 16 June.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Financial support for the Gathering has been promised from both the Scottish Tourist Board and the Scottish Sports Council. After discussion between my officials and the interested parties it is my view that these are the appropriate channels for assistance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Will my hon. Friend encourage a substantial level of funding through those and other channels, bearing in mind that during the United Nations International Youth Year the Edinburgh Gathering will be the most significant project not only in Scotland but in Britain?

Mr. Stewart: I accept the role of the Edinburgh Gathering within the general campaign for the International Youth Year. Backed by an imaginative and well-planned publicity campaign it could be of considerable benefit in attracting tourists to Edinburgh and Scotland. In recognising that, the Scottish Tourist Board has promised financial support for the event to the extent that it will contribute up to 25 per cent. of the publicity costs incurred, subject to a maximum of £9,000.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister agree that the best help that the Government could give the City of Edinburgh on this project and others such as the Festival would be to call off the ridiculous proposals that they have for cutting grants, thus destroying the ability of local authorities to carry out what their constituents want them to carry out?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is talking absolute rubbish. The Government support the International Youth Year by grant-aiding the co-ordinating committee in Scotland and the co-ordinating committees in other countries. The Scottish co-ordinating committee, consisting mainly of young people, is doing a good job and the hon. Gentleman would be better off encouraging and praising it rather than making those silly partisan points.

Council House Sales

7. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the progress being made with the sale of council houses in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): Yes. Since 1979 over 62,000 tenants have bought their houses. Binding contracts of sale have been concluded in a further 4,000 cases, and there are approximately another 7,000 applications at an earlier point in the pipeline.

Mr. Knox: What percentage of council house stock in Scotland has been sold to sitting tenants? If that figure is still significantly below that in England, what steps is my hon. Friend taking to increase the sale of council houses in Scotland?

Mr. Ancram: The percentage figure now sold is about 4·6 per cent. of the council stock in Scotland, rather larger than the last time my hon. Friend asked me the same question last July, when I told him that it was about 3·6 per cent. There has obviously been an improvement, but I must concede that we are somewhat behind the comparable figures for England, and it is for that reason that I keep trying to persuade councils of the benefits of selling council houses—such as the way in which they can spend their receipts—to encourage them to release council houses as quickly as they can.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If the policy of selling houses with substantial discounts is such a success, will the Minister tell the House why this has not been extended to the private rented sector?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member has asked that question before, and he will get precisely the same answer. We are dealing in this case with housing that has been provided by public money. I fail to understand the pathological hatred shown by the Opposition towards giving people who are living in council houses the right to own their own homes. We believe that that right is a good one, and we hope that they will exercise it.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend share my disappointment at the low rate of sales that has so far been achieved? Does he agree that, if we can persuade more people in Scotland to own their own homes by buying council houses, we shall improve their quality of life and increase the mobility of labour, which will be a factor in the future prosperity of Scotland?

Mr. Ancram: I agree totally with what my hon. Friend has said. The applications are running at about 1,800 a month. I would like to see this figure increased, and I shall do everything that I can to persuade people of the benefits of buying their homes.

Tourism

9. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the present administrative and financial arrangements for marketing and for developing tourism in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Yes, Sir. My right hon. Friend has already made it clear that he will give careful consideration to any recommendations that may in due course be made by the Select Committee for Scottish Affairs.

Mr. Kirkwood: May I refer the Minister, in addition to the obviously important evidence that will come from the Select Committee, to the important report that was published by the Fraser of Allander Institute last November on tourism and public policy in Scotland, which said that there was an urgent need for a clear statement of Government policy on tourism, including a need for an urgent degree of co-ordination of art, heritage and tourism, and an equally urgent need for Government activity in the classification of the marketing and development rules of the Scottish Development Board, the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency?

Mr. MacKay: If the hon. Gentleman talks to the tourist industry in Scotland, I think he will find that not all of it agrees with the Fraser of Allander report that he mentioned. I believe that the tourist industry is vitally important for Scotland, and we are convinced that the roles of the Scottish Tourist Board and of the Highlands and Islands Development Board are vital to the future prosperity of the industry. We shall be looking with interest at the findings of the Select Committee on the subject of the interface between these two bodies.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister says that tourism is so important. Why, then, is he insisting that local authorities cut back dramatically on their leisure expenditure, which includes museums, sports facilities and leisure recreation of all types and the arts, which play a vital part in attracting tourists to Scotland and ensuring that Scottish holiday-makers are properly entertained?

Mr. MacKay: There is another side to the coin of local authority expenditure if expenditure and rates are not kept under control. The tourist industry and especially small hotels, boarding houses and the like are damaged by the increase in rates. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman should be congratulating the Government on the considerable amount of money that we have put into the Scottish Tourist Board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board since the last election, almost doubling what was spent in the last year of the Labour Government.

Mr. Fairbairn: May I remind my hon. Friend that tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day? As his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said, the tourist season will soon start in Scotland. Can the Scottish Development Department erect the signposts in time for the tourist season? If my hon. Friend wants some good advice about how to promote tourism in Scotland, may I suggest that he reads the *Scottish Field* next month for an excellent article on the subject, which I have written?

Mr. MacKay: We all look forward to the article with bated breath. I am sure that my hon. Friend who has responsibility for home affairs and the environment has heard my hon. and learned Friend's remarks about signposts.

Mr. Craigen: When will the Government wake up to the economic potential of the £1 billion Scottish tourist industry? With regard to the Minister's reference to rates for hotels and boarding houses, has the Scottish Office made any assessment of the impact of revaluation on the tourist industry in Scotland?

Mr. Mackay: We have of course considered the question of revaluation across the board. My right hon. and hon. Friends have both answered questions on this matter. The total rate burden levied by local authorities is important to the tourist industry. While I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of tourism, I think that local authorities have to bear in mind the burden that they put on the local economy.

Highlands and Islands (Land Use)

11. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to ensure that land in the Highlands and Islands is utilised to the advantage of the local economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The policies pursued and assistance provided by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, the Forestry Commission and the Highlands and Islands Development Board are designed to improve the utilisation of land in the Highlands and Islands and to benefit the local economies.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister scrap the Government's proposals to cut the grants under the crofting counties agricultural grants scheme, and will he agree to meet forthwith the chairman of the Crofters Union steering group and withdraw the abrupt refusal to consult about the Government's damaging proposal?

Mr. Stewart: If the hon. Gentleman will put down detailed questions about the Crofters Commission, we shall answer them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to study his Department's report on the Crofters Commission? Is it not high time that we wound up that body and allowed the more efficient use of resources, which the commission is preventing?

Mr. Maclennan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister clearly misheard my question. He referred to the Crofters Commission. I asked him about the cut in the grants under the crofting counties agricultural grants scheme——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know whether that was so, but we must not have repeats in Question Time. I call Dr. Godman.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) asked a question that has not been answered.

Mr. Speaker: That is what happens when hon. Members intervene between a question and an answer.

Mr. Stewart: The answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is that I have noted his comments, but that we have no plans to wind up the Crofters Commission.

Dr. Godman: Where there is wasteful under-use of land, is not there a case for intervention to ensure the more rational use of that land by, say, tenant farmers?

Mr. Stewart: The Highlands and Islands Development Board has considerable powers to achieve its land use objectives, particularly through advice and offers of financial assistance. Between 1974 and 1983, a total of £26·8 million was provided for the promotion of land development of various kinds in the Highlands and Islands. That created 1,500 jobs and retained 800. I do not believe that extra powers are necessary.

Teachers (Pay)

12. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent communications he has had with the bodies responsible for the negotiation of teachers' salaries and conditions of employment.

Mr. Younger: In my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on 31 January, at column 272, I reported the outcome of my meeting on 28 January with both sides of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education. At a subsequent meeting of that body on 7 February the management side outlined proposals for taking forward a review within the SJNC(SE) framework. I understand that the teachers' side is to respond to that initiative at a further meeting of the SJNC(SE) on 15 February.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that if the SJNC decided that it was within its terms of reference to establish an independent body to review teachers' salaries he would not block that development and would still have on the table his responsibility to provide the necessary funds to meet any obligations arising from the deliberations and decisions that finally emanate from the SJNC?

Mr. Younger: I think that I have already answered that question, but, for the avoidance of doubt, I say again that it is up to the SJNC to decide how it wishes to carry out its tasks. I have already said that if it produces a package of pay and conditions that I consider to be attractive I shall do my best to find funds to help to implement it.

Mr. Maxton: Why does the Secretary of State continue to give the impression that he and the management side of the SJNC ar totally separate and independent beings? His representatives are members of the management side, and one of the underlying problems of teachers is that they do not believe that the management side can operate independently of the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Younger: I should have thought that a notable feature of the whole business was that the management side had been obviously independent. For instance, it took the line that it, too, was in favour of an independent pay review, as did the teachers, although it took a different line from the teachers in that it thought it should be a review of pay and conditions. I do not see any question of the management side being other than independent of the other parts of the body. The essential thing for everyone to understand is that the SJNC was set up for the precise purpose of considering and dealing with the pay and conditions of teachers. I suggest that this is the body through which this damaging dispute should be resolved.

Mr. Henderson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a number of people inside and outside the House are concerned that recrimination about the past few months would be unfortunate? It would be better for the teachers to explore fully within the SJNC the kinds of opportunities to which my right hon. Friend referred earlier. Rather than disrupt now, it would be better to explore the opportunities which my right hon. Friend indicated are available within the SJNC.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is true that there is a clear way of proceeding and having all the teachers' worries, grievances, and so on properly looked into by the body set up precisely for that purpose. With that in mind, I suggest that all concerned should reflect carefully on whether it is right to disrupt children's educational prospects when there is a good way of resolving the difficulties without doing so.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Jury Vetting

36. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what is his policy on jury vetting in Scotland in cases relating to section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): The general policy of the Crown in Scotland with regard to jury vetting was explained by the previous Lord Advocate in 1979 and has not changed. The Crown does not screen persons cited for jury service. There have been no recent cases in which all or part of the proceedings needed to be held in camera, but for any such case in the future my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate reserves his position so far as the making of inquiries consistent with the observations of the High Court in M *v.* Her Majesty's Advocate in 1974 is concerned.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Solicitor-General set out in the Library the criteria of selection?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: A detailed explanation is given in the case to which I referred, which

sets out the special cause where a challenge can be made to individual jurors. I shall make that available to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall make sure that it is in the Library.

Mr. Dewar: I hear the careful caveat that the Solicitor-General has made. May I take it from his reply that he shares my implacable resolve that jury vetting should not become a feature of the Scottish judicial system?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: What needs to be appreciated by the whole House is that were we have a jury operating in Scotland it operates in a different context from the jury that is to be found south of the border. There are significant differences. We have a different system of majority verdicts and a different size of ordinary criminal jury. I confirm to the hon. Gentleman that screening or vetting is not an ordinary part of the way in which we conduct matters.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that the reason why the Government were persuaded by argument to leave the rejection of three jurors without cause shown was so that the practice of jury vetting by a back door should never be introduced in Scotland?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes, indeed, that is the situation. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) appreciated, there is only one small but general reservation that I have made on the whole matter.

Matrimonial Homes Act

37. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he is satisfied with the operation of the Matrimonial Homes Act.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Government are aware of the criticisms made of the operation of the Act and are, as appropriate, taking steps to meet these criticisms, or ascertain how far they are justified, and to provide remedies by legislative and other means.

Mr. McKelvey: I am grateful to the Solicitor-General. He will recall that during the progress of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill there was discussion of the Matrimonial Homes Act 1981 and Women's Aid indicated disquiet about variations in judgments in the appropriate sheriff courts. I look forward to the result of his investigation and to any action that can be taken to remedy the problem.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As I have already indicated to the hon. Gentleman, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has commissioned research into the operation of the Act. It is expected that this will be available by the beginning of next year. If he has specific complaints about the operation of the Act and the involvement of the police or procurators fiscal in Scotland, I hope that he will make the details available to me.

Drugs Offences

38. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many cases of alleged drugs offences have been reported to the Crown Office or to procurators fiscal in 1985 to date.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In 1985 to date, 290 cases have been reported to procurators fiscal.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does the Solicitor-General consider that the proposed change in the law to make fines available as the norm to the court in addition to prison sentences would be a useful deterrent, bearing in mind the alarming increase in the number of drug cases in Scotland?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the point that he makes. I regret that the problem of trafficking in drugs remains very serious in Scotland, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I am glad to say that our success rate in prosecutions in the High Court has been good. I hope that the amendments that have been put down to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill will provide an effective addition to the armoury of deterrents against those who believe that trafficking in drugs is a profitable way to carry on.

Mr. McQuarrie: Can my hon. and learned Friend tell the House how many of the drug offences in Scotland last year were committed by young persons under the age of 18?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I cannot immediately answer my hon. Friend. I regret to say that that area of crime involves not only older people. There has been a significant and tragic increase in the number of those involved under the age of 20.

Armed Trespass

39. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions took place in 1984 for armed trespass.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Trespassing with firearms is an offence under section 20 of the Firearms Act 1968, and 51 prosecutions for contraventions of that section took place in 1984.

Sir Hector Monro: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that that is a very high number? Can he break down that figure into urban and rural offences? Can he assure me that sufficient effort is made to prosecute those who are poaching both fish and wildfowl?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I cannot give a breakdown into urban and rural offences, but I should think that most of the offences took place in a rural context. As my hon. Friend will appreciate, if those offences are pursued in the courts, that can sometimes involve very complex questions of civil law, which the courts have said are not always suitable for determination in criminal trials. However, I understand my hon. Friend's great concern about poaching.

Mr. Eadie: Based on the figures that the Solicitor-General for Scotland has given for prosecutions relating to armed trespass, what has the hon. and learned Gentleman to say about the alleged easy availability of weapons in Scotland? Will he investigate that matter and provide the House with information?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I shall be glad to provide the hon. Gentleman with what information I can. Under the Firearms Act 1968 and other statutory and common law offences, significant penalties can be imposed on those in possession of firearms or who use

them when they do not have a justifiable excuse for carrying them. The courts in Scotland have imposed heavy penalties when such offences have come before them.

Drugs Offences

40. **Mr. Malone** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions for drug-related offences have taken place in the Grampian region in the past 12 months.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The figures available are for 1984, when 294 drug-related cases were reported for prosecution in the Grampian police area.

Mr. Malone: I am grateful for that reply. While it is a tribute to the ability of the Grampian police that they have been able to contain the overall problem within the Grampian region, does my hon. and learned Friend recognise that within those figures there is an increased number of offences for the use of hard drugs? Will he consistently bear that fact in mind when considering sentencing policy?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As my hon. Friend will recognise, sentences are a matter for the courts. However, it has been the established policy for the past two years of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate that where there are prosecutions of those engaged in the trafficking of drugs—be they hard or soft drugs—they should ordinarily take place in the High Court. That ensures that the full range of penalties available in that court can be used. I hope that in future that will include the power to impose, as a norm, a fine as well as a sentence of imprisonment.

Dr. Godman: Can the Solicitor-General for Scotland tell us how many of those prosecuted for drug-related offences were registered drug addicts?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an answer to that question. The range of offences covers not only those found in possession of drugs, but those found in possession of them with the intention of supplying them to other people. In those circumstances, whether or not the accused is a drug addict is essentially immaterial. We are seeking to crack down on the idea that people can engage in trafficking, especially when it is for profit.

SCOTLAND

Dental Charges

16. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the costs of dental treatment provided under the National Health Service in Scotland was met by the charges paid by patients at the latest date for which figures are available; and what was the corresponding proportion in 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: The proportion was 24·6 per cent. in 1983-84 and 20·29 per cent. in 1979-80.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Minister aware of the great concern that is felt not only by the dental profession but by patients about the increased charges? Does he agree that dental care should continue to have an important place in Scotland?

Mr. MacKay: I am indeed most concerned to improve the quality of dental care in Scotland and the attention we pay to our teeth. About half the courses of treatment are provided free. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that while the number of dental treatments in 1978 in Scotland was 2·4 million, by 1983 it had risen to 2·75 million.

Questions to Ministers

3.33 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given you prior notice. My point concerns Question Time. You will have noticed that the Government have recently transferred overall responsibility for forestry policy from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Scottish Office. The Table Office has, therefore, been directing hon. Members who represent English and Welsh constituencies to table their questions on United Kingdom forestry policy to the Scottish Office, and two of my hon. Friends have, rightly, done so today.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that this administrative transfer from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Scottish Office could impose an intolerable strain on the time available for Scottish Office questions. Would it be possible—indeed, would it be in order—in view of the situation for a Scottish Office Minister to be present in the House during Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food questions to answer questions on United Kingdom forestry affairs?

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that of the Scottish questions today, three were from hon. Members representing English constituencies and one was from an hon. Member representing a Welsh seat? While I entirely agree that they are within their rights according to the odd usages of this place, do you agree that representations should be made for Scottish questions to return to being answered one week in three instead of the current one week in four?

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has raised a real difficulty. If we find, as we monitor this matter—as we are in the early stages of this transfer, it will have to be monitored—that it inhibits the proper scrutiny of the abysmal mess that the Scottish Office is making of the Scottish economy and everything else, we shall want to return to the subject.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The number of questions in which English Members participate—I refer not just to the questions on forestry today — suggests that Scottish Question Time should be extended. Will you take account of suggestions recently made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), that Scottish questions could usefully be added to some meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh? That might also serve to reduce the number of English Members participating in Scottish questions.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is it exactly the same point of order?

Mr. Forth: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Forth—an English Member.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you consider enjoining Scottish Members not to interfere in English Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: That illustrates the difficulty about this issue. It is not one for me. This is a legitimate matter, and it should be taken up through the usual channels.

Leader of the Opposition (Statement)

3.37 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This is the big one.

Mr. Stanbrook: It will be.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, you ruled against my submission that certain words used by the Leader of the Opposition, calling into question the truthfulness of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, were out of order. You said:

"It is right that we do not impute dishonour to each other, but what the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition said was that he did not himself believe it. That is a different matter." —[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 188.]

Now that we have the advantage of reading in *Hansard* exactly what the Leader of the Opposition said, I respectfully submit that what he said was out of order. The Leader of the Opposition said:

"The right hon. Lady says now, and she has said to me before, that she was not involved in the decision to prosecute. Frankly, I do not believe the right hon. Lady".

The Prime Minister said:

"I was not involved in the decision to prosecute a particular person." —[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 162.]

I ask you to consider that matter, Mr. Speaker, in the light of the precedents in "Erskine May", especially on page 432.

Several precedents are quoted. The most recent precedent involved the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight). The words used by the hon. Member for Fife, Central were:

"I doubt the word of the hon. Member for Edgbaston."

Mr. Bryant Godman Irvine was in the Chair as Deputy Speaker and it was reported that he said:

"I find it difficult to distinguish between doubting someone's word and calling him a liar." —[*Official Report*, 15 May 1980; Vol. 984, c. 1789-90.]

That is in "Erskine May" and is under the heading "Charges of uttering a deliberate falsehood". In view of these precedents, I respectfully suggest that what the Leader of the Opposition said about the Prime Minister's truthfulness yesterday was out of order. I ask you to consider the matter, Mr. Speaker, now or later as you wish, and to rule that, the Leader of the Opposition being out of order, he should withdraw.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, you were present for all the proceedings and as a result of a point of order by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) you made a decision there and then which was apparently to the satisfaction of most hon. Members who were present, otherwise there would have been further points of order. The hon. Gentleman wishes to challenge that ruling, and that is a matter for him.

I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that one does not have to go as far back as the incident in 1980 because there are plenty of examples, if you care to look them up, in which many hon. Members have doubted the veracity of statements made by other hon. Members. That does not apply simply from the Labour side to the Conservative side; it happens the other way round as well. Perhaps you will reflect that the most glaring example happened in July last year, when I asked whether it would be in order for somebody to say that the Prime Minister would not recognise the truth if it was sprayed on her eyeballs, and I got away with it.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point) : Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that we can agree in part with what the hon. Gentleman has said. We have our differences and on both sides of the House we are accustomed to harsh criticism, which is inherent in our tradition of free speech. I have sat in the House for 11 consecutive Parliaments. Only the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) has sat here longer. I cannot recollect in those 35 years an occurrence such as that which we witnessed yesterday, when the Leader of the Opposition accused the Prime Minister of not telling the truth and then failed to substantiate the charge.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, before you give your ruling, that what the right hon. Gentleman did—he may have done so unwittingly, and I hope that he did—cast a slur not merely upon my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister but on every hon. Member, because it touched on the honour of every one of us. When we speak, from whatever side of the House, we may be mistaken, we may have been misled, we may not express ourselves clearly, but the assumption is that we are speaking in good faith, and that is the only basis on which the House can operate.

I would respectfully suggest that the right hon. Gentleman has only one course. He can put down a motion in which he apologises to my right hon. Friend, or he can table a motion which goes a long way to substantiate what he says, which would lead to a debate in this House or an appropriate committee of inquiry. The situation cannot be left where it is, because the right hon. Gentleman has pointed the finger at every hon. Member, and that would be intolerable.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. In col. 1789 of *Hansard* of 15 May 1980, not only did the hon. Member for Fife, Central, (Mr. Hamilton) talk about doubting the word of my hon. Friend, the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston, (Mrs. Knight), as referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), but he used exactly the same words as the Leader of the Opposition used yesterday. He said "I do not believe."

In col. 1790, I asked Mr. Deputy Speaker for a ruling about whether that was tantamount to calling my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston a liar. Mr. Deputy Speaker ruled that it was tantamount to calling her a liar and he called upon the hon. Member for Fife, Central to withdraw. To his credit—although he said that he did not do it with full gracious heart—in col. 1792 the hon. Member for Fife, Central obeyed the Chair's injunction and withdrew the comment. Since the words on that occasion are identical to the words used yesterday, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to bear that similarity in mind.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Tell us about video nasties on the train, George.

Mr. Foulkes: Further to the point of order. Before you reconsider your ruling, Mr. Speaker—if you intend to reconsider it on the basis of submissions made—would

it help if I gave you a list of the occasions when the Prime Minister has not told the truth on this issue, starting——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just what we want to avoid in a highly charged situation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] Order. I ask the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) not to use that phrase, because that is just the difficulty that we are trying to avoid—*[Interruption.]* Order. If hon. Members will allow the hon. Gentleman to hear me, I ask him not to use phrases of that kind, because that is just the kind of accusation that we are seeking to avoid.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. May I help you by giving you a list of a number of occasions upon which incorrect information was given by the Prime Minister on this matter, starting with her reply to Mrs. Diana Gould on the BBC programme "Nationwide"?

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), Mr. Speaker. It will be within your recollection that yesterday my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General corroborated on a separate occasion the information which he gave to the House. To my knowledge, neither the Leader of the Opposition nor any Opposition right hon. and hon. Members have impugned the honour of the Attorney-General, notwithstanding the fact that he confirmed what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had said. My point of order relates to that of my hon. Friend and the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). Surely it is not acceptable to the House for one right hon. or hon. Member to make a clear allegation that another right hon. or hon. Member was not telling the truth, his justification for so doing merely being that he has decided of his own volition that he will not withdraw his comments unless and until he receives an explanation on a wholly different point, which clearly is a point of argument, and an argument which can never be proved.

Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. given that in the past two or three days right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have accused each other of—shall we say—terminological inexactitude — *[Interruption.]* well, whatever—perhaps it would be appropriate for you on Monday to call my early-day motion, which would divide the House on the basic issue that we should, from our own ranks, establish a Select Committee with powers to call persons and papers to determine who has been telling the truth and who has not over the past two or three weeks. Is it not as simple as that?

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Reference has been made to me and my behaviour on a similar occasion. In all fairness to Conservative Members, they said that I graciously accepted the Chair's ruling. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I invite them to do the same with your ruling of yesterday.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I accepted your ruling yesterday, and that is how it stands — [HON. MEMBERS: "Who are you?"] That is the usual reaction from public school louts. I should like to make you aware, Mr. Speaker, if I may, that we are aware of what is going on in the House today —the media have informed the general public that the heavy gang on the Conservative Back Benches mean to do a great deal more of this. I thought that you should be made aware of that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member still being helpful?

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I hope that my intervention will be helpful. Before you make any ruling on the issue that has been raised, will you take into consideration the political circumstances in which the question has been raised? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Is it not clear that Conservative Members are now putting up a smokescreen to avoid the issue that two Ministers came to the House of Commons and deliberately misled the House of Commons, and that was upheld——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is an experienced Member, and he knows that the phrase "deliberately misled" is not a parliamentary expression. He must not use it.

Mr. Heffer: I shall leave out the word "deliberately", but they misled the House of Commons. The whole business by the Opposition is an attempt to deflect attention from the real issue—[HON. MEMBERS: "You are the Opposition."]—on the part of the opposition on that side of the House, to deflect attention from the real issue, which is that people are trying to get away from the decision that was made in the court, and that the Ministers involved should resign. That is the issue. The issue is not the attack on my right hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Norman Buchan.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that if you had called me earlier, you might have defused the whole matter. May I ask a simple question? Has the Secretary of State for Defence or one of his junior Ministers approached you for the opportunity to make the appropriate statement to the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to say to the House in all seriousness that when this House chose me as its Speaker it expected me to be totally impartial and to do my duty, however uncomfortable and however difficult that may be, and yesterday I had to do that. It is not for me to get involved in any political discussions that are going on across the Chamber. I say to the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) that I did not know the full details of his point of order, but I, too, looked up the precedents. I must say to him that they are not similar. I do not intend to go into the exact reasons why that was, but yesterday I was watching very carefully, as the House would have expected me to, to ensure that no accusations of lying or any other unparliamentary words were used. It was not my judgment that the words which were used—"I do not believe it" or "I do not believe you"—were an unparliamentary expression. That is an expression which is used in the House almost daily. I ask the hon. Member for Orpington who raised that point of order to calculate carefully what he is seeking me to say about an expression of that kind. I stand by what I said yesterday.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has it not been the rule

[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]

of the House for more years than any of us can remember that on points of order the doctrine of the first occasion applies—that either one raises the point of order when the event happens, or one loses the right to do so? What one does not do is dig it over a day or more later when one had the occasion, if one chose to be present in the House at the time, to raise it then. Do not the events of today reinforce the wisdom of that rule of the House?

Mr. Speaker: I shall answer that at once, because the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) is a constitutional expert; I think that the whole House accepts that. Of course, he is absolutely right. It is one of the rulings that I could have given today. Indeed, I was minded to do so, but since I knew that yesterday's exchanges were likely to be raised, I thought that I would put the issue in its proper perspective at once so that we do not have any more of it.

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): On a new point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received a request from the Leader of the Opposition to make a statement denying charges that, during the Ponting trial, his office received information from councillor Lynne Oliver, a Labour councillor in Islington and a member of the Ponting jury?

Mr. Speaker: Of course I have not. I hope that the House will not seek to involve the Chair in what is after all a highly political matter. That is not my role.

BALLOT FOR NOTICE OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 1 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Edward Leigh
Mr. Michael Mates
Mr. Barry Henderson.

Molesworth (Peace Chapel)

4 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the threat of imminent demolition of the peace chapel at Molesworth".

Subsequent to the unprecedented military operation involving 3,000 soldiers and police to evict 150 peace demonstators from the Molesworth cruise missile site, the Royal Engineers have erected a 6 ft high barbed wire fence around the perimeter of the site. This unprecedented Ministry of Defence and police paramilitary action, which has been universally condemned by the broad spectrum of the peace movement and by many religious leaders, resulted in the peace chapel becoming inaccessible to those who would wish to pray for world peace. It is now enclosed within the perimeters of the barbed wire fence.

I was alarmed to hear this afternoon that the chapel is threatened by demolition by bulldozing. It is a stone-built structure and it would have been completed with a permanent tiled roof in a few weeks' time. It stands as a symbol for all religious creeds whose members wish earnestly to pray for world peace. Regular religious services were being held at the chapel until it was incarcerated behind the barbed wire. The building of the chapel coincided with the sowing of wheat fields. This was a symbolic gesture and an attempt to send grain to the starving people of Ethiopia and other areas of Africa.

The chapel was built by public subscription. It cannot be described as consecrated because technically it stands on Ministry of Defence land, but it has been blessed by the Bishop of Huntingdon and in the minds of peace-loving people it would qualify as being consecrated. The fact that this modest chapel has such important symbolic significance is perhaps the very reason why the Secretary of State for Defence would wish to eradicate it from sight, but to do so would be a mistake. The House surely cannot allow this travesty to happen in the name of defending the country. If the Secretary of State cannot find it in his heart to allow the chapel to stand, surely the least that he can allow is for the chapel to be demolished stone by stone so that this place of worship can be rebuilt on another site.

I honestly and earnestly feel that this is a matter worthy of debate. Demolition is imminent and there will be no purpose in discussing the matter once the demolition by bulldozer has taken place. I ask you earnestly, Mr. Speaker, seriously to consider granting my application.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the destruction of the chapel at Molesworth."

I have listened carefully to what he has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Employment of Young People

4.4 pm

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide more employment opportunities for young people.

I am not, of course, unaware that the cancerous evil of unemployment is present across the age spectrum. I am aware equally that it rots the soul of those in all age groups. It causes resentment, bitterness and despair across the age generations. Yet, in terms of the future society, to which we must address ourselves, it is surely at its most evil among young people. From November 1984 we have had about 364,000 who have never worked since leaving school. These disaffected jobless youngsters become disillusioned and often the knock-on effect is one of crime, drug abuse, vandalism and general apathy.

In my 12 years as a Member of this place I have never accused the party in government of deliberately creating unemployment. Mad though I believe other parties often are, I doubt very much whether they are that mad. However, I have often said in employment debates that criticism is justified of the Government's attitude to unemployment. I gather that that view is now shared by some Conservative Members.

I have long believed—I have said this previously in the House—that unemployment, especially among the young, is too serious a matter to be treated as a party political football. We all know that Bills that are introduced under the ten minutes rule stand little chance of becoming law. However, if my Bill were to provoke cross-party discussion and serious thought and discussion, that would be at least a step forward. Two of the proposals in the Bill are certainly matters for discussion and if the Bill were to proceed I should be willing to listen to argument upon them.

The first proposal is to appoint a Minister for youth with responsibilities for young people in the hands of his Department. There are those who will be sceptical of the idea, but I remind them that there used never to be a Minister with responsibilities for small companies. We now have such a Minister, thanks to the Liberal party. The idea has worked in that instance and it could work again if we had a Minister with responsibilities for youth.

The second proposal in the Bill is the establishment of an environmental corps. I envisage the corps giving training in skills that will be a training for life and living. I see the corps undertaking projects and initiatives that are presently beyond the reach of local or national Government. I remind the House that the environment includes the inner cities. I stress that recruitment to the corps would be utterly and absolutely voluntary. Part of its training would be residential and this could lead to a meaningful base training for thousands of young people.

The third and main proposal is a type of statutory apprenticeship scheme. The number of apprenticeships in manufacturing industry fell from 155,000 in 1979 to 99,000 in 1983. Many of the 99,000 apprenticeships have not been filled by school leavers. One of the major criticisms of the Government youth policy and youth employment schemes is the application of the schemes and subsidies to 17-year-olds and not 16-year-olds. I speak with some experience as an employer.

My Bill would enable the Government to place a levy on employers employing more than 50 people who fail to take on a proper and agreed number of apprentices. We tend to think of apprenticeships as largely within the engineering industry, and I submit that that is the wrong approach. We need to have new ideas about apprenticeships, and wider visions.

In Western Germany there are thousands of apprenticeships in the hotel and catering industry, for example, but in Britain there are comparatively few. There are many similar examples in Western Germany and not in Britain. Statutory apprenticeships in Western Germany are the norm; almost 500,000 of them exist. About 50 per cent. of German youth complete a three-year apprenticeship. In Western Germany, the state and industry—industry includes trade unions as well as employers—consider such schemes to be a social responsibility. The state has taken power to implement a levy but it has never had to impose one, such has been the voluntary response of industry to that legislation. In Belgium, too, there is a scheme of statutory apprenticeships.

I employ apprentices in my small company, and I know the problems and the financial costs involved. Much of the Government money now being spent on what I would describe as tarting-up schemes, and much of the money being spent on paying people not to work, could be diverted to financing statutory apprenticeships, with the state bearing much of the cost, not as extra expenditure but as a better use of existing expenditure. There could also be tax incentives and rebates to industry to encourage companies to employ more apprentices. But should industry fail to respond, under my Bill the Government would have the power to impose a levy.

We need the will, leadership, drive, enthusiasm and determination—in short, we need the right attitude. My Bill is an attempt to start the ball rolling and to ensure that we have a trained labour force in the future and that, instead of putting youngsters into schemes for one year and then throwing them back on the dole, we give them meaningful and purposeful training during their adolescent years. That can be done, and it is being done in other European countries. If the will was there, it could be done, and I suggest that International Youth Year is not a bad time to start.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Cyril Smith, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Michael Meadowcroft, Mr. David Penhaligon and Mr. James Wallace.

EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Mr. Cyril Smith accordingly presented a Bill to provide more employment opportunities for young people: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 April and to be printed. [Bill 82.]

Orders of the Day

Representation of the People Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 29 January]

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 5

MANNER OF VOTING AT PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

4.12 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On a point of order, Mr. Walker.

I wish to ask you a question about amendment No. 88, which is not included in the provisional selection of amendments. As you will recall, Mr. Walker, when we discussed clause 1, the Committee greatly extended the franchise and, by so doing, extended the postal vote, with the result that the provisions of the Parliamentary and Municipal Elections (Ballot) Act 1872 are somewhat less effective in ensuring that tampering with ballot papers cannot take place. Amendment No. 88 was tabled to deal with that. There is no other provision in the Bill for that, and therefore no opportunity to discuss the matter, save in the most general way during the debate on clause stand part. Perhaps it would have been better to table a new clause instead of an amendment. If clause 7 is added to the Bill as it stands, without substantial amendment, it might be impossible to raise the issue during a debate on a new clause.

To ensure that there is some debate on the avoidance of tampering with postal votes, would you reconsider the provisional selection of amendments before we reach clause 7?

The Chairman of Ways and Means: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I considered carefully the amendments which I did and did not select. Amendment No. 88 is clearly outside the scope of the clause. I did not select the amendment, and I cannot contemplate a debate on clause stand part. The hon. Gentleman will have to consider whether it is more appropriate to table a new clause, and I shall consider that in the event of it being tabled. But I repeat that, having considered the amendment carefully, I decided that it was outside the scope of the clause.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 8, line 11, at end insert—

'(5A) If he is entitled as an elector to an absent vote at the election because he cannot reasonably be expected to go in person to the polling station allotted to him under the appropriate rules by reason of blindness or other physical incapacity, he may vote in person at any polling station in the constituency or, as the case may be, electoral area.'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following:

New clause 13 — *Access for disabled to polling stations*—

'After paragraph *(d)* of section 18(2) of the principal Act the following words shall be inserted as paragraph *(e)*—

"*(e)* at each polling station, in the means of access both to and within the premises and in the parking facilities to be available (if any), provision shall be made, in so far as it is in the circumstances both reasonable and practicable, for the needs of electors who are disabled."

and the same words shall be inserted as paragraph *(e)* of section 18(3) and as section 31(5) of the said Act.'.

New clause 33—*Proxy vote for disabled*—

'Where a person becomes unable to attend the polling station in person because of physical disability arising after the date prescribed for him to apply to the registration officer to vote by post or proxy under the provisions of section 7, a ballot paper shall be issued to his proxy by the presiding officer at the polling station to which he would have attended but for the physical disability on presentation of a prescribed certificate issued by a medical practitioner attending the person provided:

(a) that the certificate is signed by the medical practitioner and certifies that the person concerned will be unable to attend in person because of a physical disability arising since the last day for the receipt of applications for a postal or proxy vote under section 7,

(b) that the person concerned completed the certificate by appointing as proxy a person qualified by section 8 and

(c) that the proxy appointed completes the certificate by saying that he is qualified to be the proxy under section 8.'.

Mr. Hannam: The amendment and the new clauses seek to improve voting opportunities for the disabled. I warmly welcome the extension of postal or proxy votes to all local government elections in Great Britain, including elections to parish and community councils in England and Wales.

The lack of availability of postal or proxy votes until now has meant that many disabled people have been disfranchised at local elections, and we must all be pleased that the Bill amends that position. However, when we consider the number of disabled people who apply for postal or proxy votes, we must ask why they have to apply for such votes. It is not necessarily on grounds of ill health or inability to get out of their houses and go to the polling stations, but often because the polling station is inaccessible to them. It is ironic that a disabled person applying for an absent vote must produce a doctor's certificate confirming that he or she is disabled, when the real reason for applying for an absent vote is not that he or she is too disabled but that the polling station is inaccessible. That applies not only to people in wheelchairs, but to the many people who have severe walking difficulties, including the elderly, and those who find it difficult to walk up steep steps or any steps at all. I am sure the Committee will agree that everyone, from the most severely disabled to the most athletic, should have the same right of access to polling stations in order to cast their votes in an election.

The use of the postal or proxy vote must be seen as a second-rate alternative to a vote in person, and we should do all that we can to ensure that polling stations are accessible to all. Amendment No. 32 seeks to build on a precedent already established in the Bill—that a person working in connection with the election, but in another part of the electoral area, may vote at any polling station within that electoral area. The amendment proposes that a disabled person should also be able to vote at a polling station other than that normally allocated to him—not because he especially wants to, but because many polling stations are inaccessible.

This is an interim measure pending the time when all polling stations will be fully accessible to disabled and blind people. I understand from questions and answers in *Hansard* that 50 per cent. grants are available from central

funds to provide ramps to polling stations. I had not heard of that scheme before, and it would be most helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister would give further details of it. However, I do not believe that it is working effectively enough to act as a substitute for my amendment. Portable ramps have a limited use, in that they cannot accommodate the great range of access requirements. Many portable ramps can accommodate only one or two steps and cannot solve the problem of a flight of steps. I believe that the take-up of this scheme is extremely low, and I do not know of any local authority that has taken advantage of it. Perhaps my hon. Friend could give me some idea of the number of polling stations whose accessibility has been improved under the scheme.

A further drawback of the scheme is that it does not accommodate the wide range of disabilities. For example, for many elderly people who have walking difficulties, it is most important to have a good handrail. Such needs are not accounted for under the scheme. That is probably the major access need.

For those reasons, the 50 per cent. grant scheme cannot be relied upon to provide the accessibility to polling stations that is needed. Therefore, I hope that the amendment will be accepted. If it is, I should have thought that the principle underlying the current scheme could be extended to cover permanent adaptations that are made to polling stations in order to improve accessibility. Such expenditure would benefit people not only once every few years when an election is held. As I have said in many previous debates upon different legislative measures, the great majority of polling stations are to be found in public buildings. Therefore, improved accessibility would benefit all local residents throughout all the days and months of the year.

New clause 13 deals directly with accessibility to polling stations and inserts into the 1983 Act an additional requirement that, when district councils and London boroughs review polling stations and places, they will ensure that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, parking and access are provided for disabled people. In Scotland, that duty lies with the returning officer. In both instances, that duty will relate to both parliamentary and local elections.

The wording of the new clause is taken from the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. If the spirit of that Act had been implemented by local authorities, many of the buildings that are used as polling stations would already be accessible to disabled people. Sadly, not nearly enough local authorities have made their public buildings accessible to local people. The picture across the whole country is extremely patchy. Unless such a clause as the one that I have moved is inserted in the Bill, this situation will unfortunately continue. The new clause will not place an onerous burden upon anybody. The result will be that disabled people who are not ill but who otherwise would have to obtain medical certificates will not need to do so.

I have made my final point again and again when putting forward proposals to improve the facilities for the handicapped. Every improvement in the facilities for the handicapped also helps other sections of the community —the elderly, mothers with prams and those who are carrying shopping. A clear illustration of this is the Newcastle metro. A survey shows that the specially wide barriers that have been erected enable 56 people in wheelchairs, 27 blind and handicapped people and 100 people with prams and pushchairs to use that metro service each day. They would be unable to do so if those wider entrances had not been provided.

I hope that these worthwhile proposals will receive favourable consideration from my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): I have great pleasure in following the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam). I am reminded of a campaign conducted in my constituency that was directed at preventing the elderly from having to walk long distances. The returning officer established a caravan on a small site which made it easier for people to get to the polling station. However, the concern I felt can be imagined when I say that numerous telephone calls followed me around the constituency on polling day asking me to go to this particular polling station, where I found that people in wheelchairs were in tears. The travelling problem had been overcome, but the access problem had been aggravated. The steps of the caravan were far too steep for some of the frail elderly who had difficulty, because of arthritis, in climbing the steps. Amendment No. 32 seeks to provide an alternative method. It is not unique. It would enable those people who feel that their polling station is inaccessible but who do not want a postal vote to vote in person. Some people, God bless them, still want to exercise their right to cast their vote at the polling station. They want to be like other people on polling day. That is very important.

The Minister could look kindly upon this amendment by providing that facilities for the disabled should be made available at accessible polling stations, which may be situated outside the wards in which they live. Returning officers already carry their voting rights elsewhere, so this is possible. The amendment would meet the needs of the disabled, most of whom would like to continue to go to polling stations for as long as they possibly can. It is not for this House to put barriers in their way.

There is a section in the Education Act 1981 that deals with the education of handicapped children. It provides that schools must be made accessible to all children. The improved accessibility which has resulted from the 1981 Act may be of value to the disabled who want to cast their vote personally. Substantial numbers of polling stations are based at schools.

As the hon. Member for Exeter said, when we took the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 through the House perhaps we should have been more positive and said that access to new public buildings should be made mandatory. The assumption is that access should be made available only for people in wheelchairs, but, as the hon. Member for Exeter said, everybody at some time or another has been pushed around in a pram. A mother is entitled to enter a polling station without the hassle of having to leave her baby behind.

All these factors have to be taken into account. Until we can provide relatively simple access to all polling stations which are not too far from the homes of the disabled, the ideas underlying amendment No. 32 ought to commend themselves to the Minister. If he cannot accept them as they stand, I ask him to do everything within his power to ensure that practical support is given to local authorities with difficulties to enable those who want to do so to exercise their right to vote, even though they are disabled, at a polling station.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I am one of the signatories to new clause 13. I fully support what my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) have said about the provision of easier access to polling stations. During the 1983 general election, two people in my constituency of Leicester, East found it impossible physically to go and vote. I asked my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department only a few days ago to define a polling station. One has to remember that schools where the traditional polling station is to be found do not normally teach disabled children in wheelchairs. Another difficulty is that some polling stations are situated in outhouses at the back of the school. The polling station could be at the top of a massive flight of steps.

In June 1983, my two constituents experienced great difficulty in climbing very steep steps. One was in a wheelchair; the other had two sticks. I applaud the polling agent, who helped the person in the wheelchair to go into the polling station and vote. The person with the sticks could not get up the steps. I have no idea how she would have voted had she been able to get up those very steep steps. It might have increased my majority.

Severe problems are involved in getting disabled people to polling stations to cast their votes. We give disabled people lifts to and from the polling station, but they have difficulty in getting into and out of the car. It is important for the disabled to be able physically to come and vote rather than having to vote by post.

Leicester has a large disabled community and from speaking to them I know that the one thing that they want is to be treated the same as everyone else. It is up to all of us to co-operate with the Home Office in ensuring that they have the facilities to enable them to vote.

Once disabled people have got into the polling station there is the additional difficulty of voting secretly. Some cannot reach the ballot paper, some cannot fold it and some cannot reach to put it into the ballot box. Voting for the disabled must be completely reviewed as soon as possible.

4.30 pm

I support amendment No. 32 which will allow disabled people to go to any polling station in the electoral area. I do not know whether I would like to see one polling station for disabled people. I can see that it would have its attractions in a general election when the voter is voting within his constituency, but I can see a problem arising at a ward or district election when a person goes to a polling station other than that at which he is registered. However, that proposal would go some way to enabling disabled people to vote.

It is a great democratic right in Britain to be able to vote. I sincerely hope that disabled people will be allowed to vote whenever they wish to. I hope that all access points to newly designated polling stations will be wide enough and will have ramps. Disabled people should be able to vote proudly, without assistance. They should be able to go to vote freely, in secret and with pride. It is for that reason that I support amendment No. 32 and, in particular, new clause 13.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I congratulate those hon. Members who have tabled amendment No. 32. I fully support the principle that it seeks to establish, although its wording means that it cannot be implemented.

It is not my understanding of the amendment that if a disabled elector goes to a polling station his vote must necessarily be totted up with the other votes there. I am sure that his vote could be transferred and counted in the ward where that elector resides.

Every hon. Member will have experience of electors who are greatly disadvantaged because of the way in which ward boundaries are drawn. I used to live in Aberystwyth. One village in that ward, Capel Seion, consisted of a long road in a rural area with perhaps only 200 electors. The ward boundary went down the middle of the road for about two or three miles. Electors on one side of the road lived in Llanbadarn-y-Creuddyn Upper and were able to vote in the village, while the electors on the other side of the road were in Llanbadarn-y-Creuddyn Lower and had to travel three or four miles to vote in a different valley with a greater centre of population. There were complaints in sparsely populated areas, where winter sometimes creates difficult conditions, yet the returning officer could not recommend that in that case an extra polling station should be installed. Therefore, there is a case for special facilities being made available for disabled people.

Amendment No. 32 would apply only to an elector who has an absent vote. I know of difficulties where certain electors are physically handicapped yet have found it difficult to get an absent vote. In some areas, a doctor's signature is required and the electoral registration officer has to be satisfied with that signature. In other areas the conditions are not so strict. If I could be satisfied that physically handicapped voters would usually get an absent vote indefinitely, easily and simply, without having to write letters or having to go to town halls or guild halls for forms which then have to be taken to the doctor, that would go a long way to meeting the amendment.

Hon. Members have said that handicapped voters want to do the same as ordinary people and that that can never be completely achieved by the amendment. If the Government cannot accept the amendment now, I hope that they will consider whether some administrative procedure could be instituted and introduce an amendment to that effect on Report. If a handicapped voter wanted to go to the polls and if there were an accessible polling station, surely the administrative procedures could be made available so that that vote could be transferred and counted in the appropriate district. Therefore, I support the amendment.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Perhaps I may pick up from where my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) left off. It is a well known fact that polling districts change their boundaries periodically. Polling stations move and, with the development of movement of population, people find themselves in different polling districts, wards and, periodically, constituencies, without physically having moved.

A good friend of mine, who is severely disabled, has always been a keen student of politics. For a long time he voted at a polling station close to where he lived which was readily accessible. For him, the exercise of voting in person was important. When his local authority moved the ward boundary, he was suddenly in a different polling district, the polling station was some considerable distance away and he was no longer physically able to go there. That is a disgrace. He had not moved house and the polling

station where he had gone was still some 50 to 70 yd away, but the boundary line now went between him and that polling station.

Bearing in mind that everyone is issued with a polling card with a name and polling number on it and every polling station to which I have ever been always seems to have a complete electoral register for the constituency or ward as a whole, it is ludicrous that my friend should not be able to take his polling card to the nearby polling station and exercise his democratic right.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on amendment No. 32. I agree entirely with what he has said. If the Government will not accept it, I hope that he will press it to a Division because it has considerable merit. In a modern electronic age, there is no reasonable excuse for not allowing that small number of persons the right to go to their nearest polling station.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Can the hon. Gentleman help me? I am trying to envisage a polling station in which on a ward-by-ward basis a list of all electors is kept. If an elector from another area asked to exercise his right to vote at that polling station, would there not be difficulty for the officers administering the poll in verifying that person's identity to allow him to vote?

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. If we take as an example the smallest number of electors involved in an election for a district or parish council, the number of wards involved may be as small as five, 10 or 15. Surely it is not beyond the wit of man for a number of voting slips for adjacent wards at the district level to be left at each polling station. Alternatively, why not allow the polling officer the right to make a ballot paper which would have to be kept separate and secure? We can all think of little difficulties, but let us consider the overall principle.

How many such cases are we considering? It is a remarkably small number. Is it beyond the wit of a returning officer in a constituency in a general election or in a district council election to allow disabled persons in the constituency or district to vote in the polling stations nearest to them?

A medical certificate grants to a disabled person the right to vote at a polling station other than his own. It would not be beyond the wit of man to include in the application form the address of the nearest polling station. That would allow the returning office for the constituency or district to know the number of applications and the polling stations to which those applications were going to be made. The officers at those polling stations would then have the appropriate ballot papers available. Such ballot papers, instead of being put into the box, could be sealed, placed in a separate box and delivered to the appropriate counting point.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I envisage even greater problems than I did earlier. Assuming that the disabled person lives in the constituency neighbouring the one in which he works, I foresee great problems in trying to rush his ballot paper back to the appropriate constituency. Secondly, and more important, if the polling station is in the same constituency, I am certain that this system will still work because it will not affect the general election result. However, I would have considerable worries about the polling officer having loose ballot papers in the polling station. I seek the view of the hon. Gentleman on the situation in which the elector votes in one ward and lives in another, bearing in mind that wards sometimes have election results with majorities of only one or two.

Mr. Bermingham: As I failed to make myself clear the last time I went through the process, perhaps the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) will allow me to recite the simple fundamental point involved. At the time that the disabled person makes his application for the right to vote at a polling station other than his own, he should nominate the convenient polling station. If I may return to the example I cited earlier of my friend who is severely disabled and whose nearest appropriate polling station is 70 yd from his home, he would nominate that polling station in his application as the one at which he intended to vote. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's example of an elector working in a neighbouring constituency, that elector would nominate the polling station at which he intended to exercise his right to vote, and the nominated polling station would hold the appropriate polling slip or ballot form.

4.45 pm

Mr. Hannam: I think that the hon. Gentleman has it right. The amendment seeks to apply the same rules to disabled persons as are now applied to those who perforce are working in an area away from the appropriate polling station, such as polling officers and policemen on duty. They are obliged to carry out the procedure that the hon. Gentleman has outlined. We are asking that the procedure applied in the registration of an absent vote be applied to the disabled.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, because I think that he agrees with me. A simple procedure can be devised to enable disabled people to vote at the most convenient polling station. As I understand it, that is precisely what the amendment seeks. It is unnecessary to draft a complicated series of provisions in order to permit the disabled to vote.

Dr. Marek: The problem has been raised of a disabled voter who lives in one ward but votes in a different electoral area. Does my hon. Friend agree that that clouds the issue? It may well be that we would have to rule out that type of change for the time being. However, it should be possible to devise some administrative system within a constituency for a disabled voter to vote at a different polling station from the one that collects the votes of other voters in the ward. That would go a long way to solving the problem.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention, but I think that on this occasion he may have clouded the issue slightly. I am endeavouring to keep matters simple. If, in the city of Sheffield, a police officer is stationed on duty in the Hallam constituency and he is entitled to vote in the Attercliffe constituency, he is treated as an absent voter, the necessary arrangements and nominations are made and no problem arises. Elections are neither won nor lost on that one vote, because the vote is transferred.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: They are.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Member for Leicester, East must not become obsessed with his own tiny majority, which seems to worry him.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): And rightly so.

Mr. Bermingham: If the procedures which work well for persons engaged in the electoral process are applied to the disabled, the numbers involved will be small. The same care that is taken with the votes of police officers and others will be taken with the votes of disabled persons.

It does not seem too high a price to pay in a democracy for a disabled person to have the right to cast his vote where it is most convenient and for that vote to be counted in the ward, district or constituency in which he is normally resident and entitled to vote. The transfer of such votes in the counting period should not give rise to any great difficulty. I therefore strongly urge the Committee and the Government to accept the amendment.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I apologise to the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) for having missed his opening remarks.

I welcome the opportunity to debate a subject that must have affected every Member of Parliament at some time. All of us at the time of elections know of incidents in which disabled people have experienced difficulty with polling booths. My experience may be a little different from that of hon. Members who represent city areas.

My constituency is a rural area, with about 90 polling stations and only 60 or 70 electors in some areas. Only some of those stations are schools. Many are village halls or the vestries of chapels and churches and some are singularly unsuitable. At the last general election, one polling station was in the front room of a council house.

In such constituencies, problems arise and they must be taken into account in our consideration of the amendments. I support the objective of the amendments, though new clause 13 appeals to me more than does amendment No. 32, because it lays down a general objective that meets the wishes of most disabled people. They want to be able to vote in a normal, unselfconscious way. They do not want to be herded into different polling booths.

I have seen problems at first hand. In the town of Caernarfon, one polling station is in a reasonably accessible building, but it is on the second floor. People with heart complaints are upset because they cannot climb the stairs. That is a particularly prevalent problem in areas where a number of people suffer from pneumoconiosis. Such people have difficulty walking up hills and stairs.

We need to put pressure on the authorities that organise elections. It is not enough for them to show goodwill towards disabled people. There must be a requirement on them to take all "reasonable and practicable" steps. Those words appear in new clause 13 and, in another context, in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. They should be included in the Bill.

There should be legislative pressure on the organisers of elections to use the polling stations that are most advantageous for disabled people and, if there are problems at some of those stations, to take "reasonable and practicable" steps to put them right; obviously, they cannot spend thousands of pounds adapting a building that will be used only once every three years.

Polling stations must be made as accessible as possible to disabled people. I refer not only to disabled people in wheelchairs, but to those who have difficulty walking up hills and those with sight difficulties who may have problems if they have to walk down steep slopes. We need to ensure that hand rails are provided and that access is through the most convenient door in a building and not, as is sometimes the case, through the least convenient door.

We want the Government to recognise the problem and to put responsibility on local authorities and ensure that they cannot wriggle out of it. At the same time, we must not impose such stringent conditions that it becomes impossible for those authorities to comply with that responsibility.

Mr. Forth: I hope that the Minister will tell us how he thinks that the administrative procedures recommended in the amendments would work in practice.

I agree that we must make every effort to ensure that people with disabilities of any kind can cast their vote in as near normal a way as possible—I favour easier access to normal polling stations as the best solution—but I get a little worried when we start complicating the administrative measures at individual polling stations to try to accommodate many possible methods of voting.

One of the great strengths of our present voting system and its procedures is their elegant simplicity. However good our motives, if we start to try to build in ever more procedures to cater for any number of possibilities, dangers of inaccuracies, the miscasting of votes, counting difficulties and so on will emerge. We should not cast aside such problems too lightly, because several hon. Members have majorities of fewer than 100 and some have majorities in single figures. It is possible for the miscasting of votes or the misplacing of ballot papers to cause serious electoral problems.

I hope that the Minister who is to reply will tell us how the administrative procedures would work, whether they would be viable and whether they would give rise to difficulties. Perhaps we would do better to provide easy access to polling stations rather than to over-complicate the important administrative and security procedures that are necessary at each polling station.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): At every election in which I have been involved, I have been impressed by the disabled people I have met while canvassing or on polling day and by their tremendous determination to vote, no matter what the difficulties. I am sure that my experience has been shared by other hon. Members, and it is a tribute to elderly people and those who find it difficult to move easily that they prefer to cast their vote in person than to exercise their right to a postal vote. It is a sign that they regard voting as a civic duty and is a lesson to all of us. I feel humble when I see the enormous dedication and determination of those people.

It is right that we should debate ways in which we can make it easier for some disabled people to vote—not that many such people want matters made easier for them. I should welcome the opportunity at the appropriate stage formally to move new clause 33, which is intended to cater for people who become disabled after the last date on which they were able to apply for a postal or proxy vote. If they are unable to go to a polling station in person, they should be able to vote by proxy, even if their disability occurs only just before polling day. That is a sensible provision which will ensure that no one is denied the right to vote through no fault of his own. New clause 13 also deserves support. If it is accepted, no disabled person who can get anywhere near a polling station will have any difficulty in casting his vote.

I think that all the polling stations in my constituency are at ground level and, apart from the two or three steps from a school playground into the building, which cause difficulty for disabled people, they do not present many problems.

However, even if most polling stations already conform to the requirements set out in the amendments, there will be a few that do not. Almost without exception, polling stations are situated in public buildings. If adequate access has to be provided at election time, it will almost certainly need to be provided for the other uses to which the building is put — for parents visiting schools, for example. Adapting buildings to improve access would not be a one-off operation for election time. It would be helpful for the rest of the time as well.

I am sympathetic to the intention behind amendment No. 32, but I have some reservations about it. There will be enormous difficulties for returning officers in dealing with people who are not on the voting list. Indeed, the person in charge at the polling station to which the disabled person would normally have gone may not know that his vote has been cast elsewhere. There is a danger that, for the most worthy of motives, we are making the position rather more difficult than is necessary. If we concentrated more on access, amendment No. 32 might be considered unnecessary even by those who have tabled it.

5 pm

It is unusual if the polling station to which an elector would normally go is not the one that is easiest for him to attend. Sometimes there are geographical quirks but those occasions are few and far between. Although I subscribe to the motives underlying amendment No. 32, I wonder whether it would be easy administratively to overcome the difficulties inherent in it. I express that reservation but I hope that new clause 13 will be passed, which would make amendment No. 32 unnecessary.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad to have the opportunity to respond to a most useful debate. One cannot think of a more appropriate way of beginning our second day of deliberations on this important Bill than that we should consider the rights of the disabled in relation to voting and that there should be recognition, as there was from my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), of the considerable improvements that the Bill already proposes. I am anxious to respond positively to the calls for further improvements.

My hon. Friend needs no commendation from me because his work for the disabled is well known. They have an eloquent spokesman in him and his contribution is appreciated by us all. We know too that this is a bipartisan matter. The hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones), who has to be elsewhere at the moment, also does sterling work for the disabled, as does the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter pointed out that considerable improvements are proposed in the Bill for those disabled who want to exercise an absent vote. At the moment, a disabled voter has a right to a permanent absent vote where he or she has been certified as being unable to vote in person. That right is to a postal vote. If the Bill is passed in its present form, there would also be a right to vote by proxy, so that increases the choice for the disabled. Anyone who wished to apply in future for a postal vote on the ground of disability would be able to apply in the normal way for one election, without going through the special procedure, and would merely be required to fill in the form, including the reason why it would not be practicable to vote in person on the day, and obtain the appropriate counter signature. Of course, most disabled people would want a permanent postal vote. That requires certification, mainly but not exclusively, by a doctor. Those matters have properly been of concern to the all-party group.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is most interested in these matters and he has been with me on the Front Bench throughout these debates. Later I shall turn to his contribution four years ago when he was Minister of State at the Home Office. It has been pointed out in the debate that the help given by central Government to local authorities to improve facilities at polling stations has not been fully understood.

My right hon. and learned Friend has been in correspondence with the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on the subject of certification. I welcome the opportunity to re-emphasise in Committee, as my right hon. and learned Friend did in his letter to the right hon. Gentleman, that when obtaining a certificate the disabled person is not required to pay a fee. General medical practitioners are not entitled to charge a fee for certifying an absent voting application on grounds of physical incapacity. They are prevented from doing so by paragraph 31 of the terms of service for doctors in schedule 1 to the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1974. That is an important point to put on the record, because there have been proper inquiries about it in the past.

We have tried to ensure that any disabled person who wishes to have an absent vote may get one with the minimum of fuss and difficulty. The point has been made tellingly from all sides of the Committee that some disabled persons welcome the opportunity to be able to vote in person and regard that ability as one of the many challenges in life that they wish to surmount. It is a challenge that keeps up the morale and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) said, the self-respect of the disabled.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) for his work for the disabled; his courage in facing up to disablement in his own family has won the admiration and respect of all of us. He referred to difficulties at polling stations. I think we have all had personal experience of this. In Putney, my constituency, our work for the disabled is perhaps the thing for which we are best known. In the constituency we have the headquarters of the limb manufacturing and fitting industry and also the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, one of the foremost institutions for the severely handicapped, where marvellous work is done and where modern technology has given a new dimension to life to those amongst the most severely disabled.

At the last general election, because of one of those unfortunate errors which sometimes happen and which reveal the importance of people being able to vote in person, a large number of postal vote applications for residents in the Royal Hospital went astray. So that they would not be deprived of their votes, a substantial operation was mounted to get them to the polling station. I know from my personal experience of that and from other encounters with disabled people that the ability to exercise their right to vote is of fundamental importance to them:

[Mr. William Powell]

my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is wrong to outline them from time to time, but, when it comes to the major matters I can see no justification for drawing substantially different rules and for exaggerating the prowess and ability of Sinn Fein to produce a false result at the polls.

The overwhelming evidence is that elections in Northern Ireland, just as much as in the United Kingdom, are conducted fairly and properly. I do not see why we should try to enact in statute different rules based upon assumptions which are fundamentally false.

Mr. Kaufman: One of the questions that I ask myself — perhaps the Minister, with the assistance of his officials, could help us — is whether it is too late to lodge an election petition in relation to Leicester, East.

I would very much like to support the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the amendments which we have tabled which complete the right hon. Gentleman's proposition. He has properly moved to take out the words "in Great Britain" but the clause is still discriminatory as long as subsections (2) and (3) remain.

The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) is right. Although the clause provides the new facility for an absent vote — a new facility which in principle Labour Members stongly support — it goes on to more than double itself in length by seeking stringently to limit that new right for electors in Northern Ireland. I must say with great clarity that we find that utterly unacceptable.

I do not want to follow right hon. and hon. Members on the detail of electoral problems and problems of public order within Northern Ireland. Those are matters to be dealt with not in a Representation of the People Bill, but in other ways if they are to be dealt with at all. Indeed, the Committee has recently been dealing with electoral problems in a manner which I must confess does not wholly appeal to me.

It is not acceptable to discriminate in the allocation or extension of the franchise on the basis of issues which relate not to the franchise but to the maintenance of order in a part of the United Kingdom. If we intend to do that, we must also consider other parts of the United Kingdom in other respects. That turns the franchise into a political issue rather than a political right.

7 pm

That being so—and the right hon. Member for South Down was perfectly right to say that in that sense the debate is an extension of the previous debate — I recommend the amendments and support the right hon. Gentleman's amendment in the interest of parity, which was the basis of the amendment that I moved and of the amendments that I supported in the previous debate. The arguments are self-evident. They have been put amply and eloquently by the right hon. Gentleman.

I hope that the Government will accept the amendments so that we can move further still along the road that the Committee has already indicated it wishes to travel.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I do not know of any election petition in Manchester, Gorton, but I shall certainly take part in it if I have to.

I used to hesitate about discussing Northern Ireland matters if only because, although I had visited the Province a couple of times, I would not have called myself an expert. Having visited Northern Ireland now on a number of occasions and participated in the Committee consideration of the Northern Ireland electoral legislation, I say now with more confidence that my hon. Friends know exactly what it is like and why Northern Ireland should not be treated in any way differently from the rest of the United Kingdom.

I support wholeheartedly what the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said in moving the amendment. After all, it is in a way an extension of clause 6(6), which the Committee discussed a short while ago.

The Northern Ireland Office seems to treat Sinn Fein as the bogeyman, and gives it far more credibility than it should have. No hon. Member admires terrorism, but the democratic process must be allowed to continue. I will defend that right, and I will support hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies in any similar amendments.

The extension conferring a new facility must have the approval of the Committee. It makes a great deal of sense, it gives more self-respect to the people of Northern Ireland and above all it ensures that they will be treated no differently from those in any other part of the United Kingdom. For that reason, I support the amendments.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I support the amendments. We are dealing with the matter of the franchise and with the right of citizens of the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland to have the same franchise rights as their colleagues in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Parliament has already considered some legislation relevant to the Sinn Fein activity in elections. I did not agree with what the Government did, but I listened carefully to their arguments and appreciated their point of view. I cannot accept that they have a different point of view on the issue now before the Committee because it is a clear-cut issue concerning the right of the people to vote. If one says that, because of Sinn Fein, people are to be asked to identify themselves, although I disagree with the method of identification, I can understand the argument. But I cannot understand any hon. Member arguing that, because the menace of Sinn Fein exists, the right of the people to vote will be taken away. That is the real issue before the Committee.

I am glad that there is a consensus in the Committee that all citizens of the United Kingdom should have the same right to vote at election time. Following the argument that was put forward in discussion of the last amendment and the basis on which it was accepted by the Government, I think that these amendments should be accepted. We shall then be on all fours with the rest of the United Kingdom, and I make a plea to that end.

Mr. Mellor: The fundamental point at issue has already emerged clearly as a result of the debate. I hope that my recognition of it will be apparent from what I am about to say.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) referred to the dilemma in which the Government find themselves with regard to the basic structure of clause 7. The decision was irresistible, as I have said, and it is common ground from what has been said in most, if not all, speeches of hon. Members in the debate that there has to be a dramatic widening of the availability of absent voting arrangements to take account of changes in habits.

In almost any month in which an election is held, there will be hundreds of thousands of people — in some months even millions—away on holiday. It is no longer possible to sustain the argument that they should be deprived of their votes when it is apparent that necessarily they will have booked their holidays long before a Prime Minister takes the decision to hold an election.

As the right hon. Member for South Down recognised, that posed a dilemma. We could add to what was already regarded as an anomalous list of categories, which was riddled with holes and difficulties if we chose to examine it carefully, a couple more equally anomalous categories. After all, what of the person who has to go to nurse a sick aunt? That would be a perfectly legitimate reason for being away from home, but, unless such a person were prepared to claim that it was a holiday—it would not, on the face of it, appear to be much of a holiday — that person would be deprived of his vote. That is clearly not right.

We therefore decided — and I am glad that the Committee accepts this—to sweep all that away. Clause 7(1)*(a)*, which appears to be small and insubstantial—much like many of the others in the Bill—is substantial. It establishes one overall basis for the availability of absent voting facilities by requiring the registration officer to grant an application for absent voting if he is satisfied that the applicant's circumstances on the date of the poll will be, or are likely to be, such that he cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at the polling station allotted or likely to be allotted to him under the appropriate rules.

It seemed to us compelling that if we established that that one clearly understood test had the application set out, countersigned with a penal sanction attached for the first time, this was an appropriate way — indeed, the only way—of moving forward, consistent with the objective of widening the franchise.

Our colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office had to advise us on the likely effect of the widening of the franchise on the Province, against the background of concern about the damage that would be done to the Province if certain parties grew to prominence as a result of massive electoral abuse. Those arguments were sufficiently compelling for Parliament in the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 to approve a measure that recognised the nature and extent of organised malpractice in Northern Ireland, and to set out a different set of safeguards on the personal exercise of the franchise that will come into effect at the next election.

I was grateful for the recognition by the right hon. Member for South Down, with his customary fairness, of the good faith of Northern Ireland Ministers. They considered that the effect of the measure might be nullified if there was such a broadening of absent voting categories that it enabled many more people to avoid the necessity of going to the polling station and complying with the new arrangements in the statute, with a consequent continuation of malpractice. It was on that basis, and in good faith, that clause 7 was drafted so that the extension of the absent voting facilities, which was to be granted to Great Britain, would not be granted in Northern Ireland.

On Second Reading, the right hon. Member for South Down and his colleagues made clear, as did the Opposition, their concern about our proposal. At the end of my speech in reply to the debate, the right hon. Gentleman asked me whether, as the Bill progressed, we would be prepared to justify, case by case and detail by detail, the reason why the differences were being included in the Bill. I willingly assented to that request, because I realised that we would have to do that if we were to persuade Parliament that our proposal was necessary.

We have had extensive discussions with the Opposition, with Northern Ireland Members and with Ministers from the Northern Ireland Office about the pros and cons of our proposal. I am happy to say that, as a result of those deliberations, it has been decided that the extension of absent voting facilities which we have proposed for Britain should apply also to Northern Ireland. I am pleased that that is to the liking of all parts of the Committee and I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I were able to play a part in bringing that about.

I should like to accept in principle—I am constantly advised by parliamentary counsel that there is always a better way of doing something than any mere hon. Member ever manages to put on the amendment paper——

Mr. Kaufman: I do not quarrel with what I think the Minister is about to say, but perhaps he, or one of his colleagues, will explain to us why, if parliamentary counsel are such superior draftspersons to the rest of us, the Government are having to use the Bill to make several more amendments to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Mellor: I seem to recall the right hon. Gentleman making a similar point when we were making our fourth attempt to get right certain arcane details of overseas forces disciplinary legislation. By the fourth attempt, I was beginning to run out of reasons.

I should like to accept in principle amendments Nos. 37, 41 and 43, which would remove any restrictions on the exercise of the full absent voting facilities in Northern Ireland. I undertake to bring forward on Report amendments to that end that meet with the approval of parliamentary counsel.

Another group of amendments among those under discussion would not make the arrangements in Great Britain and Northern Ireland the same, and I imagine that the right hon. Member for South Down will not wish to press those.

It is necessary to recognise, as I think we all do, that there is a bona fide reason for being troubled about how the new arrangements will work in practice, though we all hope that they will be trouble-free throughout the United Kingdom and especially in Northern Ireland. However, I hope that the Committee agrees that it would be appropriate to have provisions available in the legislation, which could readily be brought into force if, contrary to the expectations of Northern Ireland Members, there is substantial abuse.

It is important that, after appropriate consultation, the Government should have available a ready way of bringing into force restrictions that would enable the abuse to be corrected. Therefore, we shall wish later to table amendments to introduce a power for absent voters to be required to apply in person, with proof of identity. That power would be exercisable throughout the United Kingdom, or in any part of it. Of course, we hope that it would never be necessary to use it, but the power would be available and could be introduced by affirmative resolution.

7.15 pm

Secondly, we shall table an amendment to enable the Secretary of State to introduce special arrangements for Northern Ireland electors who would normally vote by post to vote in person at special polling stations under rules contained in a new schedule to the Bill. Again, we would not intend to introduce that power, which would also be subject to affirmative resolution, unless problems arose.

Those fail-safe devices have enabled us to assure our colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office that the mechanisms to which they rightly attach importance in other legislation will be maintained and that action will be taken speedily if our wishes and hopes are dashed and problems arise as a result of the widening of the availability of absent voting facilities.

The right hon. Member for South Down has also tabled amendments Nos. 47 to 49, and I think that I may be able to do more than he is asking for in those amendments. They cover a detailed subject, and I should like to go through the existing arrangements, the arrangements that the right hon. Gentleman proposes and the arrangements that we shall propose.

We are dealing with the proxy's right to apply for an absent vote at a particular election. He is exercising someone else's proxy, but cannot do it in person and, therefore, requires an absent vote.

The Bill gives proxies the right to vote by post at particular elections throughout the United Kingdom, but on a different basis for Great Britain and for Northern Ireland. Proxies in Northern Ireland may vote by post if they live in a different district ward from the voters who appointed them. British proxies may apply if they cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person.

The different treatment reflects the general difference in treatment of postal and proxy voting in the Bill. The amendments of the right hon. Member for South Down seek to allow all proxies throughout the United Kingdom to vote by post if they qualify under the present Northern Ireland position or under the Great Britain provision.

We wish to table on Report an amendment that will go further in the direction that the right hon. Member for South Down wishes to go. We shall introduce arrangements to allow all proxies throughout the United Kingdom to apply to vote by post at a particular election if they cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at the polling station allotted to the electors who appointed them. There will be a common rule throughout the United Kingdom, which I think will be helpful.

In addition, our amendment will allow proxies to apply for an indefinite period if they live in a different area from the electors who appointed them. That is intended to meet the needs of overseas electors and service voters, who cannot find a proxy in their own constituency, but find one elsewhere. I hope that our re-think is acceptable to the right hon. Member for South Down and his colleagues.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I am grateful, as, I am sure, is the Committee, to the Under-Secretary for his careful and measured statement.

I refer first to what the hon. Gentleman dealt with last. In principle, his proposal on amendments Nos. 47 to 49 is self-evidently both simpler than, and preferable to, what would have been the result of our amendments. Subject, therefore, to being able to consider them when they are tabled subsequently, I welcome those proposals. There is no question of my seeking to move the amendments today.

In regard to the major matter, I am grateful both to the Government, and to all others who have concurred with the Government, for restoring the elector in Northern Ireland to the same position as his opposite number in Great Britain. I wish only to allude to the qualifications which the Under-Secretary of State set out. I am sure he would not expect my hon. Friends or myself to offer a verdict on those without having been able to consider them in actual terms. Should we, after considering them, feel it necessary to register our opposition to the principle behind them, as we registered our opposition to the principle of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Bill earl er this Session, I am sure that would not be taken in derogation of the major agreement at which we have so happily arrived on the main point of substance.

The proposal to build into a United Kingdom Act of Parliament the means to vary its application in a part of the United Kingdom by affirmative order is not in itself something which is attractive to representatives of Northern Ireland nor, I think, could it be attractive to members of the Committee as a whole. We act upon the principle that we deal with the franchise by way of legislation and in no other way, and there is a degree of inconsistency in building into such legislation the power to deal with the franchise otherwise than by legislation. That contradiction is inherent in the treaty which has been arrived at between the Home Office and the Northern Ireland Office.

I know that Her Majesty's Government are one and indivisible—that is confirmed by an eloquent gesture on the part of the Home Secretary. There is no gap between one Department and another into which a man could insert the point of a pin. Nevertheless, there seemd to be a trace rather of the voice of the Northern Ireland Office than of the Home Office in certain parts of what the Under-Secretary of State had to say on the amendments. My hon. Friends and I, while reserving the right to restate our objection when the proposals are brought forward and to put forward other considerations in relation to them when we can study them, are happy to accept the major assurance that has been given.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 39, in page 10, line 12, at end insert

'and, in respect of a Parliamentary general election, that he cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at the polling station allotted or likely to be allotted to him under the appropriate rules in any other Parliamentary constituency in which he is eligible to vote in Parliamentary elections.'.

The effect of clause 7 and other clauses is to widen eligibility for postal and proxy votes. That has been the theme of many of the debates on specific aspects. More people will be entitled to postal and proxy votes. In general, I support that principle. I have sought to qualify it only in particular respects, another of which will come up in the next group of amendments.

One area where the extension of postal votes has a bearing concerns those who have multiple registration in several constituencies. This is not the amendment on which I would seek to address myself to the general issue of whether people should be able to have votes in several parliamentary constituencies. The question that arises on this amendment is simply whether the ease of postal votes

will make it easier for them to transfer their votes at will between the several constituencies in which they may be registered.

When I addressed the Parliamentary Under-Secretary by letter on the broader issue of multiple registration, he replied on 14 May 1984—an illustration of how long these discussions have been going on—in these terms:

"an elector registered twice may not, as you say in your seventh paragraph, 'transfer votes at will between constituencies'. In general, he has to vote in the constituency where he is physically present on polling day."

The effect of the extension of postal votes is to remove the presumption that in general the elector has to vote in the constituency where he is physically present on polling day. One cannot say that that general restraint applies to the person registered in several places when all he has to do to obtain a postal vote is to indicate that he cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at the polling station allotted to him. There is no presumption there that he will have to vote in the place in which he is physically present.

The bearing of the extension of postal votes upon multiple registration will not merely be to make it easier, for example, for those who have holiday homes but whose place of work is some distance away, to register for a postal vote. It will also, of course, make it easier for their wives, and any other members of the family who lay claim upon that as one of the places in which they are registered to vote, to apply for postal votes. The test is so much broader than before that it will be relatively easy to indicate that there are reasonable grounds why one cannot vote at a particular polling station in a particular constituency.

I hope the Minister will consider this carefully. I submit that it was never part of his intention in widening postal votes to enable someone to say—I hope the Minister will not be distracted by the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) because I am addressing a detailed point—that, because he is resident on polling day in another constituency in which he is also registered, he should thereby be entitled to a postal vote in the first of the constituencies in which he is registered. If someone is able to vote in another constituency in which he is registered, I do not think that the privilege of having the postal vote should be extended to him.

The object of extending postal votes was to make it easier for people who would not otherwise be able to vote to do so. The greatest motivation for extending postal votes was to assist people on holiday because many people have been disfranchised. That is not the case when someone has a house in the Lake District and a house in London and whose reason for not voting in the Lake District is that he has, for no particular reason, decided to be present in London, where he is also registered to vote.

I do not think that it was ever the Minister's intention to facilitate the switching of votes at will between several constituencies in which people are registered. If I did not think that it was not his intention I might be charging him with attempting to behave partially on the presumption that there might be more people owning houses in several constituencies who could thereby apply for votes at will between several constituencies. The decision to switch votes between constituencies can be highly political if one constituency is marginal and one has a safe majority for the party that the voter wishes to support. Multiple registration confers upon some voters a much greater freedom to use their votes where they think they would be most effective.

We shall argue later whether other considerations justify that, but it is no part of the purpose of extending postal votes to make it easier for people to switch votes at will, otherwise the Minister would not have written to me as he did, saying:

"In general a voter has to vote in the constituency where he is physically present on polling day."

Therefore, I ask the Minister to consider carefully the arguments I have put in support of the amendment. If we do not do something about this, the extension of postal votes will be put to a purpose for which it was not intended.

7.30 pm

Mr. Winnick: I am not persuaded by the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). As he admitted, on most occasions he argues in favour of extending the right to postal votes. We must wonder whether the motive behind the amendment is self-interest on the part of the Liberal party and the SDP.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Has my hon. Friend noticed that SDP Members have not attended today's debate? Nor did they attend Second Reading.

Mr. Winnick: I expect that that is because there is no publicity mileage in today's debate. Therefore, SDP Members have no reason to be present. I am sure that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed privately agrees with me.

We should hesitate to remove a right unless we are persuaded that there is widespread abuse of it. I doubt that the hon. Gentleman could show such abuse, or give any good reasons for changing the present system. The categories of people who, under present regulations, are entitled to register in a number of constituencies are well known to hon. Members.

If students are at college when an election is held, currently they can apply for a postal vote at their home address on the ground they cannot get to the polling station because of their studies. Similarly, if an election is called when the college is on vacation and the student has, perhaps, found part-time employment, he can apply for a postal vote at his college address. I see no reason why that practice should not continue. There is certainly no evidence of widespread abuse.

I am surprised that the Liberal party wants to introduce such a restriction—it is somewhat illiberal. There must be far greater evidence of abuse before we agree to a change that will harm a number of people who currently register in a number of constituencies. At the end of the day, they are entitled to only one vote, and that is an important point to remember. Simply because they are registered in a number of constituencies does not give them more rights than other citizens. The hon. Gentleman is really objecting to the fact that someone can decide whether to vote in one constituency or another. Perhaps the Liberal party believes that that is not in its interests.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman should talk to members of the Labour party in such areas as the Lake District, the coastal areas of eastern England, constituencies such as those formerly represented by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson),

[Mr. Beith]

Cornwall, Devon and many others where the Labour party has argued strongly that the right conferred by multiple registration is one that accrues especially to those who own several properties.

Mr. Winnick: I stand by my remarks. I believe that the Labour party will oppose the amendment. The hon. Gentleman objects to the fact that a person has a choice. I see no reason to change the present system.

Mr. William Powell: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has introduced a jarring note into our debate. For some hours we have proceeded on the basis of wide agreement among all parties on the principles and on how they should be put into effect by the Bill. The hon. Gentleman has introduced a substantial and important measure of disagreement. It is a jarring note in what has otherwise been a most impressive and satisfactory discussion of the issues.

I have been conscious that the Rockingham Whigs have been in situ and I have been waiting for their contribution — almost trying to tempt them into a measure of disagreement. Alas, that has not happened.

Two factors underlie the amendment. As the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said in his admirable contribution, we are talking about the principle that a person should be allowed to cast only one vote. I am sure that that principle will find universal acceptance in the Committee. However, we live in a world where, because it is not possible to introduce substantial changes to our registers between the dates on which they are drawn up, it is necessary to allow people to register in more than one place. It is legitimate, even satisfactory, that, for example, students should vote either at their university or at their home. It would be wrong for the Bill to withdraw that right. Other groups are also exceptions to the general rule that persons should be registered in only one place. We should not seek to limit the opportunities of students and other people to register where it is convenient.

Wherever possible, voting should be in person. However, there must be exceptions to that, and we are enlarging those exceptions in the Bill. However, the fundamental principle should remain that people vote in person. If a massive number of people voted by post at every election votes might be cast fraudulently on behalf of people who were dead or who had left the country.

As I have, alas, had occasion to say from time to time, we live in a age where there is a more mobile population —people move house more often. The turnover on the electoral roll is, perhaps, higher than it is has been at any time. Estimates for the electoral roll about to come into operation in my constituency show that there has been a 12 per cent. turnover in the electorate since the last electoral roll came into operation a year ago. I should think that a turnover figure of between 8 per cent. and 12 per cent. would be typical of what is happening in the southern part of the country.

There is an enormous movement of population going on all the time, with people moving not just from one street to another in the same community but from one part of the nation to another. People move from, say, Yorkshire to Northamptonshire; some who are dissatisfied with their representation in Northamptonshire move to Yorkshire, where they know that an admirable representation is available to them.

Until we make provision for people, when they move, to change their electoral registration from one constituency to another—we shall not do that in this measure—it is necessary to preserve those exceptions that exist, as outlined by the hon. Member for Walsall, North, in our law. They are necessary until we are able to develop what might otherwise be called a rolling register. The principal defect of the Bill is that we are not making provision for a rolling register, but I will not develop that theme now. I have no doubt that it would be wise for the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I do not see the need for the clause, which seems to deny one the freedom to vote, in the constituency of one's choice, one of our last rights which we value greatly—*[Interruption.]* People will be eligible to vote in only one nominated place instead of in more than one.

I say that because I am particularly concerned about those at university, who are, rightly, on the registers near their universities and colleges, and, equally, are on the registers in the constituencies of their parents homes. They should have the opportunity to nominate in which one they will vote.

I have read the amendment nine times and still find difficulty in understanding it. Our main concern should be the reliability and accuracy of the electoral register. As my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) pointed out, the new registers are due out shortly. Checking them carefully will be the best way of avoiding fraud—for example, the fraud of people claiming to represent people they do not represent.

I have previously alleged in Parliament that in certain constituencies people have tended to vote more than once. There is a motto, "Vote early, vote often." That concerns me greatly, and that is why I am in favour of giving people more opportunity to vote in person.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Corby said, many people move about the country. They should be entitled to vote in the constituency either in which they formerly lived or in which they pay rates. Whether or not rates are important in relation to the subject under discussion, a person who pays rates should have a vote.

We must do all that we can to avoid fraud being committed—of people voting more than once. To that end, amendment No. 39 is strangely worded and, I should have thought, unnecessary. It is unfair that university students should suddenly be denied the opportunity to vote in the constituencies in which they are based.

I have counted 36 constituencies with smaller majorities than mine.

Mr. William Powell: I hope that my hon. Friend has not left out Erdington and Wrexham.

Mr. Bruinvels: There is no doubt that, in such circumstances, the postal vote can play a vital part in deciding who and which party is returned.

Mr. Beith: Could that be why the speech which one usually hears from the hon. Member who normally occupies the place from which the hon. Gentleman is speaking — the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman)—is in precisely opposite terms to the speech that the hon. Gentleman is making? The hon. Member for Lancaster has frequently argued for the abolition of multiple registration.

Nothing in the amendment would deprive any student, or anybody else, of the right to register in more than one place. It would simply not grant the right to exercise a postal vote merely on the basis that the person concerned had to be in the other place in which he was also registered to vote.

Mr. Bruinvels: I cannot be expected to answer for my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), whether she speaks today or tomorrow, from wherever she speaks. I try my best to represent the views of my constituents, to put what I believe to be the right view from these Benches and to speak in accordance with my conscience.

The second part of that intervention by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was patronising. A university student in the position that I described should have the right to vote. Other than saying that, I shall not be led down what I regard as a suspicious road which does not bear on the subject under discussion.

We are discussing the whole issue of the right to vote and the need to ensure that an absent vote is used properly. Part of that right includes one's freedom to vote in whatever constituency one chooses. Our main concern must be to ensure that nobody votes more than once in any election. For that reason, I cannot support the amendment.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I appreciate the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and others about the need to ensure that people who have legitimate cause to have addresses in different places should be allowed to vote. That includes students and those who, in the course of their work, have two genuinely different addresses at which they live. In that event, they should be permitted to vote in one of them.

7.45 pm

I have some sympathy with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) in relation to the holiday home factor. In my constituency, people have holiday homes in some of the attractive seaside villages. We know of people—generally Conservatives, I suspect —who are resident in safe Tory seats elsewhere, but who register themselves as voters in the coastal villages of my constituency where their holiday homes are situated. To add insult to injury, they do not even turn up to cast their votes at the local polling station, but claim postal votes. In the event, most of them have wasted their time, because the boundary commissions have made that activity a futile gesture. However, it was an irritant in its time.

I do not see why legislation should allow people who have the privilege of a holiday home in another area to select tactically which is the most advantageous constituency in which to vote. That abuse goes on in some areas, including, no doubt, the west country and parts of Scotland and Wales.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has raised a legitimate point which should be distinguished from the aspect relating to students, who have a legitimate reason to live for a large part of the year at the location of their university. Accordingly, they should be able to vote there.

Sir John Farr: I regret what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said. He is a nice person and I have known him a long time. It is totally alien to his nature and open character for him to move such a suspicious amendment. I know that the hon. Gentleman is tackling the problem in a hopeless way.

My constituency includes the eight or nine large halls of Leicester university at Oadby. A few elections ago there was thought to be a polling irregularity. The matter was taken to court, and eventually we went to the High Court. The agents of the other two parties and I, together with the county executive at the court, had the authority to inspect the electoral register for the wards in Oadby where the Leicester university students voted. At that time there were about 4,600 people on the register. Remarkably—this proves my confidence in the natural honesty of people in Leicestershire and proves also the error of the path taken by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed — although polling day was a Thursday and the university was in session, only one in 10 people on the roll voted in Harborough.

Students do not waste their votes. I had no way of telling, other than by talking to the students a week or two later, where their votes had gone. All those to whom I talked said they had gone home to vote. There was nothing suspicious about that. We had the privilege of examining the votes cast by the people on the register for the wards in Oadby, and only about one in 10 of the students voted in my constituency. Nationally, at least 70 per cent. of the students turned out to vote. Therefore, one can assume that 90 per cent. of those who voted did so from their homes or by postal vote.

I regret the fact that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has introduced this amendment. Apart from the sheer cost of establishing a centralised electoral register so that the checking of multiple registrations can be carried out effectively, I must point out that the whole idea verges on the fantastic and seems to come from never-never-land.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed is typical of other Liberals I have met outside the House. They are all nice people and have the best of intentions, but they do not amount to much when it comes to the count.

Mr. Mellor: The evening becomes more entertaining as it goes on. The point made by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is perfectly legitimate. Whether multiple registration should be permitted is plainly an issue. The hon. Gentleman is addressing a consequence of multiple registration, but he is fully entitled to introduce into the argument the fact that it is consistent to object, as the hon. Gentleman and a number of others do, to multiple registration and to argue that the manifestation of multiple registration, which gives a voter a choice of constituencies in which to vote, should not be permitted. Although I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman, I accept the internal logic of his argument and believe that he has a perfectly sensible point of view. One cannot say that the arguments go totally one way.

I believe that it is not inappropriate that we should stick by the test that has been established for so long—one may register in a constituency where the address has a substantial degree of permanence. It follows that some people will manage to establish, to the satisfaction of the ERO, that they have in more than one place an address that has a substantial degree of permanence. I am not sure whether many people are registered in more than two places, but I understand that there are objections to people being registered in more than one place. Some of those

[Mr. Mellor]

objections are derived from principle and some from a light coating of principle and a feeling that party disadvantage will be involved. I understand that.

We have all been in politics for many years. We have all been introduced to party professionals and others who have myths about the effects of various electoral rules on various parties. On looking at the swings and roundabouts of the various people who are registered in more than one constituency, I dare say that there is no more likely to be party advantage in such registration than there is in having polling hours between 9 am and 10 pm, as Dr. David Butler asserts. I know that many people think that there are advantages and disadvantages.

I do not believe that a feasible or practical way has been devised to make it a practical proposition to prevent multiple registration. I do not think that multiple registration is objectionable, provided the substantial degree of permanence test is satisfied and provided that the person concerned exercises his franchise in only one place.

If people have a stake in a community they are entitled to exercise their vote. One would not need to live in East Lothian very long to realise that one had a sufficient stake in the community not to want to be represented by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). If I had a holiday home in his constituency — not being a landowner like him I do not run two holiday homes—I dare say that I would be driven irresistibly to that conclusion. It is difficult to establish tests.

Mr. Corbett: He has a flat in Putney.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman might have several flats in Putney. When one asks whether a person's degree of permanence in one place is greater than his degree of permanence in another place one introduces complications and justiciable issues of a kind that would make what should be the relatively simple process of registering to vote a difficult process.

Even if one accepts multiple registration, to hedge it with the type of restrictions that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed seeks to impose in his amendment would be complicated. The hon. Gentleman made the point—I can see where that point springs from—that multiple registration could be seen as facilatating the exercise of a vote by a person who would not physically be in the constituency at the time of the election. It would be likely to facilitate his vote in an area where his degree of permanence was less than in the other place where he was registered. I understand why the hon. Gentleman said that. Surprisingly, the answer to that point was given by the hon. Member for East Lothian who, in an aside, made the revealing point that many people who have holiday homes in his constituency have the temerity not to be in the constituency on polling day when the dreadful opportunity arises to vote in person for him. Nevertheless, such people obtain a postal vote so that they can vote against him from a convenient distance where they are safe from his wrath. That reveals the essential truth of this situation.

It is not only in East Lothian where there is a particularly good reason to try to get a vote in elections, but in many other constituencies. Someone who was once on the register but is also registered at an address elsewhere can obtain a postal vote by applying for such a vote in the constituency in which he will not be on polling day by stating that he will not be physically present on the grounds of change of residence. Technically speaking, he may still be resident at the other address, but if he applies for a postal vote on change of address grounds he is not required to produce any evidence that he is no longer resident at the qualifying address, and the registration officer has no means of investigating the matter. Therefore, in practice, registration officers grant postal voting applications on the grounds of change of residence on demand. That is the reason why I do not think that the change that we are making will, in practical terms, significantly increase the number of people who are registered in more than one place obtaining a postal vote to facilitate their voting in the constituency in which they will not physically be on polling day.

8 pm

In any event, if one accepts, as I do, that there is a case for multiple registration, one is not entitled to hang around the neck of that any inhibitions upon the individual casting his vote in the constituency where it seems to him, for a diversity of reasons, most appropriate to do so. Actually stopping him from doing so would be difficult. Let us say that, as well as having my residence in Putney, I borrowed some money from the hon. Member for East Lothian, who probably has a lot of it around ready for such needy causes, and purchased a holiday home on his estate. I suspect that there are some nice dells and fields on his estate where one could build a convenient cottage. Being an unpleasant person, I might be determined once I got there to vote against him, and I could be impeded by the fact that Parliament had had the lack of wisdom to accept the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. It would still be difficult for the returning officer in East Lothian to test my assertion that I was not capable of voting in Putney, where I was resident, and therefore had to have a postal vote for East Lothian.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed accepts that if one is able to demonstrate that one is incapable of voting in person at either of the constituencies in which one is registered one is then entitled to decide in which one one would cast one's vote. How does the returning officer for East Lothian react? He is perhaps, also living on the hon. Gentleman's estate, is beholden to him and therefore does not wish to facilitate postal voting in the constituency because he realises that, as I am obviously an intelligent man, I shall not be casting my vote for the hon. Member. However, it would be difficult to show that I would not be capable of voting in Putney, whereas he might have a chance when dealing with East Lothian.

For all those reasons, I hope that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will not press his amendment.

Mr. Beith: I can relieve the Minister of one problem. Were he to obtain a delightful residence on the estate of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), he would find himself in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), not that of the hon. Member for East Lothian. The Minister might then feel even more strongly that he would wish to change his residence on party grounds. However, that is not what we are talking about.

This amendment, as I sought to argue at the beginning, is not an excuse for an argument about whether there should be multiple registration. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) seemed to be saying that, but in doing so he overlooked the fact that, when the

Labour party gave its evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs, it said, in words that brook of no misinterpretation:

"The Labour party would support a change in the law to outlaw multiple registration."

The silence from the Labour Front Bench, which is occupied by one of the members of the Select Committee and one who listened to that evidence, seems to suggest embarrassment. No one wishes openly to contradict the hon. Member for Walsall, North, but his is clearly not the view of the Labour party. I agree with those hon. Members who say that it is difficult to know which Labour party one is speaking about. Walworth road was clear in its view, and this view is supported by at least one occupant of the Opposition Front Bench.

The Minister produced one genuine technical objection to the amendment, which I recognise. That is the legitimate change of residence case, which gives rise to a technical difficulty if the amendment is passed in its present form. Where I do not agree with him in the change of residence case is in his apparent implication that the sort of people to whom he referred would readily use a change of residence basis to secure the vote that they wanted if they were otherwise precluded by this amendment. He implied that people would keep saying that they had changed their London home to their country residence one year and back again the next, each time so that they could obtain a vote. Conservative Members are at one stage saying that we are dealing with people who are scrupulous, fair and honest and the next minute that we are dealing with people who are imagined to engage in the most dubious procedures.

There is nothing suspicious about the wording of the amendment, which sets out a test to be put to the person applying for a postal vote. Like many other things in the test for a postal vote in the Bill, it places a considerable onus and trust on the applicant and gives the returning officer fairly limited opportunities to check what is being set before him. This is the case in general when applying for a postal vote, which is why I shall seek to probe the matter in the next group of amendments, because we are taking a great deal on trust.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman will find in the regulations that the returning officer will have more power to refuse and a better basis for doing so, because the reason why a person states that he will not be available to vote in person on the day will have to be clearly stated, and it will have to be countersigned by another person. We have yet to determine who that person should be and whether there should be any limit on those who can countersign. For the first time, there is a penal sanction. People will put themselves at risk of appearing in court if they say something that is demonstrably false.

Mr. Beith: The Minister is unlocking his treasure chest in advance. These are the jewels that should be brought out when we come to consider on a later amendment what sort of counter-signature should feature in the Bill or the regulations. In these electoral matters, people are taken on trust to some extent and are asked to make certain assertions. That is the only reasonable way to proceed.

Conservative Members have several times suggested that there would be no way in which one could check on the extent of multiple registrations, or about applications for postal votes from those registered in more than one place. If that is so, they were talking glibly about dual voting. If there is no way to check anything in multiple registration, there is no way to establish that somebody is voting twice. That is the weakness in our system, and the Minister needs to pay some attention to what should be done about this.

In a number of parts of the country, attempts are made by the parties to establish whether voting twice is taking place, but the process is difficult. I think that the parties have gone further than the formal machinery of the returning officers has done to check whether double voting is taking place. I believe that double voting occurs very rarely. I should be surprised to find that it happens at all. However, we do not know, and the absence of any way to check some of these things is not something that I would hold up as a virtue of the system or as something from which we should step back and on which we should admit defeat and accept that nothing should be done. Dual voting is the kind of electoral offence against which we should have some protection and some check.

I have been criticised for talking about this amendment in rather broad partisan terms. Hon. Members have short memories. I opened the debate in the narrowest sense and sought to present a logical case about the way in which postal voting should be circumscribed. Scarcely an hon. Member who has spoken has not said something containing at least as much partisan interest in the matter as anything that I might have expressed. One has only to go to some of the constituencies that I know and see the extent to which potential second-home postal voters are circulating to encourage their application for a second vote to realise that there is substantial partisan interest in this.

Both the Conservative and Labour parties, when giving evidence to the Select Committee, accepted that there was a problem and that multiple registration should be ended. We should confront multiple registration when we come to that part of the Bill which deals with it. Postal voting is a narrower issue. There is a technical objection to the amendment but it could be overcome by redrafting.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 40, in page 10, line 16, at end insert—

'*(d)* the applicant has supplied to the returning officer a certificate of the relevant circumstances which has been countersigned by a Member of Parliament, Justice of the Peace, Minister of Religion, lawyer, bank officer, established civil servant, school teacher, police officer, doctor or a person of similar standing known personally to the applicant for at least two years.'.

This is a probing amendment to enable the Minister to tell us more about the regulations. The purpose of the amendment is to provide a system of countersignature. The amendment sets out the people who should be allowed to do the countersigning. The list is familiar because it is the same as that for signing passport applications. Hon. Members must have signed many such applications. It is by no means the end of the road in terms of what should be in the bill or the regulations and it is probably best to deal with the matter in regulations.

The Bill amends the "prescribed requirements" for an absent vote. Schedule 1(7) provides:

"Provision as to the evidence which shall or may be required, or be deemed sufficient or conclusive evidence, in connection with a person's application to vote by proxy or to vote by post as elector or as proxy."

The new requirements may include countersigning, but we do not yet know how extensive the change will be.

It is necessary to hedge postal voting with some checks and limitations for all the reasons already advanced. A

[Mr. David Mellor]

I endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). That was a major operation, carried out successfully because of the happy chance that the polling station at which those people voted is a modern community centre which had been built with the disabled in mind. Although there were considerable difficulties in getting the severely handicapped people to the polling station, once they were there they were able to vote with relative ease. There are other polling stations in my constituency and in other constituencies where that would not have been possible. We have rightly been addressing our minds to the consideration of how we can make the position easier.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): My hon. Friend has talked about the desirable accuracy of the electoral register. He mentioned the regrettable incident which occurred in his constituency at the last election. Similar incidents occurred in other constituencies. On page 7 the White Paper recommends a form of computerisation:

"All authorities should be encouraged and if necessary assisted to install and to use modern technology to ensure the accuracy of their ERs."

I am sure that would meet with the approval of my hon. Friend. Therefore, would not he think it a good idea that a new clause to that effect should be debated later?

Mr. Mellor: That is a different point. The point I was making was not that they were not on the register but that their applications for postal votes had gone astray. It is part of our policy — most of this should be done administratively — to try to ensure that modern administrative equipment is used in one of the most difficult jobs that people in town halls have to do— ensuring that the register is properly compiled and accurately maintained. A great deal of work has been done, including seminars with electoral registration officers on, for instance, enabling more members of minority communities to be registered. We have been making a determined effort, following the report on the extent of inaccuracies in the register, to improve it. I hope we shall be seen to be successful.

Facilitating the exercise of the franchise in person by the disabled has considerably concerned my right hon. and learned Friend. When he was Minister of State at the Home Office for the first two years of the last Parliament, he had responsibility for the job that I now do—special responsibility for electoral law. As a result of his initiative, a circular was issued in 1981 advising returning officers that the Treasury would meet half the cost of portable ramps to help electors in wheelchairs enter polling stations. The other half of the cost would be paid by the local authority. That circular has not, perhaps, been as widely noted as it could have been, and I am glad to emphasise its existence today. That was a significant step in the right direction, although not all disabled people require wheelchairs. That initiative recognised the financial implications; we would like more local authorities to take up that provision, and perhaps hon. Members could remind their returning officers of it.

Without widening the debate unreasonably, I want to say that the Government have a general policy, which they have sought to follow with thoroughness, to improve access to buildings for the disabled. The Department of Health and Social Security has set up committees to investigate in detail access to public buildings. In a trail-blazing clause, the Secretary of State for the Environment inserted in a piece of legislation in 1970 a requirement that new buildings should be constructed with access for the disabled. That represented a material step forward.

The difficulty faced by returning officers is that they must have a polling station within each polling district. They must use the facilities available, many of which are schools built in an era before the interests of the disabled were paramount. To some extent, those buildings can be adapted for access by the use of ramps. Certainly returning officers should not gratuitously seek to make the plight of the disabled more difficult by, for example, placing a polling station on the second floor of a building when it would be just as simple to place it on the ground floor. If there is a choice of building, the building chosen should be the one that provides easiest access for the disabled, people with heart conditions and those who have difficulty in climbing stairs. We hope that exhortation alone will achieve that aim. Certainly the Government have been playing their part in that.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I feel that a case has been made today for a provision similar to that in new clause 13, which would require returning officers to have regard to the needs of disabled electors before designating a polling station. It is no criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter to say that I cannot accept his new clause lock, stock and barrel, because it has been prepared without the advice of parliamentary counsel. However, if I say that I am minded to bring forward an amendment on Report, I hope that he will feel that he has done a useful and worthwhile job in raising the issue today. In the face of such widespread agreement, it would be curmudgeonly of the Government not to do so, especially in view of the commitment to the issue that we have demonstrated over a number of years.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is my hon. Friend aware that polling often takes place at schools where the remainder of the school functions as normal? In one part of my constituency, a polling station was designated at the back of the school in an outbuilding. What would be my hon. Friend's guidance in such a case, as the school obviously continues to function throughout polling day? Can guidance be given to returning officers to place the polling station in a classroom at the front of the school so that the disabled do not have to try to reach the rear of the building to vote?

5.15 pm

Mr. Mellor: The proposition embraced in new clause 13 would place returning officers under an obligation to make the best possible arrangements for disabled voters. It is then a matter for those concerned locally with the matter to make representations if they think that that rule is not being followed.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Any instructions given to returning officers must filter down to the presiding officers, who often choose the sites in the buildings for booths and ballot boxes. The Minister, with his usual courtesy and sympathy, will no doubt accept that point. We must ensure that the polling station is placed in the most accessible part of the building.

Mr. Mellor: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Any duty placed on returning officers will also be a duty

on their staff, and that would include presiding officers. The returning officers must ensure that the presiding officers do not take decisions contrary to the duties laid upon them. These are very local matters, which is why I stress again that, although we can lay a framework placing an obligation on returning officers, it is the people in the locality who must act on any suggestion that that obligation is being breached by insensitive placing of polling stations.

I share some of the reservations expressed by the hon. Member for Battersea about amendment No. 32. I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his place on the Opposition Front Bench. I have teased him a little that his services on the Select Committee have caused him to be put into purdah on this Bill. The invisible export of his hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) to Sri Lanka has brought the hon. Gentleman to the Front Bench. However, I gather that his hon. Friend is due to return.

We must ensure that the polling station is made as accessible as possible for the disabled and I believe that considerable strides forward can be made in that direction. The difficulty with making arrangements for the disabled to vote at polling stations other than their own is that it cuts across what was eloquently described by the hon. Member for Caernarfon, when he said that the disabled want to exercise their franchise rights in as normal a way as possible. Obviously, to go to someone else's polling station is abnormal. To accept that would be almost an admission that we cannot make the overwhelming majority of polling stations accessible for the disabled.

Since 1887, those working at the polling stations on election day have had the right to vote in polling stations other than their home station. It is an informal arrangement because it does not rely on there being a printed list of the people available at the polling station at which they cast their vote. They are placed on trust—if they cast their vote in one polling station they will not then go to their home polling station and cast again. I am not suggesting that disabled people would take the opportunity offered by amendment No. 32 to cast their vote twice. But as there is no structure within which to take wider than the limited application — applying to police officers, presiding officers, staff and so on—the right to vote at another polling station, it would be difficult to make an extension without building in some kind of administrative infrastructure which might be more trouble that it would be worth.

I suggest that, having made progress by common consent in the direction of the sentiments expressed in new clause 13, we leave amendment No. 32 for the moment in the hope that the accessibility of the individual's polling station might be so improved that we shall not need to look at the necessity to go further and adopt the alternative scheme that amendment No. 32 suggests.

Mr. Bermingham: Will the Minister agree that the number of persons involved in the suggestion embodied in amendment No. 32 would be small, so that there would not be the degree of administrative difficulty that he foresees? We are thinking of a limited number of cases, such as that of my friend whose nearest polling station is only 70 yards distant but is in a different polling district. Under the scheme proposed in the amendment, the polling station would be nominated at the time of application. Thus, few of the difficulties to which the Minister referred would arise. Perhaps the hon. Gentlemen will give the matter more thought between now and Report, and I shall write him on the subject.

Mr. Mellor: I always take the hon. Gentleman seriously and will consider anything about which he writes to me. We have made such progress in the direction of improvements in relation to what one might term the home polling station that I am not sure that I shall be likely to change my mind about amendment No. 32, and I hope that I carry hon. Members with me in uttering a word of caution about that amendment.

I hope that it has been abundantly demonstrated in our debates on the Bill generally that we are interested in trying to carry as wide a consensus as possible on the proposals that are being made about the rules by which we get to this place and by which a great many more do not get here.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Battersea focused on new clause 33 because it embraces an important concept. Because of the adminstrative difficulties of arranging absent voting, an application for an absent vote must be in on the Wednesday, two weeks and one day before polling day, on the assumption one always makes that polling day is on a Thursday.

Because of the considerable widening of the availability of absent votes under the Bill, we thought it right to say —my right hon. and learned Friend said it in the debate on the White Paper — that we intended to make arrangements by which applications for postal votes would close on the Monday, two weeks and three days before polling day.

We recognise that that two weeks and three days is a considerable time, during which, in the normal course of events, some people will fall ill or be admitted to hospital and that a number of people will lose the ability to go to the polls in person without having the entitlement to obtain absent voting facilities.

It has been represented to us by hon. Members in all parts of the Committee, and formally by the Opposition, that it would be appropriate to make arrangements by which procedures could be introduced to allow people taken ill during that period to have a chance to apply later for absent voting facilities, be it in respect of a postal vote or, as is proposed in new clause 33, by proxy.

The Government have been looking at this issue since we embarked on the process of consultation on the Bill. We consulted the political parties and local authority associations at an early stage on a proposal to give the registration officer a discretion to accept late applications in those circumstances.

The local authority associations were unenthusiastic about the extra work that it would cause them. However, I am not sure that the case for taking action is not sufficiently compelling to hon. Members for it to be appropriate to take the matter back to the local authority associations and say that it is the will of Parliament that some change be made in that direction.

There will remain a live issue as to what the cut-off point should be for that; plainly, it could not be allowed right up to polling day. There would have to be a few days before polling day when anyone then taken ill would lose the right to vote. I believe that I carry the Committee with me in saying that it would be right to try to move the deadline markedly forward for those taken ill or admitted to hospital.

[Mr. Mellor]

We can do that without adding anything to the face of the Bill. While I appreciate that the new clause was tabled as a way of enabling the matter to be considered, the hon. Member for Battersea will appreciate that the matter could be dealt with by way of regulations. If I give an undertaking that, on having further consultations with the parties and local authority associations on when the cut-off point should be, we shall put new arrangements in regulations, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not press the new clause, having achieved the purpose which he had in mind.

Mr. Dubs *indicated assent.*

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): There is a distinction between putting the cut-off date nearer to polling day and making different arrangements for those who, between whatever is the cut-off date and polling day, still might qualify. We shall have to reflect on the Minister's statement. In the meantime, will he agree that, from the point of view of those engaged in an election, the cut-off date, though much too early at present — experience at the last election reinforced that view in many people's minds—is of considerable importance, as all sorts of procedures related to communication with the electors hang on that date? There were, therefore, two distinct propositions wrapped up in what the Minister said.

Mr. Mellor: That is why we shall take further views before making any announcement about regulations. As the right hon. Gentleman says, these are significant points, and we do not want to create difficulties elsewhere by moving towards a means of enfranchising the limited number of people—an important section of the community—who fall ill in that period. They would need to be different arrangements from those that would apply before the main cut-off point, which, for the administrative reasons that I have given, must be longer before polling day than most of us, as practising candidates, would ever have wished.

On the basis that this has been a useful debate and that the main thrust of the points has gone home or will be acted on by the Government, I hope that my hon. Friend will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Hannam: The Committee is grateful to my hon. Friend for the manner in which he responded to the debate and for his acceptance of the principle involved, which is to try to enable disabled people to vote in person rather than by any other means. To win two out of three is a good record in any debate, and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

ABSENT VOTE AT ELECTIONS FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move amendment No. 35, in page 9, line 17, after 'keep', insert 'and supply to each of the candidates nominated in the constituency.'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 45, in clause 7, page 11, line 8, after 'keep', insert 'and supply to each of the candidates nominated in the constituency.'.

Mr. Beith: The Under-Secretary of State responded helpfully to the points made in the last group of amendments, and I hope that he did so in a spirit of improving the Bill and accepting the sensible suggestions that will prevail in our discussions. There are many sensible suggestions on the Amendment Paper from me and my hon. Friends. I have no doubt that the consideration will proceed apace on that basis.

Amendment No. 35 is a probing amendment because what it seeks to do will — if it is done properly — be done in regulations. One matter that was common to both sides of the argument when we discussed the extension of the postal vote was the importance of the candidate being able to address the voters. If there is to be a considerable extension of postal voting, as envisaged in the Bill, it is important that candidates should have the information that is necessary to enable them to address the voters. The essential part of that information is the list of voters and the place to which that information can be sent. It is already the practice—this is enshrined in the regulations made under the Representation of the People Act 1983 — that returning officers supply candidates free of charge with a copy of the list of absent voters. The Bill significantly changes the law on postal voting. No doubt, the regulations will be modified as a consequence of this legislation. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that candidates have the right to obtain as expeditiously as possible and free of charge a list of absent voters.

The discussion at the conclusion of our debate on the last series of amendments underlined the need to convey all that information to the canndidates, including late additions to the list of absent voters which might be made under more generous provisions to enable people to register as absent voters at a later stage. That information must be made available to the candidates with the utmost speed, and the regulations should make it clear that that should be done. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will give us that assurance.

5.30 pm

Dr. Marek: This is a probing amendment because its provisions will be covered under regulations. If this legislation is passed, many more people will receive postal votes. It has been estimated that up to 30 per cent. of votes could be postal votes. That is why we have to examine this measure seriously.

Until now the postal vote register has been of some interest, but it will be of much greater interest in future to all the candidates and political parties. If possible, I should like the electoral registration officer to have a running list so that between elections political parties and, during elections, candidates, can be supplied as quickly as possible with a current printout of the absent voters list. That is an important point.

Electoral registration officers in some parts of the country have the habit of including in the list the names of electors in previous years, even though they have no idea whether those electors are still in the area. I believe that there will be increased possibilities for illegal voting if many postal vote applications are sent out to voters and are not picked up but are left lying around letterboxes. I do not believe that this is the time to discuss these aspects in detail, because I believe that they will be considered later in the Bill. I look forward to a helpful reply from the Government.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I am surprised that these amendments have been tabled. All of us who have been

candidates for election know that a full list of absent voters is available in the committee room. I am, therefore, surprised to find that that measure needs to be recorded in this legislation. Every candidate has a right to obtain that list. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) hinted at the need for a more accurate list, and I sympathise with his wish. It is important to keep that list up to date. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) indicated in an amendment which has not been selected that changing the list by using a computer would be the most helpful way of keeping the list up to date. It is sufficient for there to be trust in us as candidates and lists on which we can rely. I shall certainly not support either of the amendments.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): The amendments raise two fundamental principles, which go to the heart of the Bill. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) touched on those principles. For once I am delighted to agree with the points made by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) in his short contribution.

Mr. Forth: Uncharacteristically short.

Mr. Powell: One of those fundamental issues is the accuracy of the register. The purpose of these probing amendments is to ensure that the list is as accurate as possible. Substantial criticisms have been made about the inaccuracy of the registers. Unfortunately, I am afraid that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is not prepared to go far enough in ensuring that the registers are as accurate as possible. The Bill contains a defect because there is not sufficient provision to improve what has been widely held to be a substantial weakness in our present system.

These modest amendments should be supported in so far as they aim to improve the accuracy of the register. One criticism made by the hon. Member for Wrexham, which has been voiced repeatedly during our debates from the time we first discussed the White Paper—no one has been more eloquent on this subject than the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell)—is that we are possibly increasing substantially the number of votes cast by post. In doing that, we are limiting what has been a fundamental principle of voting since the passing of the Parliamentary and Municipal Elections (Ballot) Act. In future, the proportion of people who vote in person will not be as high as previously. By increasing the opportunities for postal voting, we are increasing the opportunities for fraud and dishonesty which may result from ballots being cast in absentia.

I have urged the Committee to enlarge the opportunity to exercise the franchise. Having regard to the criticisms that have been made, much can be said for improving the accuracy of the register rather than increasing, almost at large, the opportunities for postal voting.

Mr. Forth: I regret that my hon. Friend has lost me. I understood that the objective of the amendments was to make existing information available on a wider basis to candidates. I am not sure that the objective was to improve accuracy. Perhaps I have missed the amendment's point. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

Mr. Powell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am saying that it is a weakness of the amendments that they do not try—any more than the Government intend to try—to make the registers more accurate to minimise the necessity to vote by post. We may well have the opportunity of enlarging upon this point later this evening.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member is straying some way from the amendments before us. I hope that he will return to them.

Mr. Powell: I accept that rebuke, Mr. Walker. I shall try in my concluding remarks to bring myself back within the scope of the amendments. We must try to ensure that the information that is available is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. These amendments go to that issue. We must try to ensure that the registers actively reflect the electorate that is resident in the constituency. To the extent to which these amendments do not deal with that point they are defective.

Sir John Farr: I respect what my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) has said, and I think that the main intention of most hon. Members who are here tonight is to strive to secure perfection and the utmost accuracy in the electoral register. There are occasions when the electoral register is hopelessly inaccurate.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member has just heard me draw to the attention of the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) the fact that such a line of debate is outside the scope of the amendments. I hope that, if the hon. Member wishes to address the Committee, it will be on these amendments and not on some others.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful for your advice, Mr. Walker. However, my remarks relate to the fact that when one compiles a list of postal or proxy voters, as amendments Nos. 35 and 45 are seeking to do, these additional alterations and changes, either by post or by proxy, make what is not an easy task—getting the electoral register accurate—even more difficult. The addition of postal and proxy records would add to the already great imperfections that often occur in general elections.

The Chairman: Order. The amendments deal not with the problems that the electoral registration officer may have in compiling the register but with the distribution of it. The hon. Gentleman should address himself to the distribution of the registers rather than the conduct of them.

Sir John Farr: I have no hesitation in accepting your ruling, Mr. Walker, but I was seeking to point out that the amendments add a further complication. The records are often imperfect, and to include the postal and proxy voters, as recommended in the amendments, would make an already difficult problem even more difficult.

Mr. Mellor: I was wondering what to talk about when I rose, but I decided that it would be appropriate to return to the amendments. A moving picture was painted by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) of his being out in the cold pressing his nose against the window pane while others were inside warming themselves at the fire of ministerial benevolence. I invite him to join us and to put his toes in the embers for a little while. Taking his amendments in the spirit in which they were offered—as a probe—I had some research undertaken which might show him that what he is asking us to do is not necessary because the information is already available. I

[Mr. Mellor]

shall adduce my arguments, and if he thinks that there are flaws I shall be happy to return to the subject at some other time.

The hon. Gentleman has a limited aim. He seeks to ensure that candidates are supplied with copies both of the so-called permanent list of absent voters and of the special list of those who have the right to vote by post or proxy at a particular election. The registration officer is already required by regulations to supply candidates with copies of the special list. The candidates do not need copies of the permanent list, because its contents form part of the special list. That is the fundamental point.

Clause 6(3) requires the registration officer to keep a record of those whose applications to vote by post or proxy for an indefinite period he has granted. That is equivalent to the so-called permanent list of absent voters that the registration officer is required to keep under certain sections of the Representation of the People Act 1983, with which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed is familiar.

Clause 7(4) requires the registration officer to keep a special list of those who are entitled to vote by post or proxy at a particular election. That is the same as the list required by rule 27 of the parliamentary elections rules, and it consists of those whose names are included in the permanent list or record of absent voters, plus those who have successfully applied to vote by post or proxy at a particular election.

Regulations under the 1983 Act currently require the registration officer to make a copy of the so-called permanent list available for inspection at his office and, as soon as practicable, to supply, on request and free of charge, a copy of the special list to each candidate or his election agent.

I hope that I have satisfied the hon. Gentleman by giving him an undertaking that these requirements will be preserved when the new representation of the people regulations are made after the Bill receives Royal Assent, as I hope and expect it will in due course.

The effect of the amendments would be for candidates to be provided with a copy of the permanent list as well of the special list and for them to be supplied automatically on request.

On the first point, it is perhaps unnecessary for candidates to be suppled with both lists when all the information contained in the first list is contained in the second list. Secondly, I would oppose automatic provision, because not all candidates want it. For instance, candidates of the Official Monster Raving Loony party, which as I understand it is not yet formally part of the alliance, might not always want such information, and I see no reason why we should give it to them gratuitously.

5.45 pm

Mr. Beith: I accept the Minister's undertaking. I hope that he recognises that this issue could be more difficult for returning officers, with the great expansion of the postal vote, than may have been foreseen. There must be hon. Members here who are aware that, even in the present circumstances, returning officers can run into difficulties if there is a sudden upsurge in the number of postal votes registered in the early part of an election campaign. Getting the list to candidates, even under present conditions, is not always done with the expedition that one would desire. There can be no doubt that the returning officers' task will be more difficult in the first election to be fought under the changed rules set out by the Bill, because almost certainly there will be a much larger number of applications and, were there to be substantial delays, that would be a serious matter.

It had been my assumption that, as the right was already in the existing regulations, it would be preserved. The intention of the amendments, which were in no way defective, was to check that that assumption was justified. I happily accept the Minister's assurance, and beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Dr. Marek: I apologise for coming in at this late stage. I wanted to intervene in the Minister's speech. Could he answer one point? I know of cases where the returning officer has not allowed a person to photocopy any part of the list, even though that person may have been a bona fide inquirer. If he wanted to take notes, he has had to do so in longhand. Can the Minister take this on board in the regulations so that bona fide inquirers, possibly a month before an election, will be allowed to photocopy the list, if necessary?

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I am keen to have an answer to this point, and I am certain that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to answer it. It concerns the cut-off date for drawing up this list before it is provided to the candidates. I am concerned about the accuracy of the list. As many more people will be going on the postal and absentee voters' lists, it is important to keep the lists accurate. I am keen to know whether my hon. Friend is able to estimate the particular cut-off date.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move amendment No. 71, in page 10, line 1, leave out subsection (6).

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 36, in page 10, line 1, leave out 'in Northern Ireland'.

No. 46, in clause 7, page 11, line 24, leave out 'in Northern Ireland'.

No. 50, in clause 9, page 15, line 6, leave out 'in Northern Ireland'.

Mr. Kaufman: Throughout our consideration of this proposed reform of electoral law—during the debate on the White Paper, on Second Reading and during consultations that Her Majesty's Opposition have had with the Government—we have made it clear that absolute parity of treatment between electors in all parts of the United Kingdom, whether in Great Britain or in Northern Ireland, is essential in parliamentary elections.

I have made it clear on behalf of the Labour party that to impose on part of the kingdom restrictions which are not imposed upon another part is to turn the citizens of the kingdom subject to those restrictions literally into second-class citizens. I say "literally" because that adverb is much misused. In this case we are talking about a literal fact.

Citizenship is dependent, among other things, upon the exercise of the franchise. That is a token of adult citizenship. For limitations to be imposed on those with a franchise in one part of the kingdom when they are not imposed upon others is unacceptable.

We have agreed that the expatriate vote should be conferred upon all citizens of this kingdom with the right

to vote. We disagree with and make no bones about the expatriate vote, but it is clear from the legislation that any expatriate voter from Northern Ireland will be treated in the same way as an expatriate voter from the other three countries of the kingdom.

Clause 6(6) discriminates clearly, because it refers only to Northern Ireland. The subsection states:

"A person applying to vote by post in Northern Ireland must provide an address in the United Kingdom as the address to which his ballot paper is to be sent."

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and his right hon. and hon. Friends seek to amend the clause by placing a limitation upon all voters in the United Kingdom who require postal votes. They say that all absent voters who exercise the postal vote may do so only within the United Kingdom. That is an arguable proposition. I have severe misgivings about sending ballot papers out of the country. That is one of the great worries about the postal vote in general and one of the subsidiary worries that I expressed on behalf of the Opposition in relation to the expatriate vote.

A suitable limitation would be to permit all people exercising the absent vote within the kingdom to vote by post, provided that they are somewhere within the kingdom, but to use a proxy vote if they go outside the kingdom. That is my personal preference for a number of reasons.

First, ballot papers would not wing their way all over the world in a way that could lead to misuse. Secondly, it would be a protection for the voters themselves. It would place absent voters on a par. It would mean that someone who had gone on holiday to Miami—assuming the rate of exchange permitted that—would be less likely to have a vote than somebody who had gone on holiday to Brittany. The postal service, even in some Community countries, is not always as good as it might be. Most of us will have sent a postcard home from Italy or France and arrived home before it, and will therefore be worried about ballot papers hanging around after a person has returned from holiday.

The better solution is to restrict the postal vote within the United Kingdom. I make it absolutely clear, so that there is no misunderstanding, that the Labour party favours postal votes for all holidaymakers, wherever they go, in whatever continent. We favour strongly an absent vote for holidaymakers. The suggestions that I make, in line with those made by right hon. and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies, are not meant to inhibit the exercise of the vote for holidaymakers. We support their solution.

The alternative is to remove the subsection and provide that people in Northern Ireland should be allowed to have their ballot papers sent to them wherever they are, even outside the United Kingdom. In a sense, I am asking the Government to accept the amendments tabled by Northern Ireland Members rather than my amendment, but if the Government accepted my amendment, with assurances, that would be as good as any other solution. I have no pride of proprietorship in amendment No. 71. I have moved it to try to ensure that when the Bill is enacted Northern Ireland electors are treated in the same way as electors in the other parts of the United Kingdom.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will respond sympathetically. Perhaps in the light of what I have said and what other right hon. and hon. Members may say, he will give assurances and draft more appropriate amendments. Provided that his assurances are reliable and solid, that would suit us well. We regard this as a fundamental issue of democracy within the kingdom, and we hope the Government will respond accordingly.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: As the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has made clear, two principles are at issue in this debate. The first is the principle of parity and the rights of citizens to vote in all parts of the United Kingdom. The second is the question of the sending of ballot papers outside the realm for the purpose of absent voting. On both those matters my right hon. and hon. Friends are in agreement with what the right hon. Gentleman has just said.

That will occasion no surprise in relation to the first of those principles. The fact that that principle has been so firmly asserted by Her Majesty's Opposition right from the first proposals which underlie this Bill has not gone unnoticed in Northern Ireland.

Ever since I became a Member for Northern Ireland and, indeed, since I first presented myself for election, I have told my electors, "In the end the House of Commons will be fair to you. It may take some time to understand the issues—to understand what is involved—but in the end there is an essential fairness about the House of Commons which derives from the fact that all who sit there go there with the same right, upon the same basis and by the same process." The position taken up—I think successfully—by Her Majesty's Opposition has been a strong confirmation of that view. It will assist in the restoration of stability and confidence in good government in that part of the United Kingdom.

I come, therefore, to the second principle which is at issue. Here again, it seems to me, the right hon. Member for Gorton is right when he says that there is something inherently unsatisfactory in a flight, as it were, of ballot papers issuing forth by post from these shores at a general election, no doubt with various addresses—anywhere from the nearest places outside the United Kingdom, which are presumably the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, to the most remote corners of the globe—with the likelihood in the lottery that they will arrive in the most remote corners of the globe sooner than in the adjacent continent of Europe; for it is a common experience that one receives letters from Australia far more rapidly than letters from France or Italy.

6 pm

That is an electoral absurdity, but that is what would happen. It would give electors who had sought an equal opportunity an unequal chance of exercising that opportunity. It is possible for us to retort to those electors, "Well, you entered the lottery. You took your choice. You decided to ask for a postal vote. It is your fault that the post in Miami, Australia or the south of France was not adequate for you to be able to exercise the franchise in time." That is not an attitude which the House in legislating should take. We ought to be instituting a system which is sound and equitable in itself. I do not believe it can be sound or equitable for rights of voting by post to be exercised from addresses outside the United Kingdom.

There is another, perhaps esoteric, aspect of the matter, but it may be worth mentioning. The provison of the opportunity to vote is an exercise of the sovereign power in this country, which is in commission with the House:

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

to arrange for a vote to be cast is an expression of the sovereignty of the Crown in Parliament in this realm. When we provide a proxy vote for an absent voter who has gone on holiday, outside the United Kingdom, wherever it might be, that principle is not breached; but when we send a ballot paper outwith the jurisdiction, in the hope that it will arrive in some foreign parts in time to enable the recipient to vote in this country, we are guilty of creating a breach of that principle.

It may be that at some future time, although I hope not —there have been earlier debates on this subject—we shall extend the whole concept of elections beyond the shores and confines of the realm, but we are not doing so in this Bill. The new rights which the Bill creates do not extend the concept of a general election as something domestic to the United Kingdom. We should not breach that principle by allowing postal voting beyond the confines of the realm.

I hope that the consideration that the Government give to this amendment will find a means of meeting the plea of the right hon. Member for Gorton not just on the first point—I am confident that their sense of justice will ensure that—but on the second point also.

Mr. William Powell: I am delighted to follow the right hon. Members for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and for South Down (Mr. Powell), and to express complete agreement with the way in which they have expressed their arguments. As has been said, the amendments raise two principles, one of them of fundamental importance. The other is of secondary importance, but it goes to the heart of the mechanics by which we ballot.

The principle of fundamental importance is that the rules for election should be the same in Northern Ireland as they are in England, Wales and Scotland. That is a principle by which everyone should be able to stand. Hon. Members who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland come to the House frequently to complain that Northern Ireland is being treated differently from the rest of England. I have listened to those arguments for the past 18 months and more with a growing sense of apprehension that they are not correct in the way in which they are formulated. I have frequently found myself going into the Lobby to support the Government with a heavy heart. On one occasion at least, I have been one of the lone Conservatives prepared to go into the Lobby with hon. Members representing Northern Ireland when they have complained about Northern Ireland being treated differently from the rest of the United Kingdom.

The amendment raises a fundamental principle of our election law. I should find it impossible to support a provision which treated constituencies in Northern Ireland, as to the franchise, differently from constituencies in England, Wales, Scotland, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire or wherever.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary recognises that all parts of the House are anxious to ensure, if it is at all feasible—I do not see in this instance how it is not—that Northern Ireland is given the same indivisible treatment under our law as every other citizen of the country.

The other principle is not on such an elevated plane, but it is important. It relates to whether persons entitled to vote abroad should vote by post or by proxy. In the month preceding the general election in June 1983, I and other hon. Members were accosted by disgruntled constituents complaining that they would not be able to vote because they would be on holiday. I always answered that if we were able to secure votes for holidaymakers who were abroad, as likely as not they would be cast by proxy, and that if they were in the United Kingdom, as likely as not the votes would be cast by post. If we allow postal ballot papers to be sent to addresses abroad, the likelihood of them being mislaid is considerable. For all we know, the post in Tibet may be a great deal more reliable than the post in France, Belgium or Luxembourg. If we were to regard it as normal to send substantial numbers of ballot papers abroad, that would be unsatisfactory.

I have argued, I hope most vigorously, in favour of the extension of the franchise. Not every right hon. and hon. Member has agreed with that. There has been a substantial division of opinion among hon. Members on that issue.

The principles have by and large been established during the course of our debates. The outline of the principles is clear. We are now dealing with the mechanics. When my hon. Friend and his advisers come to deal with the regulations by which the principles that we have laid down should be enforced, I hope that he will attach much more weight than the Treasury Bench has so far appeared to do to the idea that persons abroad should vote in this country by proxy rather than that we should waste a great deal of time, effort and money ensuring that they have postal votes. It may be difficult to reach such people. A great many votes may be returned to returning officers after a constituency has declared its result. Electors wishing to cast a valid vote will find that they are ruled out of time through no fault of their own but through the vagaries of the post at home or abroad.

I do not rule out the fact that postal voting for some people abroad may be appropriate, but I hope that much more emphasis will be given to encouraging them to vote by proxy.

Mr. Molyneaux: I wish to record our appreciation for the support from both sides of the Committee for our amendments. We are grateful that this support has emerged towards the end of what has been a fairly lengthy —I do not say battle—correspondence between the Home Office and ourselves.

I should like to place on record the fact that I am not excluding the Minister from my expression of gratitude because he listened attentively and, dare I say, sympathetically, at all times to the case that my right hon. and hon. Friends put forward. He, in turn, explained many of the difficulties, but I think that it is true to say that, as a combined operation, perhaps this was one of the best examples of co-operation between both sides of the House —I include both Front Benches and, indeed, the former leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). It has given us great satisfaction that we have reached that consensus.

It is important to acknowledge that absent voting is different from postal voting. When we talk about the principle of absent voting and its availability for holidaymakers, we agree with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in saying that it would be best exercised by proxy and not by any attempt to work the unworkable and go for postal ballot papers outside the United Kingdom. I reckon from my limited experience of

receiving correspondence from abroad that if persons were to entrust their franchise, their right to vote, at a general election, to the European postal system—I shall put it no further abroad than that—only one third of the ballot papers would be returned in time to be included in the count at any given constituency.

Therefore, I hope that the message and advice that go out from the Committee to people who will want to avail themselves of the facility of absent voting will be that they should play safe and be 100 per cent. certain that, if they adopt the proxy method, there is no risk of it being exploited, and that the vote that they cast as citizens of a democratic country will have its due effect.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I am pleased to be able to follow the leader of the Official Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), because he sincerely put forward the views of Conservative Members and also, I believe, of Opposition Members. It is a fact of life that Northern Ireland wishes to be treated in the same way as the rest of the United Kingdom. Therefore, I have great sympathy for the right hon. Gentleman's amendments. I would support them if they were forced to a vote.

I should like to refer to the risk of absent voting and the fact that voting by proxy is by far the most sensible course to take. There is always the element of ballot papers not being sent to the right place and getting lost in the post. Indeed, only today I received a letter informing me that I had been appointed to the Committee on the Local Government Access to Information Bill. The letter is dated 6 February and arrived today. I had already been given dates and times, which were announced in the paper. Yet the letter was posted in and sent to the House of Commons. If it takes that long for a letter posted in this building to be delivered, it shows the difficulties that we are up against with regard to sending postal votes abroad.

I feel strongly that we should stop all postal voting from abroad in the sense that I am unconvinced that the ballot paper will arrive there on time and, more important, that it will be delivered to the right place. One cannot even be certain of who has voted. There might not necessarily be a witness of the person casting his vote although there is supposed to be a witness when one completes the postal vote form.

For that reason alone I hope very much that we shall encourage and support the principle of proxy voting. It would be the only way of guaranteeing true identification. In the past we have heard of massive problems with voting in Northern Ireland. We only have to look at the House of Commons Library research note No. 195, which on page 7 refers to Cmnd. 9140. Paragraph 322 states:

> "There is widespread public concern, shared by the Government, at the extent and nature of electoral abuse in Northern Ireland, including the abuse of postal voting."

That causes all of us concern. It is therefore obvious to me and, I hope, other hon. Members that the best solution is to vote by proxy.

6.15 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan: I am glad not to have to sound a discordant note and to be in wholehearted agreement with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who moved the amendment. My hon. Friends in the Social Democratic party and the Liberal party adopt his reasoning and believe that the case that he made should commend itself to the Government.

It would be of some interest, if only for historical reasons, to know why the clauses to be amended were presented in the way that they were in the first place. The principle of equality of citizenship in the exercise of the franchise should apply throughout the whole of the kingdom. It is odd that political difficulties within the Province should have led the Government to make such a proposal that did not recognise that fundamental constitutional right. Problems of personation there may be, but that is not the way to deal with them.

Mr. Bermingham: I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for moving the amendment. The reason why my hon. Friends and I tabled the amendment is simple. We could not see why there should be any difference in any part of the United Kingdom. What is good for one is good for all; what is bad for one is bad for all. Against that background, we hope that the Government will accept the amendment.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Members for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), supported by clear signs of assent, which I welcomed, from the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), paid tribute to the work done to try to resolve differences that were made clear on Second Reading about the arrangements that should exist in Northern Ireland regarding the extent and exercise of absent voting. I greatly enjoyed participating in those discussions. It has always been my wish to try to ensure that there is the maximum agreement possible on the measure because, plainly, that is the nature of the Bill. As a result of the efforts that have been made, we have been able to clear away some substantial differences.

I do not want to anticipate too much the debate on the next set of amendments. What could have been a highly contentious matter, which could have kept us here for some time, has now been resolved amicably and with a consensus that the right decision has been reached. I am grateful to the right hon. Members for Gorton and for Lagan Valley for their participation in the careful negotiations necessary to bring us to that point.

However, one issue remains unresolved. Before embarking on that, it is important to note that it is the one issue that remains unresolved in this area. It relates to a narrow point of mechanics, if I may say so, without wanting to disparage those who see this as a matter of deep principle. In my view, for what it is worth, it is a very narrow matter of mechanics. Having determined whether there should be absent voting and for what categories, how should it be exercised? Is it right that the elector should be offered a choice in every circumstance on whether he votes by post or by proxy, or should restrictions be placed on his choice? If restrictions should be placed on his choice, should one of the considerations be, in deciding what restrictions to impose, whether it is possible to have wholly consistent arrangements throughout the United Kingdom? The Government have taken—I think rightly—a severely practical view.

The right hon. Member for Gorton has made it clear that the Opposition support the view that it is no longer possible to have general elections when many of the electorate are away on holiday and effectively disfranchised. A real consensus has been established on that, although there are agents of both major parties who see nothing but gloom arising from the proposed changes.

[Mr. Mellor]

However, I think that the general feeling is that the changes must be made and that democracy will be strengthened by the increased number who will be able to cast their vote as a result of the implementation of the Bill. In certain months we are talking of literally millions of votes. For example, we think that there may have been 2 million voters on holiday at the time of the 1983 general election.

How will the franchise be exercised? Application will have to be made on the Monday that is two weeks and three days before the election. Those concerned will then go to the Hotel Splendid at Torremolinos or some similar location within the United Kingdom. Is it necessary to impose a restriction, dependent on whether the individual is to be in Paris or Spain as opposed to Edinburgh or Birmingham, on how the absent vote should be exercised?

The Government have taken the view, rightly or wrongly, that the issue comes down to a matter of practicality. If a vote is sent through the post, the fact that it goes to Paris or Plymouth is not one that involves a great issue of principle. The problems stemming from tampering with a vote are no more likely to arise if the vote is entrusted to the French postal service than if it is placed in the charge of various parts of the United Kingdom's system.

We have taken heed of the evidence that the Post Office officials gave to the Select Committee. That evidence suggested that, if the returning officer in any constituency in the United Kindom was in a position to issue postal ballot papers on the Monday 10 days before the poll—the Post Office officials said that in their experience that was usually the position in most well-ordered constituencies—there would be time for postal ballot papers to be issued to and returned from at least some addresses outside the United Kingdom. Plainly if someone were at the Hotel Splendid at Ulan Bator, he would be unwise to rely upon the ability of the postal services to get his postal ballot there and back within 10 days.

We say—I hope that the right hon. Member for South Down will recognise the Government's basic principle even if he does not agree with the whole argument—that the voter should have the choice and should abide by the consequences of his choice, just as he does in most of the choices that he makes. If the voter decides to exercise his absent vote by post and the postal service does live up to expectations and he loses his vote, he has taken the decision and that is that. I am not sure whether it is a proper inhibition on our making of rules that voters might make the wrong decision. After all, it is only one of a series of wrong decisions that voters are capable of making in an election.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Hear hear.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman says that with great feeling. I understand that slightly more than 100 of the electorate in his constituency made the right choice rather than the wrong one, by his way of thinking, during the general election.

We think that the voter is entitled to take the risk that I have described. He should know—no doubt the Post Office will tell him if there is any doubt—what the likelihood is of the postal vote getting to Paris, Spain or Italy and back again. Those who have participated in the debate have not been disposed to favour this proposal. It is not a matter on which I want to invite my hon. Friends to go into the trenches with me, as it were, to turn it into an issue of principle. As I have said, I have never seen it in that way. I want to reflect on what has been said, including the condemnation from various quarters. Therefore, I am reluctant to spoil the consensus which has been established generally in this one instance, but that is not a commitment that the Government will definitely change their minds.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Gorton that we should not in any sense derogate from our position of giving holidaymakers the postal vote by saying that they could exercise it only by proxy. Of course, that might ensure that more votes were actually cast. I remain of the the view, without having had the advice of the House of Commons, that this should be a matter of choice for the voter, and that we have reached a stage where the communications system is such that the crossing of a national boundary should not be an obstacle.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I wish to float an idea to my hon. Friend which has occurred to me while he has been speaking. During the elections in France I happened to notice that the French embassy in London was open to those who wished to register their votes in England in those elections. What is my hon. Friend's view on the same facilities being made available to our citizens at all our consular offices and embassies throughout the world prior to general elections? The date would be published throughout the country.

Mr. Mellor: At first sight, I am not especially attracted to my hon. Friend's idea as a realistic proposition. I shall think about it and perhaps my view will be different on reflection, but I think probably not.

The Government believe as a matter of practicality that it is better that voters should be given the choice of a postal ballot and that no great issue of principle arises. It is said that there is an issue of principle in the equal treatment of all parts of the United Kingdom. I do not belittle that argument because there has to be a good reason why there should not be equal treatment. As the right hon. Members for Lagan Valley and for South Down and their colleagues know, it is that fact which has motivated me in my efforts to try to ensure the maximum possible correspondence between the practice in Great Britain and that in Northern Ireland.

If there is a good reason for there being a difference in treatment, I do not believe that there is any great argument of principle on why the difference should not be permitted to exist. There is a good reason—I think that we all know it—why postal votes should not be sent out of the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland into the Republic. I do not think that any of those representing constituencies in Northern Ireland would want postal ballots to be sent from the Province to the Republic. It is clear also that no distinction can be made between the Republic and any other country. As a practical proposition, sending ballot papers out of the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland is not something that we would want to suggest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) has become sufficiently convinced of the case for there being precisely the same arrangements in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom to expound that cause

with even more zeal than his mentors in the Ulster Unionist party, but that is ever the way of the convert, as we know only too well. St. Paul set an admirable precedent.

If we are to intrude a fact into these considerations, the arrangements in Northern Ireland are not the same as those in the United Kingdom in at least one material particular. I have in mind the important issue of the qualification date. It has never been seen necessary in Great Britain—indeed, it is not necessary—to do other than establish that on one night—it could be any night, but it happens to be a night in October—one is resident at a particular address for the purpose of getting oneself on the register. That has always been thought inappropriate in Northern Ireland because of the fear that people will come from the South for one night, whatever the one night is, register and then return to the South, only to return on election day to exercise the franchise. That is why the qualification period for registration in Northern Ireland is several weeks. No one has said that the principle that everyone should be elected to the House on the same basis is thereby destroyed.

Before doing what everyone in the Committee probably wishes me to do, may I venture the suggestion that this may not be a great matter of principle. One could, of course, go into a trench and say that there were precisely the same compelling reasons for having a different view about whether one sent a postal vote out of the jurisdiction as there properly are for the time that one must be resident in order to register.

Having got that off my chest, I should say that the Government are not greatly attached to the proposition. There is certainly room for reconsideration. We shall reconsider the matter, but I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that that is not a commitment to change it. We can return to the matter later. I shall consult my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and others as to whether we should change the proposal, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will feel that he has achieved what he set out to achieve.

6.30 pm

Mr. Kaufman: My regard for the Under-Secretary of State has grown steadily during the months since we faced each other over the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and especially since I discovered that he was much more knowledgeable about the music of Berwald than I am. That being so, I am always ready to take seriously what he says. However, he has a strange tendency which, if he is to become leader of the Conservative party—we all look forward to that—he must suppress. It is to introduce extraneous contentious material at the end of a consensus debate. There will soon come a time when the Conservative party will again yearn for consensus, and he may be the very man to bring that to it.

Therefore, with regard to his latter point, I should say that it is on the face of this Bill that we find the introduction of disparity unacceptable. I hope that the Minister will have noted that from every quarter of the Committee there has been support for the proposition of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and his right hon. and hon. Friends. Support has come from the Conservative party, the Social Democratic party, the Liberal party and, of course, from Her Majesty's Opposition. That being so, although I understand that the Minister is not giving us a cast-iron, 100 per cent. commitment, we look forward to his returning to the House on Report, or with an amendment in another place—whichever is easier for him in terms of drafting—to meet the point that the entire Committee has asked him to meet this afternoon.

Mr. Mellor: Of course, I give the commitment on that basis. The only point with which I would quibble, although not hoping to prove that the proposition advanced by the right hon. Gentleman is true in my case, is that other hon. Members who may be attracted to the Government's proposition do not show the same enthusiasm for attending our debate as those who dissent from it. However, I do not believe that it is worth having too many divisions on this issue, and in that spirit I shall go away to reflect upon the matter with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Kaufman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I would only point out that those hon. Members who take part in the debate are, for the purposes of the debate, the Committee of the whole House of Commons. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The people of Northern Ireland will be happy tonight because of what the Minister has said about the representations made to him by hon. Members from Northern Ireland. We are glad that the voices of those who made representations for and on behalf of the Province were listened to, and that their points were met to a great extent. As he said, he is not giving us a cast-iron assurance, but from what he said it would appear that he will seriously consider the matter and try to meet the points that have been made by the Committee. That is most welcome. The Committee must recognise that all those who are returned to the House of Commons should have equality in their electorates and in the principles of democracy. On behalf of those for whom I speak, I put on record my appreciation of the way in which the Government listened sympathetically to our case.

Mr. Kaufman: Perhaps the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) will allow me to treat that as an intervention, because otherwise I cannot withdraw the amendment. If I cannot withdraw it, it will be negatived, and I am sure that he would not wish that. Once again, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Sir John Farr: I am glad to have the opportunity briefly to talk about clause 6. No one welcomes the Bill more than me. During the previous two elections I met people who, for one reason or another, were unable to vote. Clause 6 lays special emphasis on the record which the registration officer is required to keep. I am glad that the clause is itemised in the way that it is. However, I regret that nowhere in the Bill does one find the word "accuracy". I can keep a record—any Tom, Dick or Harry can keep a record—but what use is the record if it is inaccurate?

I wish to draw to the attention of the House the experience of many hon. Members of their constituents being left off the register due to human error. The Bill provides that the fine for a double vote or misrepresentation will be £2,000, which is level 5 on the standard scale. However, the Bill does not recognise instances of people being deprived of their votes, although they may have

[Sir John Farr]

gone through all the motions. They may have been resident on the proper night, have filled in the forms properly and posted them in time, but due to human error the register was inaccurate. We must consider how to recompense those who, through no fault of their own, are denied the birthright and the privilege of any British person to vote in a general or local government election. What can we do about that and about making the records much more accurate? The Bill values a vote at £2,000.

The Bill ought to mention that any person who has been deprived of a vote through no fault of his own should be recompensed by the local authority that was responsible for making the error. The Bill puts the value of a vote at £2,000. That is a very high and probably a proper price for a misdemeanour. However, when the misdemeanour occurs because of an error made by a local authority I believe that the innocent person who has suffered should be recompensed in a suitable way. I hope that my hon. Friend will believe it to be appropriate to recommend a five-year rate rebate for everybody who has missed a vote. That is a very insignificant recompense for the value of a vote, particularly in some constituencies where one vote or two votes can make all the difference between the return of one candidate or another.

I believe my hon. Friend ought to recommend that local authorities should do whatever they can to decrease the likelihood of human error. Computerisation is referred to on page 7 of the White Paper. The Select Committee recommended that all local authorities should seek to introduce what it called information technology for the compilation of their electoral registers. Recommendation (vii) in paragraph 1.10, under the heading "Computerisation", states:

"All authorities should be encouraged, and if necessary assisted, to install and to use modern technology as an aid to accuracy in the compilation of their registers."

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that this clause deals exclusively with absent voters. He must not go into the general application of the clause.

Sir John Farr: Thank you, Mr. Armstrong. However, the clause is meaningless unless the record to which reference is repeatedly made is an accurate record. I hope that my hon. Friend will think about what I have said and consider whether further efforts can be made to prevent innocent people from being deprived of their birthright.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I fully support what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). The right to vote is very important. Therefore, it is important to keep one's name on the register when one is entitled to vote and to ensure it is removed from the register as soon as entitlement to vote comes to an end.

The registration requirements are set out clearly in clause 6. However, I am concerned about the cut-off date —whether the absent voter list will be accurate for the two weeks before an election is held. We have to ensure that at all times the register is accurate and that the constituency organisations know who is entitled to be on the list. I hope that there will be a requirement that people will have to be made aware of the fact that it is an offence for their name to be kept on the register after they have declared that it is no longer their intention to exercise their right to vote. Provided that that undertaking is given, I believe that clause 6 should stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Mellor: Whether or not the argument is rightly attached to this clause—I take the point that you, Mr. Armstrong, have already made about that—it very much underlies our consideration of the Bill.

This matter has caused considerable concern to the Home Office and to other groups for a number of years. A working party on the electoral register reported in 1978. The Select Committee looked closely at the accuracy of the register. The first chapter of the White Paper upon which this legislation is based dealt with the registration of electors and set out a number of detailed points whereby we endeavoured to ensure that the accuracy of the register was improved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) properly raised the question of correcting the register. If an elector's name has been incorrectly omitted from the published register, he can make a claim for its inclusion. The registration officer will publish a notice of the claim and correct the register at the beginning of the following month. Omissions as a result of clerical error can be corrected at once. The power to change clerical errors has existed since 1969. The power to consider and act upon late claims has existed since 1980. The redesign of form A, the guidance to electoral registration officers, both formally and through meetings at which discussions have been held about the best way to ensure that the maximum number of people are included on the register and, where necessary, excluded, has been continuing at a great pace. As I said earlier, we hope that the accuracy of the register during the next few years will be materially better than it has been up to now as a result of all the initiatives that we have taken.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7

ABSENT VOTE AT A PARTICULAR ELECTION AND ABSENT VOTERS LIST

6.45 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I beg to move amendment No. 37, in page 10, line 6, leave out 'in Great Britain'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 38, in page 10, leave out lines 8 to 20.

No. 41, in page 10, line 17, leave out subsection (2).

No. 42, in page 10, line 26, leave out 'subsection (2)' and insert 'The foregoing subsection'.

No. 43, in page 10, line 26, leave out subsection (3).

No. 44, in page 10, line 44, after 'constituency', insert

'(v) at a general election, his residence on the date of the poll elsewhere than in the polling district allotted to him,

(vi) the general nature of his occupation, service or employment or that of his spouse'.

No. 47, in clause 9, page 14, line 4, leave out 'in the case of an election in Great Britain'.

No. 48, in clause 9, page 14, line 5, leave out from 'that' to end of line 9 and insert

'the applicant is a person to whom section 7(3) of this Act applies'.

No. 49, in clause 9, page 14, line 10, leave out 'in the case of an election in Northern Ireland'.

Mr. Powell: The debate which I initiate by moving amendment No. 37 is in a very real sense an extension of the debate upon the last group of amendments, except that it is upon a much wider base and relates to a much more substantial subject. This is the clause which makes that large extension to the opportunity for exercising the franchise to which the Under-Secretary of State referred earlier. It does so not by a formal increase in the categories under which absent voting may be claimed and allowed but by a completely new approach to the expression of the basis of the right to claim an absent vote.

It was with great astonishment that we in Northern Ireland learned that it was intended to exclude that part of the United Kingdom from the extension of the opportunity to exercise the franchise which is implicit in the redrafting of the electoral law embraced in clause 7. I was glad to realise from the exchanges which took place a few moments ago between the two Front Benches that that discrimination is to be removed. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are content to believe that the reason for the discrimination in the first place was not because of any malice or evil intent towards the people of the Province but because of the, in our opinion, unfounded belief that the new grounds for exercising an absent vote would provide a special opportunity for electoral abuse. That was never a sound assumption.

The new basis will include people who will exercise the franchise inside the United Kingdom—whether or not outside the United Kingdom is still a matter to be decided. However, inside the United Kingdom, people will exercise the franchise by specifying an address to which the ballot paper is to be sent or alternatively by appointing a proxy to vote on their behalf. In neither of those circumstances is it practicable to organise large-scale electoral abuse. Only two proxies may be held by one and the same elector. Therefore, to organise massive abuse by means of the proxy system is almost unthinkable. Indeed, so far as I know, it has never been urged that the proxy system in Northern Ireland is seriously open to abuse.

That leaves abuse of voting by means of a ballot paper sent to an address in the United Kingdom. In the nature of things, those who will be on holiday or otherwise absent and unable to vote at their local polling station will specify a wide range of addresses at which they would like to receive their ballot papers. In some cases that will be their own residence where they will still be residing at the time when the postal ballot papers are issued. But in many other cases they will be addresses throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom. The operation of making contact with those addresses and somehow collecting those ballot papers when they are delivered, or alternatively bringing intimidation to bear upon the recipients of those ballot papers, is beyond all reasonable conception.

We know that the Northern Ireland Office has an almost hysterical anxiety about the Sinn Fein vote, an anxiety which we believe does not correspond with anything in the long-term electoral experience in Northern Ireland. But however malevolent Sinn Fein may be, there is a distinct limit to its organisational capabilities, and almost magical powers of organisation would be necessary in order for this new form of exercising the franchise to be seriously abused by those of evil intent.

Indeed, if any form of absent voting is arguably vulnerable to abuse, it is the absent vote for the person who is disabled physically from going to the poll. Only in that case is it possible, first, to bring pressure to bear for certification where certification is not fully justified, and, secondly, to secure a number of postal votes in the same general area and thus bring the ballot papers within the conceivable scope of misuse.

So the one major form of absent voting which was still left to Northern Ireland happens ironically to be the only one where it is virtually practicable to conceive that large-scale abuse could take place. Even that is probably difficult to demonstrate on the basis of the electoral figures of the more recent elections in Northern Ireland.

I have entered upon that because it is important that it should be understood, not least in the Province, why it was first proposed that this new privilege of exercising the franchise should be withheld from the Province. But we rely upon the House, Her Majesty's Opposition and the Government, now that there has been fuller consideration and the opportunity maturely to consider the alternatives, to withdraw that discrimination and to apply either clause 7 or whatever re-drafting may be needed to replace clause 7 equally to Northern Ireland as to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. William Powell: As the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) observed, this is merely an extension of some of the principles that we were discussing on clause 6. The fundamental principle that Northern Ireland should have the same rules applies with just as much force as it did on clause 6. Notwithstanding the charming tag that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has chosen to try to label me with, I have undergone a conversion of not such a different character from the one that St. Paul underwent some years ago. My hon. Friend knows, just as well as I do, that I have been talking to him about this particular matter for a great many years—many more years than either of us would choose to remember. The principle is surely sound and the right hon. Member for South Down has correctly outlined the reasons why it is wrong to try to justify different rules for Northern Ireland than for the rest of the United Kingdom.

Some sections of Whitehall may dwell substantially upon electoral abuse in Northern Ireland, but there is a real danger that that is being exaggerated in their minds. We have heard, brutally almost, during the course of our debates how the real nuts and bolts of the Bill are, to some extent, party advantage. Throughout various debates hon. Members have alluded to that. It is obvious that different parties have been trying to protect what they perceive to be their own interests as we have been dealing with a number of different matters.

The arguments about electoral abuse come down to what Sinn Fein does or may get up to. When we hear representatives of those parties from Northern Ireland who are the most determinedly opposed to Sinn Fein argue that we have exaggerated it all and that it is not capable of all the things that are said of it, that is a cry to which we should listen with respect. They are, after all, the people who have to fight Sinn Fein at the polls in Northern Ireland.

It ill becomes hon. Members from the rest of the United Kingdom, who have little or no knowledge of what an election is like in Northern Ireland, to try to devise rules which the overwhelming part of the community in Northern Ireland finds unnecessary. It may be that there are justifications for minor distinctions. I do not say that

[Mr. Beith]

postal vote is not as satisfactory in terms of the Parliamentary and Municipal Elections (Ballot) Act as a vote cast at a polling station in a ballot booth. A postal vote can be less secret than a vote cast in a polling station and the voter is open to pressure and intimidation. Hon. Members will have been concerned to ensure that old people can vote in old people's homes or their own homes, free of pressure and prying. It is important that postal votes should be given only when necessary. I support the extension of postal votes to holidaymakers, because the case is fully made out. The case for allowing people to exercise their franchise outweighs the case for keeping the vote in the polling stations, which, in other circumstances, should be our priority. The secrecy of the ballot can best be assured in the polling station.

When we extend the postal vote, we must use some restraint and ensure that those involved genuinely satisfy the requirements. I tabled the amendment to discover the extent to which the Government intend to ensure that and to give the Minister the opportunity to explain.

8.15 pm

Mr. Forth: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) tempts us down some interesting highways and byways. I am as concerned about this problem as other hon. Members are about other matters.

At least two significant problems arise from the wording of the amendment. Clause 7 provides:

"the registration officer shall grant the application if—

(*a*) he is satisfied that the applicant's circumstances on the date of the poll will be . . . such that . . .

(*b*) he is satisfied that the applicant is or will be registered . . .

(*c*) the application meets the prescribed requirements."

That is an acceptable form of words, but the amendment suggests the inclusion of paragraph *(d)* which deals with a different principle. The amendment alters the grounds for the acceptance of the test, which is made contingent on a certain category of person providing authorisation for the person applying for a proxy or postal vote. We must look at the categories of people carefully. We are, after all, talking about that most important issue in our democratic procedures—an individual's entitlement to vote in an election. Few issues are more important. We must therefore be satisfied that the mechanism which gives people the vote is above and beyond all reasonable doubt and suspicion.

Members of Parliament are the first to be listed in the amendment. Hon. Members will find it difficult to quibble at that, although an element of vested interest exists. In many, if not most, cases the Member of Parliament will be authorising a vote for an individual who will be voting for him. One could, therefore, cast a passing doubt on that category, although I doubt whether I should carry many of my hon. Friends with me.

Mr. William Powell: Does my hon. Friend recall a celebrated criminal case some years ago when a Member of Parliament was deceived into countersigning an application? He had no knowledge of the true circumstances, and his good name was abused. That led to a long criminal trial and a substantial number of years in prison for an hon. Member.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because that highlights the difficulties. Many other difficulties could arise. It would be a brave Member who refused to authorise such an application, because of the difficulties in which that might place him subsequently, and the effect that it might have on potential supporters if it got around that he had impugned the integrity of a person applying for a postal vote by refusing to authorise it.

We can let that category pass unchallenged because it is so well and long established. The same applies to justices of the peace, who are above and beyond reproach in such matters.

The next category, ministers of religion, causes problems. I shall tread carefully, because I do not want to cause offence. The title "minister of religion" has become broad and generous. Many people who style themselves as ministers of religion today would not in the past have been accepted as such. I shall not name individual religions or sects, but the title "minister of religion" is not a sufficient safeguard to ensure no abuse. I regret that many people style themselves as ministers of religion. How would the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed satisfy himself that a person so styled genuinely came within that category?

We can accept the category of lawyer without too much argument. *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members may not, but I am sufficiently generous to accept the category of lawyer.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The hon. Gentleman was disposing of ministers of religion. How does he square that with the present requirements for signatures for passports? He seeks to gloss over the classification of lawyers. Is he asking the Committee to accept that lawyers cannot be deceived?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is tempting me to digress, and I should be reluctant to do that given the pressure of time. However interesting it might be to discuss the authorisation of passports, I am sure that I would quickly be reminded that we are discussing the authorisation of applications for proxy and postal votes. Therefore, I shall not be tempted to follow the hon. Gentleman.

We run into the most fascinating potential difficulties over the term "bank officer." I believe that I am correct when I say that someone could legitimately and properly leave school at the age of 16 and work for a bank. Many young people do. It is an honourable position, but it gives rise to the possibility that, under the terms of the amendment, someone who was of voting age—over 18—could have his application for a postal or proxy vote authorised by a 16-year-old who had only just started working for a bank but who would be properly styled a "bank officer." That category is unacceptable. The fact that the amendment is loosely cast invalidates it.

Similarly, there are difficulties with some of the other categories, but I shall not detain the Committee by going through them in more detail.

Mr. Beith: Is it not apparent that the hon. Gentleman and I have done a service to the nation if we have brought to the notice of the Home Office Minister with responsibility for passports the glaring deficiencies in the arrangements by which passports are now authorised?

Mr. Forth: Indeed. What has been said this evening may well give rise to significant legislation and the

opportunity to consider those matters in greater detail. I am reluctant to do that, as I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.

The categories that I have described are sufficient to invalidate the amendment. The final category has the effrontery to refer to

"a person of similar standing known personally to the applicant for at least two years."

One is driven to ask: of similar standing to whom? Is it of similar standing to the 16-year-old bank officer, to the extremely dubious minister of some religion or other—of which kind is not specified—or is it a person of similar standing to the Member of Parliament who may have a vested interest in giving a vote to someone whose application may not be the most correct and proper?

The amendment is ill-thought-out, ill-considered and poorly drafted. To accept it would not do justice to the Bill. I therefore beg the Committee to reject it.

Mr. Barron: It was interesting to listen to the comments of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) about the list. I am sure that he could have gone on to the second half of the list and explained the categories in which anomalies might arise in relation to the countersigning of applications for proxy and postal votes. What I find interesting—this is something that the hon. Gentleman missed — is that the categories have something in common. They are middle class, and perhaps potential supporters of the so-called alliance parties.

Coming from a sensible Socialist area of south Yorkshire, I find it amazing that hon. Members have not considered the type of people who are likely to want to have countersignatures on applications for postal and proxy votes. In my constituency, they would normally be elderly people. They would look around and ask who were the responsible people in their lives and areas who could accept the further responsibility of ensuring that application forms were countersigned. I am amazed that we can have a list of middle-class, salaried people and not consider matrons of old people's homes. They are more responsible, more receptive and more likely to be readily available to sign such forms.

The list that has been presented to us in the amendment includes a Member of Parliament. I am sure that hon. Members and the vast majority of the electorate know that Members of Parliament for areas such as Berwick-upon-Tweed and Rother Valley in south Yorkshire normally live a large part of their lives—when Parliament is sitting—hundreds of miles from their constituencies. The likelihood of people being able to contact Members of Parliament is limited. The same can be said for many other people on the list. If a bank officer is interpreted to mean a bank manager as opposed to a 16-year-old bank clerk, one would need an appointment to see a bank officer or a manager in my local bank to get an application form countersigned.

Justices of the peace are on the list. There are some lay magistrates in my constituency, and a knock on the door would be sufficient to get them to sign an application form, but not everyone knows who the magistrates are. The people who normally do know are not those who see them to have forms countersigned.

School teachers, police officers and doctors are included. People go to see a doctor about their medical needs. They do not want to have to think about seeing the local family doctor to have a form for a vote in a forthcoming election countersigned. The amendment just gives a host of job descriptions which do not really fit people's needs.

I go further than the matron in the old people's home. The signature could be that of a warden of sheltered accommodation — flats or bungalows. Because of the cuts in the housing support grant, in my constituency we have only been building flats and bungalows for old people to release other housing. They have a warden to look after them, and wardens are responsible people.

Mr. Bermingham: Will my hon. Friend define what an "established civil servant" is? Does he have to have so many grades on a Civil Service scale or is he something else? How does anyone know who is an "established civil servant"?

Mr. Barron: That is a fair comment. I cannot answer that question. An "established civil servant" leaves a great many questions about who or what he is. It would be strange to think of accepting the amendment.

Wardens of sheltered accommodation in my constituency are not professional people. They do not have a salary, which is normally one of the marks of a professional person. They are paid weekly and they are on low incomes. It would be difficult to fit them into the category of "a person of similar standing". That means different things to each right hon. and hon. Member. Therefore, we need to ask the Minister to clarify what provisions he believes should be included in the regulations with regard to countersigning.

Where I come from, and in my constituency, one of the people in the community who is of very high standing, and who looks after many things, is the trade union official. I should have thought that he was an obvious person to be included in any list of those who could countersign the form. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that this was a probing amendment. It seems that the hon. Gentleman has not probed far at all in regard to those who should countersign voting forms.

8.30 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has already said that consideration is being given to the precise form that regulations should take, the category of persons who should be entitled to be countersignatories and the circumstances in which they should be able to sign an application for an absent vote. Like the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), I understand the reasons why such provisions should be in regulations, although I must confess that I have some doubts about always leaving such important matters to regulations. I would be much happier in many ways if such important issues could be contained within the Bill itself. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give me some reassurance when he replies.

The present absent voting provisions have grave defects. Serious abuses occur. One should be concerned about the fact that such abuses might take place on a wider scale, simply because many more people will be able to apply for an absent vote in future, as everyone agrees. In those circumstances, it is important to build in the best possible safeguards. I understand the difficulties of drawing more closely the circumstances in which somebody should be able to apply for an absent vote,

[Mr. Gary Waller]

bearing in mind the difficulties of defining holidays and so on. The best safeguard that we can have lies in the category of persons who should be able to countersign. In clause 7 as it stands, it might appear that we are providing absent votes on demand. Many party agents and, indeed, many electoral registration officers who have seen the clause have assumed that we are providing for absent votes on demand.

The possibility for abuse is particularly great in elections where the turnout is especially low. The sort of elections that spring immediately to mind are local government elections. We are extending the provision to them. At those elections, the turnout is sometimes as low as 30 per cent. Many of those who would be prepared to turn out in a parliamentary election, and have a commitment to a particular party, are not prepared to turn out at a local government election. Party activists going round the houses could say to people who said that they had a commitment to that party but doubted whether they would bother to go out and vote, "If you are in some doubt as to whether you will go out and vote, why not fill in an application for a postal vote? It is very easy. You are entitled to it and it will save you the trouble of going out to vote." Even those who are keen to vote could see the advantages of exercising their right to vote at home. As many hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), said on Second Reading, once we get away from the secrecy of the polling booth, the validity of the vote falls into doubt. There is a big question mark over the validity of the poll.

Therefore, we must first define as carefully as we can the "relevant circumstances", to use the terms of the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. I should like the "relevant circumstances", to be defined reasonably closely. I should like the countersignatory to confirm not only that the applicant is who he claims to be, but that the circumstances in which he is applying for an absent vote are genuine and justified.

Who is the countersignatory to be? My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) referred to some of the difficulties that arise in relation to the wide range of categories laid down in the amendment. I believe that it is probably right to limit the countersignatories to justices of the peace. The reason is simply that when they take up that office they accept certain responsibilities. We all know that there are JPs who are willing to countersign various applications, for reasons that we would not consider justified. Some JPs are much more true than others to the principles to which they swore when they took up that office. Just as JPs are specified for various purposes in the Representation of the People Act 1983, it is right that in this part of the Bill they should be the ones who have to countersign.

I hope that careful consideration will be given to that aspect, because it is one of the most important parts of the Bill. I also hope that at the end of the day nobody will be able to claim, as many people believe at present, that we are allowing absent voting on demand.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I believe that an absent vote is a right, but it must be established. It is not an automatic right. Therefore, having counter-signatures, in whatever provision requires it, is correct. I should have thought that the initial provisions of the Bill made greater sense than the list supplied to us by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). Immediately the list is in front of us, it is apparent that it is not exhaustive——

Mr. Forth: It is exhausting.

Mr. Bruinvels: Indeed, it is exhausting.

It is apparent that trade union officials should have been on the list, as well as matrons of old people's homes and so on. There is no doubt that it could be extended. If there is to be a list, I should prefer it to be returned to the original provisions. I have looked carefully at the provisions, and I must ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed why the right is given to some people and not to others. Why should this be an elitist list, as it is in a way? The list includes a Member of Parliament, a justice of the peace and a minister of religion, compared with a bank officer and a schoolteacher. It is a strange cross-section of people.

I do not necessarily accept that it is a middle-class cross-section of people, but it is strange to link an established civil servant with a doctor. It is particularly amusing, on this day of all days, that under the proposed list we are looking for a civil servant to countersign. I understood that Clive Ponting was an established civil servant, and does not like signing anything. For that reason alone, it is a strange provision.

A minister of religion is included in the list. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) referred to that. All that I would say is that some ministers do not know the truth, for example, about the virgin birth or other points. One must wonder whether they are the right people. I have great confidence in the medical profession. Its members might be around for many years and know the person since birth.

Mr. William Powell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to express great confidence in the medical profession, but has he noticed that in the drafting a distinction is drawn between a civil servant and an established civil servant, but no such distinction is drawn between doctors? The words "established doctor" do not appear. When he refers to doctors, no doubt my hon. Friend will bear it in mind that the doctor will not have to produce any evidence that he is a duly qualified doctor, if that meaning is to be attached to the word "established".

Mr. Bruinvels: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There is no evidence that the doctor is established and no evidence that he is a medical person. He could be a doctor of letters or a doctor of law.

Mr. Bermingham: Or Dr. Death.

Mr. Bruinvels: I should not like him to sign my application. That could be the kiss of death.

The idea of having to compare one group with another is abhorrent. The definition of

"a person of similar standing"

is another peculiar way of trying to assess what sort of person can countersign an application. Surely our main purpose must be to ensure that those who want to vote in their absence are legitimately witnessed in their application and their vote. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will confirm that the provisions as itemised in detail, without the amendment, make far more sense than the details set out in the amendment. For that reason alone, I cannot support the amendment.

Sir John Farr: I heard most of the debate on the amendment before I left the Chamber. I had the opportunity of listening to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) as he moved the amendment. As I said after he had moved the previous amendment, it is a pity to see him knocking around with a suspicious attitude to everyone. He seems to be suggesting that everyone must be vetted by one of the persons listed in the amendment.

Until the hon. Gentleman introduced amendment No. 39, the debate had been one of relative harmony and mutual good humour. It is regrettable that the hon. Gentleman saw fit to introduce an acid-like amendment. It is even more regrettable that he has now introduced another similar amendment. To my simple way of thinking, it suggests that the Liberal party does not trust anyone without having him vetted, whatever he does, if electoral practice is involved. That is extraordinary. It is not the right way to attract new voters to an up-and-coming party.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been following the debates on the Bill very carefully. If he had been following them with care, he would have noticed that until a relatively late stage in our proceedings it was the Government's view that no one in Northern Ireland should have the extended absent voting rights given to him that are proposed for those in the rest of the United Kingdom. The Government have conceded, as a result of argument, discussion, and perhaps a little pressure, that it would be reasonable to make the extension. Both sides of the Committee have been considering ways in which it would be reasonable to extend postal voting and the conditions that should be attached to the extensions.

Sir John Farr: I was about to address myself to the qualifications of those who are supposed to pry into the qualifications of a voter. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) has said, a minister of religion is a rather nebulous creature at this moment. If he were a bishop, I would say definitely that he would not be an acceptable object. Let us suppose that the minister is of lower standing than a bishop. Does a minister in the Church of Scientology count as a minister of religion? Has the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed thought out the consequences of his rather vague amendment, which could have the most appalling results if it were enacted?

As for the reference to

"a person of similar standing"—

well, really! With great respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), that would provide a remunerative lawyer's paradise. With all respect to my hon. Friend, he could spend days and weeks at someone's expense arguing what that provision means. I am sure that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has not thought out the amendment carefully. When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State replies, I hope that he will take fairly short steps in throwing it out.

8.45 pm

Mr. Mellor: I would not want the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) to feel hard done by. He has tabled an amendment that sets out the qualifications for those who should countersign applications for passports and he is entitled to do that as a basis for discussing the countersignatory arrangements for absent voting. When he returns home this evening to his Bournvita and a pamphlet on site value rating, I would not want him to feel depressed by the thought that he alone threw a spanner in an otherwise harmonious works. I say that to him from the bottom of my heart. He should not take this too hard.

Coming to business, the fact is that, contrary to what my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said—I appreciate that he was putting the point of view of others and not his own—this is not a part of the Bill that offers absent voting on demand. Clause 7 deals with a unified requirement, so that one test has to be satisfied instead of a mass of anomalous tests. The ERO has to be satisfied that the applicant's circumstances on the date of the poll will be such, or are likely to be, that he cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person. A form will have to be completed to set out the reasons for that. We think that the ERO should have the benefit of seeing the signature of the individual making the application, which will be written in the knowledge that it will be a criminal offence to make a false declaration. We think that there should also be a countersignature. That is my view and I do not think that anyone is arguing against that. The issue that troubles me is whether there should be any restriction based on employment, or some other test, on the sort of person who should be able to act as a countersignatory.

Mr. Beith: Several of the Minister's hon. Friends, notably the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), seemed to be arguing that there should be no countersignature. I hope that the Minister will address himself to that argument.

Mr. Mellor: Yes, I think that the primary intention of my hon. Friends might have been to send the hon. Gentleman home to his Bournvita and a pamphlet on site value rating. Perhaps they were not necessarily concerned to torpedo for ever the idea that he has put before the Committee. It is possible that they were arguing that it was damned by its association with the hon. Gentleman. If the argument had been presented to them cold, without them knowing that the hon. Gentleman had advocated it, their attitude might have been different. That is merely idle speculation on my part.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will appreciate that I have been taking his argument seriously. Indeed, I have defended his contribution to thought. Passport application forms require the signatures of anomalous categories and the requirements have been endorsed by successive Governments as being those which should be satisfied before passports may be obtained. I do not criticise the hon. Gentleman for having moved the amendment. The Government take the view in the White Paper that the qualifications of the countersignatory should be registration as an elector and someone who is known to the applicant, but not a member of his family, who is prepared to certify that to the best of his knowledge—there is a penal sanction attached to that — the circumstances described in the application form are true.

We opened up the matter rather more widely in the absent voting consultation paper by suggesting that the qualification should be further tightened by limiting it to certain categories of person. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has mentioned a possible way in which that could be achieved. Further restrictions might have been produced, for instance, by limiting the number

[Mr. Mellor]

of applications which an elector can sign. Of course, a medical practitioner would be exempted from those requirements.

I have listened to the debate with an open mind, because it is true that regulations will be made in due course. That is the normal practice, and not a sinister recent manifestation of a desire to keep things out of the statute book, as my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley suggested. There will be consultations with the parties and the local authority associations before regulations are introduced, so nothing that we say tonight is conclusive.

In so far as I have listened to the arguments and they have had an impact on me, I believe that the speech of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) was especially effective. He asked why the warden of an old person's home or of sheltered accommodation could not be a signatory. I hope that I have not damned the hon. Gentleman's career for ever by praising him. If I have, I shall withdraw my remarks immediately and attack him, so that his status and credibility might be restored.

He also mentioned trade union officials. We must recognise that any list of categories, even one as well hallowed by time and experience as the list for passport applications, is open to anomalies and does not withstand much cross-examination. On that basis, I shall leave the debate, having invited the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed to withdraw his amendment, thinking that it will be difficult, and possibly undesirable, to insert any qualifications beyond the fact that the countersignatory must be a registered elector, known to the applicant, but not a part of his family, and prepared to make the required certification.

Mr. Bermingham: I rise immediately to defend my hon. Friend and office sharer the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who raised an important point. Perhaps eventually the qualifications of countersignatories will be introduced in regulations. The Minister may consider that that matter should be brought back to the House, because it would be an opportunity to tidy up some of the anomalies in other countersignatory cases, for example in passport applications, which can give rise to much hardship and nuisance.

Mr. Mellor: That matter would have to be considered separately. As to the regulations, proper consultation will be carried out with the parties and the local authority associations. Therefore, nothing can be concluded tonight. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed simply wished to have a demonstration of the Government's thinking on the matter. The more that I have thought about it, having flirted with the idea of a restricted list, the more I believe that the proposition in the White Paper is probably the best one.

Mr. Waller: Will my hon. Friend consider whether the category should be limited to justices of the peace, who are established in the Representation of the People Act 1983 as the only people who can sign applications for several purposes? If one said that any elector in a constituency who was not related to the applicant could countersign his application, in practical terms that might become a case of absent votes on demand, although it may not be so in theory. There would be no realistic way in which a returning officer could check whether an application was justified.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend has moved back to another point, but perhaps I should deal with it. If the applicant is prepared to assert that the reason why he is not at his home address is that he is away on business, there is no penal sanction attached to that. One might just as well say in this case that, if someone is prepared to tell a big enough lie, no electoral registration officer can deal with him. We propose a much more formalised method of application which requires someone else to join in the deception, if there is a deception, and we are introducing a penal sanction. I do not agree that it will create absent voting on demand. We are making absent votes properly available to those who need them. There will always be some abuse, as there is with the present system.

As to my hon. Friend's point about justices of the peace, I believe that other hon. Members thought that that would be too restrictive, as do I. We must be practical about this matter. Although it is true that prudent people —the wise virgins who trim their wicks appropriately, as the biblical injunction states—will have made their arrangements for postal votes well before the whistle blows for an election, many people will not — *[Interruption.]* I am sorry if I have offended the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) by getting my biblical quotation wrong. The election will be called probably no more than three weeks and two days before the polling date, and postal votes will close about two weeks and three days before that date. There will be barely a week in which to make all the arrangements for postal votes. If all the people who will be away on holiday at the time of the election will frantically make arrangements, I wonder whether only justices of the peace could cope with it.

That is another reason why we must have the courage of our convictions and accept that the arguments advanced by some of my hon. Friends, and especially well advanced by the hon. Member for Rother Valley, are conclusive. We should not try to create categories other than that the countersignatory must be an adult elector who is not related to the applicant.

Mr. Beith: The debate has brought out some interesting matters, including a rather sharp division of opinion in the Conservative party. Some Conservative Members believe that there should be a much narrower category of people allowed to countersign an application for an absent vote—narrower than the category that I advanced in my purely probing amendment, and narrower than the Government considered at an earlier stage.

The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) suggested that it should be limited to justices of the peace. I have not so far detected any support for so restricted a category. However, other Conservative Members have given the impression that a countersignature should not be necessary. Unusually, I find myself midway between those two extremes of Tory thinking.

Absent voting must be extended with some care, for the reasons that I advanced earlier, and for the reasons which led the Government originally to have doubts about the extent to which they would make available a provision for absent voting. Therefore, a countersignature system must be necessary, and my thinking is moving along much the same lines as the Minister's on this matter.

The provision described by the Minister, which will feature in the regulations, together with penal sanctions, may be sufficient for this purpose, but the debate has

brought out something else. Among the Government's supporters, the present arrangements for the approval of passport applications are viewed with something bordering on contempt. They are certainly viewed as an inadequate model for fundamentally important provisions, such as the right to an absent vote.

Those views have even more worrying implications, because the control of passports is related to the prevention of terrorism and to many other major issues with which the Home Office is concerned. The fact that this brief examination has displayed the inadequacies, as a model for absent voting, of the present list of people who can authorise passport applications demonstrates that the Minister will have to consider those matters as well. It would appear that there is no support in the Conservative party for the present arrangements for issuing passports. What we should do now when people come to us with their inevitable passport applications I am not sure.

9 pm

The arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) about who might be on a limited list, to use the Government's favourite phrase, apply equally to both issues. The passport list is out of date and does not provide an adequate model. I agree that wardens in old people's homes and wardens in sheltered accommodation would be appropriate for countersignature purposes. They are already sometimes involved in obtaining postal votes for people on medical grounds. There is no reason, therefore, why they should not also be involved in this part of the process. I agree with what the hon. Member for Rother Valley said about the extended categories that ought to be included for all of these purposes. If there is to be a list, it is logical that it should be the same for one Home Office purpose as for another.

On balance, the Minister is probably on the right lines in assuming that the more open attestation provided by an elector to whom the person is known is probably adequate for the purpose; but an element of danger still exists, and I am surprised and concerned that some hon. Members seem to be unaware that there is a problem. I acquit one or two Conservative Members of that charge. However, those who assume that the extension and ease of application for postal votes would create no difficulties do not understand what led to the Government having doubts in the first place about its extension to Northern Ireland. As hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies have mentioned, the problems there may be greater in scale, but they could arise on this side of the water. It is for that reason that the Labour party has been more cautious and unwilling to extend voting rights than either the alliance or the Government. That fact is not recognised by some Conservative Members.

I recognise that the Minister is putting forward fairly sensible proposals. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. William Powell: It would be wrong to allow clause 7 to pass without noting that it introduces a most important change, which fortunately has proved uncontroversial. By means of this clause we are extending the right to vote to people who are on holiday. A very important change is being made to our electoral law. I take this opportunity to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State upon clause 7. The passing of this clause will mark a tremendous improvement in our electoral law.

Sir John Farr: The heading to clause 7 relates to the absent vote at a particular election and to the absent voters list. I wrongly put down an amendment relating to holidaymakers under clause 6. Holidaymakers are fully covered in clause 7. At the last election it troubled me greatly that one came across people who had lost their vote, either through their own ill health or through the ill health of a close relative. The Committee will say that we cannot cater for ill health or for the fact that somebody has suffered an unfortunate bereavement and therefore cannot be expected to leave the place of death or the family home to register his vote elsewhere.

At the last election I came across several instances of people whose close relatives were seriously ill. I have in my files a letter from one gentleman who had to spend his time continuously at the bedside of his wife. She had been taken gravely ill at short notice. He could find nobody to take his place in order to allow him to go and vote. I promised this gentleman and all the other people who wrote to me that when the Bill came before the House I should seek to introduce what I call an emergency clause.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) has pointed out many of the omissions from the Bill. It does not contain an emergency clause. I believe that there should be a longstop of that kind to cover a human tragedy. I should have liked to see an emergency clause, so that all the carefully laid plans of my hon. Friend in clause 7 could not be set at naught overnight. I should have liked to see an emergency clause so that we could do our best to bring some form of voting justice to those who, through no fault of their own, are deprived of the vote.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: In May 1983 the *Leicester Mercury* launched a campaign throughout Leicestershire calling for a change in the law to bring about absent voting and to give holidaymakers the right to vote.

Clause 7 is welcome on behalf of my constituents and others throughout the country. The campaign that was launched in Leicester was a great success. Democracy can now be seen to have an effective part to play. Many people will now use the opportunity to vote, and I look forward to seeing increased Conservative majorities in many constituencies.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 7 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 8 to 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1

MANNER OF VOTING

Question proposed, That this schedule be the First Schedule to the Bill.

Mr. Waller: Part III of schedule 1 deals with absent voting at municipal elections in the City of London. This is the only part of a complicated Bill which is related to an area which has quite different elections from the rest of the country. It is important that hon. Members should be aware that the City of London corporation, a body much involved with pomp and tradition, is a significant planning authority. If one considers the number of electors in the

[Mr. Waller]

city, it is almost the most important planning authority in the country. Enormously important decisions are made by that authority. Following the abolition of the GLC it will become even more important. It will become a unitary authority.

Why is absent voting in the City of London so important? It is particularly important because many of those who are entitled to vote in elections to the City corporation do not reside or work in the city. Any partnership which has premises in the City of London can provide for each of those partners a vote for every ward in the city in which those premises are situated.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: As a freeman of the City of London myself, I think that my hon. Friend will agree with me that it is inequitable that a partner in, for instance, a firm of chartered accountants may nominate certain wards in which to vote and thereby prolong an unfair voting practice.

Mr. Waller: My hon. Friend points to an important issue. Many firms have offices in several different wards. One well-known firm of chartered accountants with approximately 65 partners situated in various parts of the United Kingdom has premises in four different wards in the City of London. Many firms with more than 100 partners have offices in the city. I refer to partnerships, because companies are not able to endow their directors with votes. Sixteen firms have premises in more than one ward. The only requirement to qualify for a vote is that one should pay £10 in rates per annum. Therefore, one could have an entitlement to a vote in the City of London elections if the firm for which one worked had a car parking space.

The issue becomes more serious when one realises that some wards have as many as several thousand electors and others have as few as 30. It has been calculated that, by the expenditure of approximately £12,500 in the payment of rates in one year in carefully selected wards, it would be possible to take control of the City of London corporation and be responsible for all the important decisions made in that area. I do not suggest that that will happen in a conspiratorial way, but sooner or later doubts will arise about elections in the City of London for the reasons that I have put forward. It is therefore important, before it is too late——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am finding it a little difficult to relate the remarks of the hon. Gentleman to schedule 1 to the Bill, which is fairly narrow and technical. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can link his remarks to schedule 1.

Mr. Waller: A large proportion of those who vote in the City of London do so by post. As schedule 1, part III, is concerned with postal votes in the City of London, I consider this to be an important part of the Bill which has so far attracted too little attention. I hope that, by speaking tonight, I may have started an extended debate.

Dr. Marek: I support the sense of what the hon. Gentleman said about the City of London. I hope that some hon. Members will turn their attention to this matter, and table appropriate amendments on Report.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Clause 11

OFFENCES AS TO DECLARATIONS, ETC.

Mr. Bermingham: I beg to move amendment No. 79, in page 15, line 34, leave out

"offence"

and insert

"illegal practice".

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 80, in page 15, leave out lines 36 and 37 and add

"guilty of an illegal practice".

Mr. Bermingham: I suggest that we do not discuss amendment No. 80 because a penal sanction must be made under clause 11.

Amendment No. 79 would bring matters into line with other provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his brevity. I am happy to tell him that anybody who makes a false declaration in order to become an overseas voter will commit an offence under section 61 of the Representation of the People Act 1983. Section 61 offences are punishable as illegal practices and the penalties would include disqualification from voting. I think that the hon. Gentleman already has what he seeks.

Mr. Bermingham: I beg to ask leave to withdraw amendment No. 79.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Dr. Marek: I hope that, when postal votes are checked at a count, the returning officer will be able to compare the signature on the postal vote with the original signature on the application form.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 12

DEPOSIT BY CANDIDATES AT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

9.15 pm

Sir John Farr: I beg to move amendment No. 51, in page 16, line 6, leave out '£1,000' and insert '£500'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, we may take the following amendments: No. 70, in page 16, line 6, leave out '£1,000' and insert

'£500 or such amount as the Secretary of State may by order determine; no order shall be made under this section unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament'.

No. 52, in page 16, line 9, leave out 'one twentieth' and insert 'one tenth'.

No. 85, in page 16, line 9, leave out 'one twentieth' and add 'three fortieths'.

New clause 7—*Abolition of deposit and increase in number of nominations*—

'(1) In Schedule 1 of the principal Act, paragraph 9 ("Deposit") shall cease to have effect;

(2) In paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 1 in the principal Act, for the word "eight" there shall be substituted "at least one hundred".'.

New clause 8—*Nomination papers*—

'In Schedule 1 to the principal Act paragraph 7(2) shall cease to have effect.'.

New clause 11—*Exemption from deposit*—

'In Schedule 1 to the Principal Act (Parliamentary elections rules) shall be added a new rule 1013

"(8A) A candidate shall be exempted from the requirement of depositing a sum with the returning officer provided that he is the nominated candidate of a registered political party as defined in the Schedule (Registered Political Parties)".'.

New clause 23—*Conditions for nomination*—

'Schedule 1 to the principal Act shall be amended by substituting for rules 9 and 53 the following rule—

"A nomination shall not be valid unless it is signed by 500 electors of the Division for which that nomination is made; the nomination shall remain valid notwithstanding a margin of error in the number of five per cent.; and any such nomination may be presented for checking by the returning officer during a period of six months prior to the date of a parliamentary election".'.

Amendment No. 65—*new schedule*—

'REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES

(1) The Secretary of State for the Home Department may, by order, establish a scheme for the registration of political parties. No condition of eligibility shall attach to such a scheme, except that a registration fee, prescribed by the Secretary of State shall be payable.

(2) Any party so registered shall be a registered political party for the purposes of this Act.

(3) No political party will have to register to be able to participate in an election. Political parties not wishing to register will be able to continue to field candidates by the method otherwise prescribed in the principal Act.'.

Sir John Farr: We in the midlands have felt for a long time that £150 is too low for an election deposit. However, the Government's proposed deposit of £1,000 is unrealistically high. The £150 deposit was established many years ago, and, like the dog licence, it has remained unaltered. Action is obviously needed, if only to rule out the huge number of unsuitable candidates who stand for Parliament, particularly at by-elections.

In the past few weeks, I have received many letters from teenagers in schools in my constituency who want to know how to become a Member of Parliament. I have guided them to other constituencies and offered them good advice about their prospects in Leicester and Leicestershire for advancing their career. None of those teenagers has been deterred by the £150 deposit. If we raised the deposit to £1,000, surely that would deter teenagers who are still at school and who are keen on politics and may even want to set up their own party. Such a massive increase in the deposit would be a deterrent to those who aspire to enter Parliament.

I believe that, sooner or later, the House will be televised and that will lead to more people wanting to stand for Parliament. Whatever their reasons, we have no right to bar them by price from attempting to reach the privileged position that we are lucky enough to enjoy.

The deposit recommended in the Bill is definitely too high. No deposit is required in local government elections, but I accept that we must stop the sort of thing that happened in the Chesterfield by-election in February last year. The vast majority of the 17 candidates lost their deposits, but forfeited only £150 each. I will not list all the ridiculous names that appeared in the Chesterfield by-election, but 15 of them lost their deposit.

I want to consider what happens in other countries with which we are closely associated. We may be the oldest practising democracy; I think we are the best but we are not the only one. Fairly close to us is Belgium; the information I have this month is that no deposit is required for a candidate for either House. In Denmark, no deposit is required for a candidate for either House. In France, the deposit for a candidate for the Assemblée Nationale is 1,000 French francs which is about £100. In Germany, no deposit is required of a parliamentary candidate. In Ireland, a candidate for the Dail has to make a deposit of £100. In Italy, no deposit is required. In Canada, the deposit is 200 Canadian dollars. In Japan, it is 2 million yen; no doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) can do an immediate conversion but I think it is about £120. In New Zealand, the deposit is 100 New Zealand dollars which, at the present rate of conversion, is about £80.

The Government have got it wrong in proposing a deposit of £1,000. It will be a deterrent to many people if they have to find such an amount. We want to encourage everyone who wants to stand for election to do so; we do not want them to be deterred by the price.

Mr. Winnick: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman has told us about other countries. It does not persuade me that they are right and we are wrong. Does he know whether facilities such as free postage at elections are afforded to candidates in those countries on the same basis as here?

Sir John Farr: I have all the details but I do not want to detain the Committee too long. Some have requirements about the number of signatures required to support a candidate. Others have different formulae for the percentage of votes that a candidate has to obtain to retain his deposit. Basically they all have a smaller entry fee or membership fee than we have.

I hope my right hon. and learned Friend will accept amendment No. 51, which is fairly near to the suggestion in the report of the Select Committee. I think it recommended a deposit of between £600 and £1,000. I hope, too, that my right hon. and learned Friend will accept my suggestion in amendment No. 52 that the number of votes required to avoid forfeiting a deposit should be one tenth rather than one twentieth. If the deposit were reduced to £500 it would be better at the same time to double the percentage of votes required to save one's deposit from 5 per cent. to 10 per cent. I shall be interested to hear the response of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Beith: Discussion on the Bill has been dogged from the beginning by the issue whether we should put a barrier of a £1,000 deposit in the way of someone who wants to stand for election.

It has been the contention of those who wanted that barrier not only that the £150 figure was long out of date, but that the barrier was needed to deter candidates who were frivolous, undesirable, threatening to our way of life or in some other way worthy of being deterred. It has been the contention of my party throughout the discussions—a contention shared by members of other parties and by a number of people outside the House—that that is not the right approach.

The imposition of a barrier of £1,000 would simply deter those unable to find that sum of money—not necessarily those who were frivolous or those whose motives in standing for election were wrong, perhaps for some commercial or undesirable purpose, or any of the other groups such as those with a racialist policy that some Members of Parliament have thought might be deterred by a high deposit. We have argued that such a high deposit would damage some of the smaller parties, such as the

[Mr. Beith]

Ecology party, which has made representations to Members in all parts of the House, Mebyon Kernow and Plaid Cymru.

A high deposit would present problems even for parties that do not lose deposits. Our position is somewhat different from that of the Labour party which lost 119 deposits at the last general election. We lost barely a handful. Even so, having to put up so large a sum at the beginning of a campaign is a cash flow disability to a party fighting an election. For example, a party might have to find more than £500,000 before funding any of the expenses involved in fighting the election. At a time when its resources are most greatly stretched, that would be a considerable additional burden.

Mr. Winnick: Let us consider the matter on the basis of preserving our parliamentary democracy. Of course we recognise immediately that having a deposit of whatever sum—I am not in favour of £1,000—would not stop candidates whose motive in standing was to promote racial hatred. Does the hon. Gentleman really believe, and is he telling the Committee, that, if the system was changed to one of collecting signatures, that would not help such candidates? Is he not aware that it is such organisations as the National Front which have always advocated that change? Is the hon. Gentleman arguing that a deposit is no deterrent to such candidates and that, on that basis, we should recognise that that would not cause any harm to our parliamentary system?

Mr. Beith: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman because I believe that it is better for parties to stand for election and be shown, as the National Front has been shown, to command minimal support in the country as a whole. It received derisory support in relation to the claims it made. Should it be prevented from putting up candidates and provided with an opportunity to say that because it was denied that opportunity it must take to the streets to put its case? I do not believe that we should give it such an opportunity. The voters, quite sensibly, have shown that the vast majority have no truck with the appalling propositions of the National Front. I recognise that the hon. Gentleman believes that the barrier, whether deposit or signatures, should contribute to discouraging such organisations from putting up candidates at elections. Therefore, we start from a somewhat different approach.

As to the test itself, I believe it would be more relevant to ask whether a candidate enjoys support in the constituency in which he is standing than to ask him to produce money—wherever it may be from, whether inside or outside the constituency. The signature system is, at least in some measure, a test of support from within a constituency.

It is often argued that people can gather signatures in bus queues or while walking down the high street. It is not as simple as that, as those who have had to gather the minimal signatures now required must know. The signatures must be those of valid electors, with the electoral number placed alongside the signatures, which are then checked by the returning officers.

One of the two new clauses grouped with this amendment is designed to remove a technical difficulty from the present arrangements. Whether we have a large or small number of signatures, at present the nomination form must bear valid signatures and no provision is made for the discovery that one signature is accidentally found to be invalid. A new clause which stands in my name and which we will discuss later would ensure, if we went for a system of signatures, that it would be possible to submit 110 signatures, and so long as there were 100 valid signatures on the paper the test would have been satisfied. That is a technical point which I hope will receive the attention of the Home Office.

9.30 pm

The main issue is the test—whether the deposit is a reasonable test of a candidate's support in a constituency, and therefore whether money should be the test. My argument is that signatures are a more valid test and that money is no test at all.

The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) is right to say that, even if we stick with the deposit system, we should not have a level as high as £1,000. Suggestions of £500, for example, seem a marked improvement in terms of the burden that would be placed on parties outside the House and on the initial capital burden which would be placed on the parties represented here.

If, as I believe they will, the Government move away from the £1,000 figure, they will help to relieve themselves of the charge that they might be influenced by the greater financial security of their party compared with others. A change in the deposit figure would help the Government to ensure that such a charge could not be made to stick.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that some Conservative Members would prefer the deposit to be even less, and that an amendment standing in my name suggests £250 so as to give anybody who wishes to stand the chance to do so?

Mr. Beith: It follows from what I have said that I would prefer the smallest deposit to which the Committee is prepared to agree. I do not believe that the size of a candidate's cheque book is a relevant test of any of the questions that we might ask to establish whether a person should avail himself of the opportunities of candidature. I appreciate that there are certain facilities and opportunities given to candidates and that those benefits cost money, such as the free delivery of post. There may be a case for not making those facilities available unless some test has been satisfied.

A financial test is not appropriate, however, and a deposit of £1,000 would be no answer. I would rather a candidate's financial resources were negligible, or virtually nil, so long as he could show that a number of people agreed to the proposition that he should be given the opportunity to stand. I would rather see him given that opportunity, however few votes he gets.

I do not accept the argument that the proliferation of fringe candidates at by-elections or even at general elections is a serious problem with which our democracy cannot contend. I fought a by-election in the early stages of what might be termed the blooming of a thousand flowers of fringe candidates. A number of interesting characters stood against me, representing a variety of strange causes, some from the Conservative and some from the Labour side. They represented various fringes of the political system, while some stood simply as individuals.

The conduct of that by-election in my constituency did not suffer from the presence of those people. Indeed, I do

not believe that the Chesterfield by-election suffered materially or that the electorate were confused by the candidates. As it happens, I do not believe that the voters came to the right conclusion in electing the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Those who voted for or against him were not materially or seriously confused by the presence of other candidates.

Certain other difficulties which arise—such as the ability of a candidate to veto a television broadcast in which a candidate from one of the principal parties wants to appear—should not be resolved by imposing a financial barrier. Such problems, if they need resolving, should be resolved by reference to the rules governing the television appearances of candidates and not by saying that only candidates who can afford more than £1,000 should be able to veto whether another candidate should appear on a television programme.

The deposit approach is mistaken, while the signatures approach is preferable. But if the Committee insists on persevering with the deposit idea, it would be wrong to accept the proposed figure of £1,000.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): In rising at this stage I want to make it absolutely clear that I am in no way seeking to truncate discussion. I merely thought that it would be convenient to give the Government's view.

Unlike the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), I think that the deposit is a perfectly respectable parliamentary barrier founded in principle. It is not just a financial barrier erected to make it more difficult for those who do not have the necessary money. The deposit is founded in principle because the essence of election to Parliament is the contest between people who have serious aspirations to represent a constituency. Everyone is entitled to stand; no one is prevented from standing. It is reasonable that the considerable privileges rightly enjoyed by parliamentary candidates should not be too readily available to those who stand for purposes other than a serious expectation of election. There is a variety of possible purposes. Personal publicity, the sheer fun of standing and the attempt to gain commercial advantage are among the motives that have influenced people to stand for election.

A more respectable motive is to advance a cause or an argument, even though there is no chance of being elected to Parliament. I do not believe that that is other than a distortion of the electoral process. It is possible for people to hold meetings outside an election context and to advance their views in a variety of ways, but if they are standing for Parliament the assumption must be that they regard themselves as people who have some credible chance not just of putting forward views that they would like to make more readily acceptable but of being elected to Parliament.

For those reasons, the deposit is a reasonable barrier—not an obstacle. It is not a barrier that prevents anyone from standing, but one that can be surmounted. The level at which that barrier should be set is a matter of degree.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): Why is the deposit a reasonable test of a person's serious expectation of being elected?

Mr. Brittan: If he places the money down and is prepared to forfeit it, that indicates that he has some reasonable expectation of obtaining the number of votes required for him not to forfeit his deposit. There may be people who are simply prepared to throw their money away and have no serious expectation of obtaining the necessary number of votes. I suggest that there are not many of those people. Not many parties are prepared simply to do that. Therefore, the deposit is a hurdle that must be surmounted. It is not an absolute obstacle.

The benefits conferred upon candidates are considerable. The benefit of the free post is worth about £8,000 alone. It is reasonable to say that that benefit should not be enjoyed by someone who is not prepared to put something at risk.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said that the problems, such as the veto on radio and television appearances, should be dealt with separately. I do not believe that that is so, because such aspects are part of our electoral system, which is designed to ensure fairness. I do not see why they should be removed simply to take away the problems caused by the proliferation of candidates. It is a matter of where one sets the level.

The Home Affairs Select Committee considered that aspect. The £1,000 figure has the respectable backing of the Select Committee's unanimous recommendation. That is the principal reason why that figure appears in the Bill. It is a respectable reason. One must consider that £1,000 is less than half what £150 in 1918 terms would be if translated into today's money. Plainly, any figure is bound to be arbitrary. Therefore, the Government have made it clear that they are prepared to listen to the views of all concerned and to see which figure would command the widest consensus among those who are prepared to accept that the deposit has a proper place in our electoral system.

I listened with great interest to what my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) said in support of the view that £1,000 is too high, and £500 is the right figure. It is no secret that we had discussions with all the parties about those matters, and in particular, as is right and proper, with the major Opposition party, the Labour party, which has a legitimate interest in these matters. As a result of the discussions, I came to the view that the figure of £500 would have the widest common consent in the Committee. Therefore, the Government now commend that figure to the Committee in the spirit of compromise and of wanting a measure such as this to go on the statute book with the widest agreement.

Mr. Winnick: We recognise the need for consensus and welcome the reduction from the proposed £1,000 to £500. Has it occurred to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the sum could have been increased by a more modest figure—say, £250—while retaining the number of votes that have to be gained before losing the deposit? Would that not have been a better way?

Mr. Brittan: I was going to come to that point.

I shall deal, first, with the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) about the deposit not being forfeit, and exempting candidates from paying a deposit if they are nominated by political parties that were registered as such on a scheme to be prescribed by the order of the Secretary of State. I do not find it attractive to have such a registration system for the purpose of exemption of payments of deposits. I do not find it easy to see, although I have not had the benefit of hearing from my hon. Friend, why those parties

[Mr. Brittan]

that are formalised and organised in the way described should be given such a privilege. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, if he catches your eye, Sir Paul, will no doubt be able to deal with the argument as expanded rather than the argument as anticipated.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) asked about the threshold. The right balance is to increase substantially the deposit from £150 to £500, but to reduce the threshold not just from 12 per cent. to the 7·5 per cent. recommended by the Select Committee, but to 5 per cent. I have come to that conclusion because one is trying to set up a forfeit in the form of a deposit, if one wishes to look at it in that way, but a forfeit that should not be lost if the candidate concerned has established that he is a credible candidate in the sense of securing a reasonable percentage of the poll of those who vote in an election.

Again, there cannot be anything absolutely right when we talk about percentages. It can only be a matter of judgment or assessment. I am not proving or demonstrating that 5 per cent. is right or 7·5 per cent. is wrong. An analysis of recent elections will show that a threshold of 5 per cent. is sufficiently high to eliminate purely frivolous candidates, recognising that the word "frivolous" has a high element of subjectivity. At the same time, we should not inhibit the free expression of opinion, and the participation in elections of budding political parties that have serious claims to credibility at the time that they stand for election.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed discussed signatures. I do not commend the signature method to the Committee. The hon. Gentleman airily dismissed the technical problems. Any agent who has been involved in such matters for whatever political party would not dismiss the objections so readily. There might be ways round them, but even collecting the limited number of signatures required at present can be a headache for agents. One cannot simply disregard that.

9.45 pm

More seriously, I rely upon the question of principle. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed talks about 100 signatures and my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) in a new clause refers to 500 signatures. The number of signatures is not a proper test of support because those who sign do not promise their support for the candidate, but merely assent to nomination.

At the trial involving the election of my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) in 1983, it was alleged that one candidate collected his signatures in minutes at the pub opposite the town hall. People sign because they believe that a person should be allowed to stand, not because they support him. Even if we changed that and said that the person who signed was showing his support for the candidate, the problem would still exist. That would be a hollow gesture. It is possible to collect many signatures when all that is asked is to allow a person to stand.

The question is whether we believe it is right to erect some hurdle and impose a penalty if a person does not surmount that hurdle. It is reasonable and right that in an election to choose a Member of Parliament the hurdle should not be placed so high as to prevent serious candidates, but high enough to prevent abuses of the system of the type that have come to the fore in recent years.

In that spirit and for those reasons the Government commend the proposition that the deposit should be raised from £150 to £500 with a 5 per cent. threshold.

I beg to move, That the Chairman do report Progress and ask leave to sit again.

I move that in view of the hour, because many hon. Members wish to participate further in the debate and because we have made good progress.

Question put and agreed to.

Committee report Progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Housing Benefits

9.48 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Benefits Amendment (No. 4) Regulations 1984 (S.I., 1984, No. 1965), dated 17th December 1984, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th December, be annulled.

Those of us who watch these things with interest have seen a degree of activity by the Opposition, including the Official Opposition. The Minister can take it from that that there is an unusually high degree of interest in these regulations. They have been hurried through, arguably without proper consultation. They are ill-thought-out and will have adverse effects on bona fide claimants.

The DHSS seems to have responded with knee-jerk alacrity to some of the newspaper headlines and articles that were carried late in November 1984. The article carried in *The Guardian* on 17 November pointed out in its heading that the housing benefit loophole had appeared and could cost the DHSS as much as £190 million according to its estimates.

The Department responded by introducing these regulations. We have only to look at the front of the regulations to see that they were made on 17 December 1984; they were laid before Parliament on 18 December; and they came into operation on 19 December 1984. That was while we were in the course of the housing benefit review. Mr. Jeremy Rowe, CBE, has only just completed his report. I believe that it is in the hands of Ministers. They are in the course of a fundamental, far-reaching review of the system. Therefore, the least that the Government should have done should have been to defer the new regulations until they could have been incorporated into the complete review.

The introduction of the regulations goes against the Government's stated intention. Their circular HB(84)7 dated 20 December 1984 in paragraph 2 states:

"It is intended to avoid legislative changes wherever possible until decisions have been taken following the report of the Housing Benefit Review."

On 16 November, in a written answer, the Minister says much the same. Against that background, and if that is the Government's decision, why did they bring forward these regulations in this spatchcock and over-hasty fashion? The way in which the regulations have been introduced is undesirable. It raises an issue of some importance.

The way that the Department has operated during this Parliament on some of these issues does not bear careful examination. It does it no credit. Five other sets of regulations have attracted allegations of indecent haste. The first one that came to my attention when I became a Member of the House was in November 1983 when the springless mattress case brought forth a commissioner's decision. The timetable then was that the commissioner's decision was made on 2 November, regulations were laid on 4 November, they were in force on 5 November, referred to the social security advisory committee on 28 November, and debated by Parliament on 5 December. There are other such cases which show that the Department has in the past—I accept that the system is complicated—resorted to introducing regulations over-hastily. It has made something of a mockery of the consultation process.

As evidence of that, may I adduce the statement made by councillor John Donnelly, who is chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities housing committee? His press release dated 9 January 1985 stated:

"effectively we were given only six working days to consider extremely complex proposals"—

which they are—

"with wide-ranging implications. It was quite impossible to provide an adequate response in this timescale. To make matters worse, a few days after the original deadline, more changes were proposed. A response was demanded within four days. But this time the DHSS went one worse: they didn't even given us copies of the amendments proposed!"

Section 36 of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982—the parent Act of the regulations—makes it mandatory that the Secretary of State:

"shall consult with organisations appearing to him to be representative of the authorities concerned."

The Government are in danger of being charged, legitimately, that they are not proceeding or consulting with the appropriate authorities in good faith. That alone is a matter of concern.

Two regulations concern me in particular—regulations 11(3) and 18(3A), which create the new regulations governing joint tenancies. A joint occupier who, within the eight-week period prior to the creation of a joint tenancy or agreement, was a non-dependant of the other joint occupier or occupiers, will not now be eligible for housing benefit. Instead, he will continue to be treated as a non-dependant. That is unless the authority is satisfied that that joint tenancy or other agreement was not created to take advantage of the housing benefit system.

The other important regulation that I should like to discuss is regulation 23, which concerns so-called contrived tenancies. The regulations show that a person shall not be eligible for housing benefit where "it appears" to an authority that the tenancy was created to take advantage of the scheme, unless in the eight weeks prior to the creation of the tenancy or agreement that person already had a liability to make rent or rate payments in respect of that dwelling. Regulation 23 states that a person will not be eligible for housing benefit when he or she

"resides with the person to whom he is liable to pay rent or, as the case may be, to make payments by way of rates"

or

"is a close relative or the tenancy or other agreement between them is other than on a commercial basis."

The term "close relative" is defined to include step relatives and in-laws. That is the import of the regulations.

I should like to refer first to the joint tenancy provisions. In my opinion, the new regulation is unnecessary. I should be obliged if the Minister turned his mind to it. Authorities already had the power, before the regulations, to disallow benefit when a tenancy or agreement, or joint tenancy, had been created to take advantage of the housing benefit scheme. I should be obliged if the Minister will confirm that my interpretation of the previous statutes is right. If so, why was it necessary to rush through the provisions on joint tenancies?

We must also deplore the change because it will add to the confusion that already exists between the housing benefit regulations and the Housing Act 1980. An occupier can at one and the same time be a joint owner or a tenant under the Housing Act and a non-dependant under the housing benefit legislation. Moreover, the new power contradicts the Government's Housing Act. On the one hand, in the Act they are actively encouraging council

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

tenants jointly to purchase their homes with their co-occupiers, yet on the other hand the new regulation will discourage council tenants from becoming joint owners.

The new regulation has been framed in such a way that authorities have a duty — as far as I understand the regulations — to refuse benefit unless they are satisfied that the joint tenancy or agreement was not created to take advantage of the scheme. If that is so, claimants are being viewed as guilfy until they are proved innocent. That is the wrong way round.

I have looked at the regulation carefully. Neither the regulation nor the official guidance HB(84)7, which accompanies it, provides authorities with any criteria that they should apply to satisfy themselves that a joint tenancy or agreement was or was not created to take advantage ofthe scheme. The Minister will know that the review procedure that is instituted to try to disentangle some of the problems is different from the procedures that apply under the social security scheme. There is a great danger that different councils in different parts of the country will interpret some of the regulations and provisions differently, and we shall end up with a patchwork of different decisions being taken by review panels. It is possible to take decisions to judicial review.

Local housing authorities will be trying to set up housing benefit regulations under the terms of the new order with little guidance and in some instances the Department of Health and Social Security will be saying that if benefit is paid when it does not think that payment is justified the payment will not be reimbursed. There are many problems that still have to be resolved.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is my hon. Friend aware that in various parts of the country, including the one that I represent, some local authorities are making back-payments of benefit under the regulations which the ones we are considering supersede? I have in mind especially striking miners who are single men and living at home. Many striking miners sense that the regulations were rushed in to hit them. The inequity between local authorities seems even worse.

Mr. Kirkwood: I substantiate entirely that which my hon. Friend has put before the House. He has illustrated the argument that I am advancing. I sense that others may wish to take up the point about the miners because it forms an important part of the background against which the contrived tenancy regulations were introduced, but I do not seek to deal with it. It is true that there is great potential for confusion and differences in interpretation throughout the country.

My interpretation of the regulations leads me to the conclusion that regulation 23 is unnecessary. I think that authorities have sufficient power to disallow benefit where a tenancy agreement has been contrived to take advantage of the housing benefit scheme. I do not see that regulation 23 takes us very much further forward. As I interpret the regulations, they will disallow benefits where tenancy agreements are merely contrived or intended to be so. In some instances they will discourage tenants from renting a dwelling or spare room that they would otherwise wish to rent. If that analysis is right, the regulations will encourage the underuse of accommodation, which is something that I think the Minister would deplore.

Paragraph (1) of regulation 23 gives authorities blanket power to disallow benefit where it appears that a tenancy agreement has been created to take advantage of the housing benefit scheme. Neither the new regulations nor the accompanying circular HB(84)7 gives authorities any guidance on the criteria that should be deployed in deciding whether a tenancy has been "contrived". Is a tenancy to be regarded as contrived when the tenant knows, is friendly with, or on close and friendly terms with the landlord before he or she first rents the accommodation? It is clear that there will be great variations between authorities in the way in which that issue is interpreted. Unjustified variations will result in the income maintenance system.

Paragraph (2) of regulation 23 is equally misguided. Many people with a spare room are understandably unwilling to let it to a complete stranger but would be prepared to let it to those with whom they are familiar, such as relatives. The change in the regulations could prevent them from being able to do so. Relatives will be unwilling to rent accommodation when they will be unable to obtain housing benefit. In certain circumstances the regulation will encourage under-occupation, which is to be regretted.

The definition of "close relative" is so wide that it includes those such as step-relatives and in-laws, who may not be at all close. Some of us have in-laws who are close and some of us have in-laws who are not. The definitions as drawn in the regulation will cause many difficulties apart from the definition of "close relative" that is used in respect of non-dependants providing domestic assistance for disabled persons, for example. Why is there this contradiction?

Even more serious is the fact that many tenants of bona fide resident landlords will no longer be able to claim housing benefits. Many resident landlords let spare rooms, not for commercial reasons but to help to repay their mortgages, yet under the new regulations, if a tenancy is on other than a commercial basis, a tenant of a resident landlord will not be eligible for benefit. Again, that will make it more difficult for resident landlords to let spare rooms and will thus encourage under-occupation. It could even make it more difficult for people on low incomes to afford the cost of mortgages.

My complaint is that the regulations are unnecessary. I appreciate that there are many difficulties, and I am sure that other hon. Members will wish to deal with the contrived tenancy as it relates to the National Union of Mineworkers. The Government were ill-advised to introduce the regulations when they did against that background. I do not believe that they did so maliciously, but that they took an adminstrative decision in good faith. However, as politicians, they should have realised that a sensitive issue was involved. Their action served to exacerbate the industrial dispute. By any subjective or objective test, the regulations are unnecessary, premature and ill-advised, and if I have the opportunity later this evening, I shall advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against them.

10.5 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Housing benefit has always had two purposes. The first was to help those in need with their housing costs so that everyone could live in some comfort whether they could afford it or not. The idea was always that we should charge whatever

rent was necessary for good management and then subsidise the tenants who were in need. However, in practice, the housing benefits scheme has proved to do rather less and rather more than that. For example, many councils, which are the only bodies to have deregulated rents, do not charge enough rent. The reason why they do not charge enough rent is that they have the misguided idea that their tenants are paying the rent when in fact they are not. Many councils do not spend those rents wisely. They tend to spend the money, for example, on neighbourhood centres instead of on repairs. That is why there is such poor accommodation in many of our cities. Many councils now make a profit on their housing revenue accounts, which is one reason why public expenditure always increases. The DHSS is now subsidising the Department of the Environment, as I am sure my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench realise.

The secondary objective of housing benefits was to introduce some efficiency into the muddle of the different systems of rebates and to reduce the misappropriation of funds whereby tenants received rent moneys, but did not pay them over. But given the history of housing benefits since their inception nearly two years ago, perhaps the less said about their contribution to efficiency, the better.

In publishing the orders the Government have acted correctly to preserve the spirit of housing benefit as I have tried to enunciate it—to help those in housing need, with the better and more efficient use of public money.

A family claiming housing benefit is subject to deductions for each working non-dependant at home. In my view, that is right. We should expect such people, if they are working, to make a contribution. But if they became joint tenants, they could all claim housing benefit. *The Guardian* on 17 November 1984 estimated that about 700,000 households could do that, and so gain up to £500 a year at a cost of about £190 million a year to the DHSS. In addition, we have heard references tonight to striking miners. A person not eligible for supplementary benefit, such as a young miner on strike who lives at home with his parents—in other words, a non-householder would still be eligible for housing benefit if the rules were not changed, provided that he is paying some form of board and lodging. Therefore, either as joint tenants or as spurious sub-tenants, people would become eligible for housing benefit.

It is interesting to see the example that was quoted in *The Guardian*, which relates to the Newton family. They had a single tenancy. The husband and wife are low-paid workers earning £110 a week!—I thought we paid our Ministers rather better than that. They have an 18-year-old apprentice son earning £50 a week and a 14-year-old daughter at school. They pay £18 a week in rent and £6 a week in rates. Perhaps the changes that were introduced in a written answer last week by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House would encourage the Newton family to buy a second home and to claim mortgage interest relief from the parliamentary allowance. As a result, the Newton family is not entitled to claim housing benefit under the rules as they have been interpreted until recently. However, if the Newton family decide to have a joint tenancy instead and they split the rent into two-thirds parents and one-third son, they will then be entitled to receive £2·08 per week housing benefit for the parents and the son will receive £8 per week benefit. The total benefit is £10·08 per week, a gain of over £500 a year. That is a loophole of a very large kind and of a very expensive kind.

A question was asked a moment or so ago about why they should not be able to claim that money. In my view, it is inappropriate that £190 million of public money should be pirated in this way. I can think of much better ways of spending it—for example, on the National Health Service—and I can think of no good reason why the working miners of south Derbyshire should have to dig deeper into their pockets for the taxation which they worked so hard to earn in order to provide housing benefit for strikers in Yorkshire and one or two other places, whose main activity seems to have been to come and cause mayhem in my constituency.

But it was the headline of the *Guardian* article which caught my eye. It is called, "Yes please, Minister." That is exactly what is going on here, in my view. There is an entire industry of people in organisations like SHAC, Shelter and one or two others — which often do extremely good work in housing and look after people in housing need extremely well—scouring the thousands of pages of DHSS regulations and examining in detail the loosely knitted and ill fitting garment that is the housing benefit scheme looking for loopholes and gaps.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Does the hon. Lady recognise that if her Government restored the duty that DHSS officers once served under but which was removed by this Government, namely, to remind claimants of their rights, it might not be necessary for such an industry to exist?

Mrs. Currie: I have no doubt that however many DHSS officers we had there would be a number of highly competent people in voluntary organisations reading between the lines and trying to figure out whether they could encourage people to claim things which the scheme was never intended to give and which it is not funded to give at all. In my view, housing benefit has become a raiment which keeps out the cold only in isolated places. It has got holes all over it that are big enough to let the most unattractive of creatures get inside. The trouble is that it is the people in need who suffer and the people quids in who tend to clean up.

A large number of people are now dependent upon housing benefit. We spend over £4 billion a year on it and we aid something like 7 million households. Without meaning to we have created a major support for some of the most disadvantaged people in our society and a large number of others. It is a support which I suspect cannot now easily be abolished — all the more reason for ensuring that the system is sound and defensible. What Shelter and the other organisations were doing was contrived and exploitative and had nothing whatever to do with housing need. The Government were timely and correct to act as they did.

10.12 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Having heard the speech of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), I am almost tempted to have sympathy for the Minister because of the impossible pressures he faces from his own Back Benchers.

As you will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my speeches in the House are nowadays rare. There is as yet no Government Department to which I can relate. However, I speak on this occasion specifically because of the representations I have received from my own local

[Mr. Robin Cook]

authority. During the past year it has been alarmed at the growing number of households who find themselves increasingly in arrears following the dramatic rise a year ago in the non-dependant deductions. However, it discovered to its great delight at the end of November 1984 that it was legally possible for it to pay benefit to non-dependants who were making that deduction. But only three weeks later it found that this Government, having discovered that it was assisting those who were in arrears, were taking specific and speedy action to block up that loophole.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to the miners who are claiming benefit by means of this loophole. The National Union of Mineworkers is relevant to this debate if only because the NUM showed ingenuity not previously shown by Shelter, CPAG or Temple Bar in discovering this loophole. It is to their credit that it did. I suspect that the miners are also relevant to the debate because of the remarkable speed with which the Government have acted.

Reference has already been made to the short period for consultation: six days for consultation on first appearance and four days for consultation with the amendments. Only the NUM could prompt the Government to act with such speed.

But at that point the miners and the NUM cease to be relevant to the regulations before us, because the regulations hit not just the miners but every family which finds itself in the same position. The regulations do not say specifically that they will deny benefit to miners who are non-dependants. Even the Government have not got to the stage of introducing a specific statutory restraint on miners which would take us back to the 16th century and the days of colliery serfs. The regulations will stop anybody in that position receiving benefit.

Let me draw the attention of the House to the lack of logic behind what is being proposed. On the one hand, the Government recognise that there are non-dependants who are close relatives and who are paying rent and rates charges to the chief tenant. The Government could hardly do other, having so increased the deductions from the benefit received by the chief tenants in respect of those non-dependants. Indeed, the Government now base their assumptions about the housing benefit that they will pay on the clear understanding that those non-dependants, those close relatives, are paying rent and rates.

Since April 1984, the charges that the Government have assumed are being paid by those non-dependants have more or less doubled. For an 18 to 20-year-old in work the charge went up from £4·55 in April 1983 to £8·80 in November last year. The reason for that dramatic rise in non-dependant deductions was not the sudden discovery by the Government of the importance of the filial duty of the son or daughter towards the chief tenant, but was purely and simply financial. The Secretary of State had to find £200 million in savings and he found half that sum by obliging non-dependants to pay an increased deduction towards the housing benefit of their parents.

The regulations rub salt into that wound. Having required those non-dependants, those close relatives, to pay rent and rates on a considerable sum to their parents, the chief tenants, they now prevent those non-dependants from getting housing benefit in their own right. It should be noted that on strict financial grounds, on the income criteria, the great majority of those non-dependants would qualify for housing benefit.

The income of teenagers has never been high. The Government have taken many measures to make sure that it goes down rather than increases. The general level of teenage wages in the population as a whole has declined under the Government. Indeed, the Government have introduced a system by which they will subsidise employers if they will pay teenagers £50 or less—the youth workers scheme. It is an interesting comment that tonight we are debating the Government's anxiety to avoid subsidising the teenager in meeting his housing costs, while on the other hand they are perfectly willing to subsidise an employer who will exploit that teenager's work.

The Child Poverty Action Group has carried out a survey of 111 households which are in a band relevant to these regulations. That survey of households which responded to a letter from the CPAG in the *Daily Star* discovered that the highest wage received by the non-dependants was £85 a week. That is below half average earnings. Most of those involved were well below that figure. Indeed, most of them were earning only about half that figure.

Many of those caught in those households, were it not for the regulations before us, could qualify for full rebate on the non-dependant deduction which the Government assume that they pay as a rent and rates charge to the chief tenant. Some of them have barely £8·80 a week left to give after they have paid for their food, heating and fares from their wage.

Hon. Members may accept, as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South did so clearly and unequivocally, the principle of such a deduction, but there are strong grounds for challenging such a principle and it is interesting that that principle is applied in our law only to the poorest and most vulnerable families in Britain. I often have it brought home to me just how inequitable the Government are by how decently, nicely and sweetly they treat me. When my children reach the age of 18 and proceed to earn an income, even if they succeed in earning an income that rivals that of the Secretary of State for Social Services, not a penny will be wiped off the tax relief on my mortgage interest. It is only those who are the most vulnerable to whom the principle is applied.

Even if we accept the principle, there can be no doubt that the figures involved are exorbitant in relation to the wages of teenagers or to the rent charge on the house. For a chief tenant with a couple of teenagers who are working, the non-dependant deduction made in respect of those two teenagers may well equal the weekly rent and rates charges. Such a tenant will therefore be liable to pay full rent and rates, in effect, to have the full rent and rates charge met by the two sons or daughters in the household, although patently they are not occupying the full house, thus leaving the chief tenant in the undignified position of having the full rent and rates on his house met by his children.

The Government cannot have it both ways. They cannot deny housing benefit to the parents on the grounds that the children should pay rent and then deny those children the right to apply for housing benefit.

There is at least one element of logic in what the Government propose. They say that the housing benefit should be denied to non-dependants in these circumstances

because there is no commercial contract for the payment of rent. In that at least the Government are correct. Most parents do not seek a commercial contract for the payment of rent in these circumstances, and many of those who try are unable to get one.

The survey of the Child Poverty Action Group found that, of the 111 households that contacted it, 79 tenants would not approach their teenage sons or daughters for the non-dependant deduction because they viewed it with repugnance. Of that 79, one was a widow living on the state pension of £33·10 per week. On that amount she was liable to a weekly rent and rates charge of £8·20 attributable solely to the fact that she had a son still living with her. She would not ask him to contribute to the rent because he was her son, he had always lived with her and he was saving for his marriage; nor would she put him out of the house.

Mrs. Currie: Why not?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Lady's question betrays the lack of her imagination, understanding and compassion. One reason why the widow was reluctant to do this — a reason cited by many others in similar circumstances — is the fear that her son would leave. Those who are widowed or single parents are reluctant to speed the day when teenagers leave the house. They are therefore reluctant to ask for what is now a large sum—indeed, it equals what many teenagers would have to pay to rent a single room. *[Laughter.]*

The hilarity of Conservative Members demonstrates their incomprehension and their total inability to understand what the sum of £8·20 can mean to ordinary people. It may be difficult for the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South to understand what that amount means in a household of this kind. I say to the hon. Lady that there is no reason why her constituents or the House should forgive her refusal to try to understand what this might mean in such cases.

We face double standards and hypocrisy in this measure. Conservative Members claim to be the party of the family. This measure which they have boosted to such an exorbitant level of income in the last 18 months has without doubt broken up families. There are recorded cases of non-dependants being obliged to leave the house because of this measure. In many more cases where a break-up of a family has not occurred there have been rows, tensions and deterioration of family life because of the non-dependant deduction. To compound all that evil, this petty measure is laid before the House to block up the one chink of light that had been offered to these households.

I mentioned earlier that my local authority has noticed a significant increase in rent arrears since the increase in the non-dependant deduction was introduced. My local authority is not alone in that. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have called for the deduction to be abolished. The Association of District Councils has called for it to be reviewed in the interests of natural justice. The Institute of Housing Officers and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives have argued that the present deduction is far to high. The Social Security Advisory Committee has expressed grave concern.

No one involved in the implementation of the non-dependant deduction is prepared to defend the principle and the level of deduction. It is a measure of the deafness and stubbornness of the Government that, faced with that consensus of alarm and criticism and the pleas for a review, they take this mean and petty action to block a loophole.

The measure is illogical, irrational, mean and spiteful and motivated by the Government animus against the miners. It will cause hardship to families who, at the end of November, were encouraged to hope that there might be relief from the problems caused to them by the Government's previous actions.

Housing Benefits

10.26 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) should make more speeches on social security matters and spend less time campaigning. He would be more successful in social security debates, and he has made a cogent and clear attack on the measure.

I want the Government to understand what the sequence of events has meant in mining areas such as my constituency. The picture that is painted, particularly by Conservative Members, is that a group of people rushed in and made a fast profit out of a loophole in the social security rules and thereby enhanced their already considerable financial ease. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We are talking primarily about single striking miners — young lads in many cases — who live at home, sometimes with a widowed mother and often in an improverished household which had previously depended on their contribution. In many cases it was not long ago that the miners were still at school and were making no contribution to the household.

Those youngsters in the mining industry, mainly aged between 16 and 21, have suddenly found that they are causing a drastic reduction in their parents' ability to make ends meet. We are talking about families who were among the poorest to start with. They were not households in which there were two or three miners bringing in a substantial income. I am thinking particularly of homes where there is a widowed mother on the old-age pension and a young lad who is on strike. At the end of last year those youngsters were led to believe that they would be able to claim back payments under the regulations. That was a chink of light for them in their desperate situation.

Some Conservative Members seem to want to dwell on the moral position of someone who reduces his own circumstances by going on strike. But we are talking about elderly parents who had nothing to do with the decisions of their sons. Those lads have been caught up in the strike. The parents played no part in their decisions and real hardship is being caused.

At the end of last year, it seemed that some back payment of housing benefit could be made. In some areas, the local authorities paid out, but in others they did not. Families in Castle Morpeth and in Alnwick in my constituency have not received any money. The Minister should realise that he has left the local authorities in utter confusion. He has left the people seeking benefit at a loss to understand why the person they normally work alongside in the pit is getting the benefit because he lives on the other side of the border, and they are not. That is the position in pits like Ellington in my constituency. A striking miner who lives in Ashington is getting the benefit and a striking miner who lives in Lynemouth or Ellington is not because of the confusion among local authorities.

I asked the local authorities why they are not paying out the back benefit, at least for the period until the new regulations came into force. They tell me that the advice they are getting from the Department of Health and Social Security is unclear and they do not understand what they are supposed to do. I wrote in November about one of these cases. In his reply, the treasurer of Alnwick district council defined the lad concerned and his widowed mother as unable to qualify for benefit. He said:

> "This is the position as the Regulations stand at present, but it is fair to say that certain local authorities are interpreting the Regulations in a manner which does not accord with the general view or the view of the Department of Health and Social Security."

So the local authority assumed that the DHSS would frown upon it even making back payments to which people thought they were entitled.

It has not ended there. There is still total confusion. I contacted Castle Morpeth borough council about other people who had been denied the back benefit, and was told that the council was still unable to come to a view on the matter and would probably be unable to come to a view at its next monthly council meeting because it had still not received satisfactory clarification from the DHSS of what it understood the position to be.

While this bureaucratic tangle is taking place, the Minister thinks he has carried out a nice, clean operation. He thinks he has neatly brought in new regulations which everybody understands and cleanly brought to an end the old arrangement. But there is nothing clean about it because some have received benefit and some have not. Of course, from now on eligibility has been greatly narrowed in the way hon. Members have described.

I plead with the Minister at least to get his officials on the telephone to the local authorities to sort out the mess. Those to whom I have spoken in local authorities are genuine local government officers. They are not motivated by any political or other view. They are in real confusion about the interpretation by the DHSS and are genuinely looking for guidance. I do not think the Minister can be satisfied when sums of £200 or £300 for housing benefit have been paid out reasonably to some of these "living in" youngsters who are on strike, while others, whose families are in equal need, are not getting a penny.

I urge the Minister to shut from his mind the idea that he is dealing with a group of people who are making a fast profit or who have somehow come into the money. He will have to look much nearer this building if he wants to find people who are in that position. If he goes among my constituents in the areas which are deeply affected by the strike, he will find real hardship which has been made worse by the regulations and sustained by the chaos and confusion over what back payments should be made under the original regulations. In many cases the hardship has nothing to do with any decisions which were taken by the elderly and hard-up parents of those young people.

10.32 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Most of the points that I wanted to refer to have been made. A debate later this evening will deal with another way in which the Government operate in their attacks against the poor and the most vulnerable.

There is no doubt that the reason why the Government brought in these regulations was that the National Union of Mineworkers, miners and the women's support groups had managed to find a loophole that enabled many local authorities, including Bolsover district council, to make these payments. No sooner had the local authorities started to put the plan into operation than the word was buzzing around here that the Government would take retaliatory action. It was not long before they did. Fortunately, many

local authorities took advantage of the scheme and paid out money to miners who had been advised to apply for it, whereas other authorities that were Tory-controlled did nothing. They abided by what were, no doubt, the Minister's instructions. I suppose that, like the Prime Minister, he will claim that he had nothing to do with it. They continued to refuse to pay the benefit.

Although the provision does not affect the National Union of Mineworkers now, some miners did not put in their claims in time. Some miners in my constituency were not aware of the position. For example, someone living with a widowed mother might not be aware of the position. They are being penalised, yet they live next door to and under the same authority as others who are not penalised. Bolsover district council has been doing its utmost to get around the regulations. No doubt other authorities in north Derbyshire have been doing the same.

Mr. Beith: Should not the Minister make it clear today that, when the local authorities have not even decided whether they should pay out, it is a scandal that people are being told that they are no longer entitled to claim back payments for that period? If local authorities do not know where they are, the individual can hardly be criticised because he has not yet made a claim.

Mr. Skinner: That is a valid point, and one that has been exercising the minds of local authorities in north Derbyshire. I am sure that the coalfields throughout the country have run up against the same problem. It is all part of the Government's policy against the miners. They use every echelon of the establishment to try to hammer them into the ground. They have used the judges and the law courts to try to get them down. They have used the police —who are known in my area as Mrs. Thatcher's private army—to try to smash the miners and the NUM. They have uprated the £15 deemed strike pay to £16 in an attempt to starve the miners.

That was one aspect that Ridley had not — *[Interruption.]* It was called the Ridley plan. I am talking about the Secretary of State for Transport, but it goes under the name of the Ridley plan. It was an attempt to use all parts of the establishment to attack the miners. However, this benefit was no part of that, so when the Government came up against it they decided to have a go at that as well. The amount of money involved pales into insignificance when compared with the news from a leading Tory, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, that during the miners' strike the CEGB has lost £2,000 million. That is all part of the folly of the Prime Minister in taking on the miners. These regulations are yet another example of a Government Department using its power to try to smash the miners.

This is happening in a week when, according to the newspapers——

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Labour party would give an undertaking to keep open all uneconomic pits and that it would not take on the miners, when its leader——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. We are discussing regulations and must relate our remarks to them.

Mr. Skinner: As I was saying before that intervention, which you kindly dealt with Mr. Deputy Speaker—I am pleased that someone else can be out of order—I was with the Deputy Speaker on Saturday when I bumped into one of those who have been deprived of the benefit. We were speaking at a joint rally in Doncaster. Mr. Deputy Speaker was put in his place because he was smoking on the platform.

We are debating this matter in the same week as Members of Parliament have been given the green light to get their housing benefits second time around. I understand that they can now use the £6,500 to buy a second home. The way in which the Government are tonight attacking people — not only miners but many others who are trying to make ends meet on a few quid a week—shows the double standards of the Tories.

It is worth remembering that the Government, who are attacking people living on the edge of poverty, are headed by a Prime Minister whose Private Office at 10 Downing Street cost £1,229,000 a year to maintain when she took office and is now costing £2,889,000. We can loosely call that her housing benefit. The right hon. Lady has three subsidised homes, one at Chequers, one in Downing street and one subsidised by the National Trust in Kent.

The Government have used every opportunity to try to bully and starve the miners back to work, but they are not succeeding. They could stop the drain on the pound and add no further to the £5 billion that it has cost the state to finance a strike that was engineered by the Prime Minister and her crown princes. The strike could be settled and we would not need to debate these regulations, which were born out of the strike and out of malice on the part of the Government. That is why I shall vote against them tonight.

10.42 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Yet again today we are commenting on ill-conceived, hasty and ill-directed Government action. I use the word "commenting" deliberately, because we are not debating. As my hon. Friends have pointed out, the regulations were made on one day, laid the next and brought into operation on the third. It is impossible to debate legislation with any degree of credibility when it has already been in operation for two months.

Mrs. Currie: Why bother?

Mrs. Beckett: Because there are people in a good deal of poverty for whom the loss of just under £9 a week is a desperate matter.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Lady has made several interventions. I will give way to her later. There are people in desperate poverty who cannot afford to lose this money. They will be hit by what the Government are doing. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) seems not for a second to understand their anxieties, fears and desperate concern for how they are to meet their bills.

Mrs. Currie: If it is a matter of such great concern to Opposition Members, why are so many of those hon. Members who signed the prayer which we are debating not present?

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Lady is fond of making that point. When she last made it—not in this Chamber but on BBC radio—she was vocal about the fact that, when certain matters were debated, my hon. Friends would not be present but that she would. The following day they were debated and she was absent. I advise her to be careful when she makes that type of point.

Mr. Robin Cook: The percentage of the parliamentary Labour party present in the House is precisely the same as the percentage of the parliamentary Conservative party that is present.

Mrs. Beckett: We are told in the circular that the Government are consulting the authorities and the Social Security Advisory Committee. It is difficult to see how such bodies can be consulted when the regulations have been in operation since 19 December, and many authorities did not even get copies of the regulations until the middle of January. How can that be described as credible consultation?

The explanatory note to the regulations says that the matter

"will be referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee."

Have the regulations been so referred? If not, will they be? Is any reaction from that committee available? I raise those questions all the more because of the reactions that the SSAC has already had to these non-dependant deductions.

This depressing little measure is an attempt by the Government — perhaps it is unnecessary — to prevent people from avoiding these non-dependant deductions which the Government introduced at such an excessive level almost a year ago. Even if one argues that such a deduction is justified—the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made this point—it is difficult to understand how the deduction can be justified at that level. When the increase was announced, it was pointed out that it was much more than the rate of inflation. According to the SSAC, the previous increase was beyond what was "fair and realistic". When the increase was announced the level of deduction in respect of rent was almost half the average local authority rent. That gives strength to the remarks of my hon. Friend for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and alliance members about the scale of the imposition on the families involved.

The Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson), justified these deductions with a fine head of steam and indignation which was very much in the hon. Gentleman's best manner. His justification was that the Government were dealing with the selfish young. They were dealing with those who were living at home and earning — this applies also to those who were not earning — and who should be contributing to the household. He felt that the Government were teaching those young people manners, taking them in hand and enforcing a deduction which their parents would claim from them. For a variety of reasons, in many households — I think that many of us would understand these reasons if such circumstances occurred within our families — parents are unwilling or unable to extract contributions from their young relatives.

I have referred to constituency cases and the dozens of letters I have received as a constituency Member and as the shadow Minister, and this is one reason why I am especially concerned. I have referred to individuals who have come to my advice bureau in tears, saying that their working youngsters—for whose ability to obtain a job they had previously been grateful—are earning very low wages and, contrary to the supposition of the hon. Member for Brent, North, are paying substantial sums in board and lodging payments and towards rent and rates. Most young people are not as the hon. Member for Brent, North described them. Now such families are faced with a loss of income, because of the non-dependant deduction.

One mother said to me, "My son pays me more than he can afford out of his income. I cannot possibly ask for almost another £9. If he pays that sum to me, he will not be able to afford to go to work and pay for his meals." She was extremely distressed about how her family was to manage. The point is that the Government are taking this income from the family.

The regulations purport to deal with avoidance. We know that the Government are concerned more about avoidance in this respect than about tax avoidance. These ill-thought-out regulations will affect bona fide claimants as well as those about whom the Government are so concerned.

I have noted the reference in the Government's consultative document, a copy of which eventually reached local authorities. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed mentioned how confused local authorities are and how difficult it is for them to sort out what they are supposed to be doing. The circular is not especially forthcoming. It says:

"Authorities will need to make further enquiries about the joint tenancy/agreement and the circumstances in which it was created. Authorities do not need to make enquiries in respect of every claim".

No doubt that is very generous. Fear of the Department of the Environment and worry about possible demands from local authorities for extra staff crept in here. The advice continues:

"Authorities do not need to make enquiries in respect of every claim from a joint occupier but they should do so where it appears that the tenancy/agreement may have been entered into in order to take advantage of the scheme, for example where the joint tenancy/agreement was recently created and is between a parent and adult child."

It has already been said that the main purpose of the regulations has already been served. The powers that the Government sought to introduce through these regulations already exist. In that sense, the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston and by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed about the mining dispute showed that that has had a great bearing on what the Government have done. What reason could there be, other than the Government's determination to put further pressure on local authorities and families, for introducing unnecessary regulations, whose only effect is to shift the burden a little towards presumption of guilt rather than innocence, and to place local authorities under some threat?

Local authorities are confused about what they are supposed to do, about what their duties are and about the threats made to them by the Government that if authorities make payments—theoretically, that is left to authorities' judgments—the Government might refuse to reimburse them. What can the Minister tell us that would cast some light on how those matters are to be judged and on the criteria that the local authorities are to use? Even more to the point, what criteria do the Government propose to use when a local authority, having done what has been urged in the debate and examined the circumstances and the families, some with striking miners, decides to make the payments?

I note that if the Government decide that they will not reimburse, that will place local authorities in a difficult position. I do not know where they will stand with regard to the district auditor. I hope that the Minister will be able to allay an unworthy suspicion that arises — that the reimbursements that will be scrutinised will be those from

Labour authorities or authorities that operate in mining areas. I doubt whether the Minister will be able to allay those suspicions.

We are speaking in the same context as the reductions that were made in the entitlement to benefit of the families of striking miners, because people on strike are not entitled to benefit. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) put his finger on the point. The Government deduct £16 from the benefit of families of striking miners. Single miners and their parents have no entitlement, but in this case the Government will continue to make a deduction from the housing benefit.

I am sure that we all recall the number of occasions on which the Prime Minister has told us how much she values Victorian standards. Some 150 years ago, there was a long dispute in a silk mill in my constituency. People were denied Poor Law assistance, specifically in the case of a poor widow, on the grounds that her children smelled of trade unionism. The Government appear to apply a similar standard today.

Most of all, in the context of the regulations, we are concerned about the confusion in the ill-thought-out treatment of non-dependants that seems to run throughout what the Government do. In the Housing Act 1980, the Government actively encourage joint tenancy, especially if that assists families to purchase their homes. Government assistance is used specifically to help families which are slightly less poor than many and which are able to purchase their houses with such help.

Under these regulations adult children are treated as dependants. The thrust of what the Government have in store for us is that adult children, in relation to board and lodging payments, must be treated as dependants. They must not be allowed to be away from home for more than two or three weeks if they are to claim board and lodging allowance. They are to be treated not as independent people, but specifically as children. Financially they are being encouraged to return home.

There are rumours about the Government's intentions for supplementary benefit entitlement for teenagers. A specific decision is being taken to treat them as children without any separate income. These regulations are different. They state that teenagers are to be regarded as non-dependant.

One theme runs through the Government's decisions, and it certainly does not involve logic. The Government adopt whatever course will save them money. Even the definition of "close relative" is different in these regulations. The definition does not refer to non-dependants giving domestic assistance to the disabled. The definition appears to be new. Perhaps the Government think that it will bring in the greatest trawl of financial saving.

What is meant in the regulations by the "commercial" basis of a tenancy. Who will define it? Will it be the local authority or the Government? If the authority is thought by the Government to get it wrong, will the authority lose out?

We are worried that many bona fide landlords and tenants will be affected and discouraged from letting accommodation. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said, the regulations will encourage under-occupation.

We can contrast the treatment of the poorer young people and their families with that of those of families who are sufficiently well off not to be involved with the benefit system. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said earlier that since such young people were earning money, they should contribute. I hope that if that is the Government's attitude, the next Budget will contain tax changes so that earning non-dependants, or dependants who receive benefit, will be forced to contribute to the household's income and housing costs, irrespective of the way in which financial assistance is received from the Government.

What happens today in a family poor enough to receive housing benefit is that the earnings of children are taken into account. By contrast, children in a better off family can earn as much as they like—as much as a Minister or the Prime Minister—and the Government will not care tuppence how much tax relief is given or what that means in terms of housing subsidies.

Mrs. Currie: Why should they?

Mrs. Beckett: Why should they not? Why should poor families, dependent on the benefit system, be charged in this way when earning children in better off families do not have to make a contribution? I see no justice in that, and I find it hard to understand how the hon. Lady sees any justice in it.

Mrs. Currie: Is the hon. Lady really saying that families in which people earn a lot of money should have unlimited tax relief on their mortgages? I correct her if she is under that misapprehension. Is she suggesting that such families do not pay tax on their income? They do; and they pay a higher rate. What she has just said is a little misleading.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Lady cannot have thought through what she has just said. Of course I recognise that such people pay taxes, as do the working young adults in the families we are discussing. What I am saying is that the mortgage tax relief received by the better off parents is unaffected by the earnings of their children. That is the point. If the hon. Lady has not grasped it, she should stay out of the debate.

The problem is that these regulations, as is so often the case, are a hotchpotch, a mess, and unnecessary. They are introduced in a panic, because the Government read a story in a newspaper that someone might be able to extract more money, but they did not realise that they had the means to stop that under existing regulations. They have been tabled with what one can only describe as a degree of vindictiveness to try to prevent people from gaining a small degree of relief from the exorbitant charge—by anyone's judgment, including that of the SSAC—that the Government have imposed upon them through these non-dependant deductions. They are tabled on the criterion which seems to be the only one about which the Government care—cutting public expenditure.

The regulations have produced and will produce neither effectiveness nor justice, and that is shared by most of the other policies of the Government.

11 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): It has been an interesting and rather instructive debate, although there was a moment when I did not care to be in the direct line of fire between Derby, South and Derbyshire, South.

As is clear, the regulations put into effect a number of changes in relation to housing benefit, to establish what

[Mr. Tony Newton]

had always been thought to be and was intended to be the position rather than to make savings in public expenditure in the way that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) suggested. They were intended to prevent a rise in public expenditure that might otherwise have taken place.

The debate has concentrated on two aspects only of the regulations, the first being to close the unintended loophole relating to non-dependants and their potential claiming of housing benefit, and the second, on which a great deal of the latter part of the debate has concentrated, relating to contrived tenancies. There is an entirely beneficial third change in the regulations to which no one has drawn attention. It is designed to rectify an omission in the definition of rent which, although it was technical, placed a few people at an unintended disadvantage.

Although I cannot pretend that the sums of money at stake in those provisions which Opposition Members regarded as unattractive is on all fours with the sum of money that they found so attractive that they preferred not to mention it, it is fair for me to make the point that there is some balance in these regulations in that respect.

The unintended loophole allowed people living as members of their families' households to qualify for housing benefit if they made a payment for board and lodging that included an amount falling within the housing benefit definition of rent.

I believe that I can speak for previous Administrations in relation to the housing benefit scheme when I say that it was never the intention that people living in someone else's household, other than as commercial boarders, should be eligible for housing benefit. It was not allowed for under the old rent and rebate and rent allowance schemes which housing benefit replaced, and, as far as I am aware, at no stage did the hon. Lady or her predecessors in Government suggest that those former schemes should be amended to make possible what is now being demanded with such vehemence tonight. Such people cannot obtain supplementary benefit to meet the costs of their board and lodging.

The loophole would have allowed housing benefit to be paid to, for example, an adult son or daughter living in the parents' home where the only separate accommodation was the bedroom. In the light of what the hon. Lady has said tonight, I should be interested to know whether it is her party's policy to pay housing benefit under those circumstances, and if so whether she regards that as a priority for expenditure which we estimate could rise to some £200 million a year and which could be used for many more productive purposes whether in health, social services, social security or a number of other things.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): That is interesting, because some of what has been said in the debate relates to the payment to single miners who have been on strike for the past 11 months. The Minister quoted a figure. Did he see the Channel 4 news tonight which said that the strike has cost the CEGB £2 billion so far? In those circumstances, many Opposition Members think that it is very harsh of the Government to have introduced the regulations as swiftly as they have to stop the payment of housing benefit to single striking miners.

Mr. Newton: The comparison that the hon. Gentleman is making is pretty far-fetched. Like many other hon. Members — it happened again at Question Time yesterday—I must frankly say that I am absolutely fed up with hearing claims about the costs of keeping the fuel industries going during the dispute against a background in which the miners have caused hardship to pensioners and others by their actions.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman once more, but this is right off at a tangent.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again. The reason why I used that figure was that it was on the news on Channel 4 today. I am a member of the Select Committee on Energy, and the chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), who is absent for tonight's debate, was quoting that figure.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman has reached such a stage of irrationality about the miners' strike that he thinks that it is sensible to make a case for spending £200 million on a wasteful form of housing benefit expenditure merely because the miners' strike has already imposed a wholly unnecessary cost of £2 billion on the rest of the economy, it shows the extent to which he and his party are now living in the economics of the madhouse.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Minister argued that it would be wrong to make housing benefit available to a son or daughter who might be occupying only a single bedroom. Why, then, is it right for his Government to assume that that son or daughter will make a weekly payment towards rent and rates of £8.80 a week, which may be half the total rent and rates charged for the entire house, when only one room is being occupied?

Mr. Newton: It is already clear that we shall not achieve an accommodation of view on the matter any more than on earlier occasions. I must simply state my view that if it is thought to be unreasonable to suggest that a young person earning the sums that the hon. Gentleman quoted from the CPAG, which ranged up to £85 a week, should be expected to make a contribution of £8.80 a week to the housing costs of the household in which he resides, before the rest of the people in the country are expected to provide housing benefit for that household, we must just agree to differ. I think that it is reasonable, and I suspect that I carry my hon. Friends with me.

Apart from the case that the hon. Gentleman quoted from the CPAG survey, on the figures for April 1984 average earnings for men aged under 18 are £63 a week and for those aged 18 to 20 £101 a week. I do not think that the figures that are quoted as non-dependant deductions are in any way unreasonable in relation to those averages.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Minister will appreciate that the figures that he quoted, including the figure of £85, are irrelevant to the regulations. Where those cases are eligible to apply for housing benefit, they would not qualify on income grounds. The only people affected by the regulations and who are denied benefit are those earning much smaller sums of generally less that £50 a week. It is those people whom he is preventing from getting benefit through the regulations.

Mr. Newton: Nevertheless there has been running through most of the speeches made by Opposition Members the proposition that it is unreasonable to expect

contributions of this nature to the household costs of the households in question. I do not think that that is unreasonable.

As I said, all we are doing with this part of the regulation is restoring the position to what had always been intended, and what had been thought to exist. I should like to refute firmly the suggestion that the change is specifically directed at miners or any aspect of the miners' strike. It is simply the fact, which I acknowledge, that the loophole was discovered by the National Union of Mineworkers' lawyers in crawling over the housing benefit regulations. I pay tribute to them for their diligence. However, the loophole would have had consequences and implications going far beyond the miners' strike, and it was one that I do not believe any Government of whatever colour would have chosen to live with for any length of time. No previous Administration have sought to change the law to allow that to happen. I do not believe that a Government of whom the hon. Member for Derby, South was a member would seek to do so.

A non-householder — someone not responsible for household expenditure for supplementary benefit purposes —is not eligible for a rate rebate or rent allowance at that address. Regulation 23(2) provides that where a person resides with a person to whom he pays rent or rates and

"either that person is a close relative"

or the rent is paid

"other than on a commercial basis",

he will not be entitled to housing benefit. Genuine arrangements—for instance, where a family has taken an aging parent into its home and provided separate accommodation—are unaffected by the change. In such cases housing benefit may still be claimed for any rent and rates paid.

It has been suggested by Opposition Members that it should be a major feature in the argument that some householders find it difficult to obtain payment from their dependants and that that would be a good reason for granting housing benefit. How would it be secured that the housing benefit in those circumstances was either asked for or paid over to the tenant? I know of no mechanism to ensure that the benefit would be paid over in circumstances where apparently the non-dependant is not paying over the non-dependant deduction.

In response to the request for information to explain why we felt that the change in the regulations was necessary, the existing provisions on contrived tenancies do not cover joint tenancies, on the advice that I have been given. We think it right that any adult non-dependant, such as a grown-up son or daughter living in the claimant's household, should be expected to make a contribution towards household expenses. So a deduction is made from housing benefit in respect of each such non-dependant. Suggestions began to circulate towards the end of last year about how non-dependant deductions could be avoided by creating joint tenancies, thus making the householder and former non-householder eligible to claim housing benefit on their share of the rent. Such action would be a clear abuse of the intentions of the scheme. This issue was brought out well and effectively by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

We thought originally that no action would be needed on the ground that few people would wish to apply for joint tenancies for this purpose and that local authorities would act responsibly in considering applications from their tenants. However, it began to appear that a small number of authorities might be planning actively to encourage tenants to exploit the scheme. We were told by some authorities that as part of their overall housing management policy it was their normal practice to grant joint tenancies whenever they were requested and that publicity would place them in a difficult position.

We therefore decided that it would be right to take steps to prevent exploitation of the scheme, and that is what we have sought to do with the regulations. It would clearly be unfair if certain households were able to avoid the deductions being made and obtain additional benefit merely by being in a position to create a joint tenancy agreement with a non-dependant member of the household. To avoid this happening, regulations 8 and 11 provide that where a joint tenancy or agreement to pay rent and rates has been created, and during the previous eight weeks the claimant was a non-dependant of the occupier at the address, he will not be eligible for housing benefit. He will continue to be treated as if he were a non-dependant unless the local authority is satisfied that the joint tenancy or agreement was not created just to take advantage of the housing benefit scheme.

Thus the local authority has discretion—I think that there has to be discretion—to determine whether a joint tenancy is being requested for genuine or exploitative reasons. The amendment does not affect joint tenancy agreements between husband and wife. It applies only to those where the agreement is clearly made to abuse the housing benefits scheme. Genuine arrangements — for example, where a son or daughter has gone to live with his or her widowed mother because she is no longer able to live alone, and has entered into a joint tenancy agreement to protect his tenancy in the future—will be unaffected by the change.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) asked why the change on contrived tenancies was needed, and perhaps I could explain that to him briefly. Regulation 23 allowed an authority to disentitle a person who resided with the person to whom he paid rent, or who paid rent to a member of his family where the tenancy was created to take advantage of the housing benefits scheme. It could not be applied to certificated tenancies—that is, people in receipt of supplementary benefit. Several cases arose where the claimant did not live with the person to whom he paid rent, and/or he was a certificated case, but the agreement to pay rent was clearly contrived to take advantage of the scheme.

One case that has been mentioned to me to illustrate the point was that of a man who bought a house on a mortgage, and contrived to give the house to a friend and then to repay the mortgage from a loan, and to remain in the house, in effect paying off the loan in the form of rent and obtaining housing benefit on those payments. That is clearly the sort of device that was not intended and which we are seeking to prevent.

Mr. Kirkwood: I agree that that is clearly an abuse, but my point was that the present provisions disqualified such people because it is a clear abuse of the system. Why do we need extra regulations?

Mr. Newton: The legal advice that I have been given is that the existing regulations were not sufficient to prevent such cases. In this case, given that a mortgage was

[Mr. Newton]

involved previously, it would have been certificated housing benefit — the person in question would have been in receipt of supplementary benefit, not housing benefit. That is the problem that we are seeking to tackle. I hope that I have made the point sufficiently clear to the hon. Gentleman.

The provision for contrived tenancies covers the position where, in the past, local authorities could refuse housing benefit to a claimant not in receipt of housing benefit only if they believed that the agreement to pay rent and rates was clearly contrived to take advantage of the housing benefits scheme. There is no reason why supplementary benefit recipients should be treated differently from other claimants, and the regulation now provides that in any case where an authority considers that a person who was not previously liable to pay rent and/or rates in respect of his present accommodation has created an agreement to pay rent and/or rates to take advantage of the housing benefits scheme, it may treat him as not entitled to housing benefit.

I should mention briefly the more favourable provision of the regulations, which no other hon. Member mentioned during the debate. The definition of rent in the housing benefits regulations covers payments made by former tenants if they continue to occupy the accommodation after the tenancy agreement has been terminated. It was always the intention that payments made by former licensees should also be eligible for benefit. However, we were advised that the previous definition did not cover such payments.

It might be helpful if I explained the sort of case that could be involved. One example would be a family living in Crown property, where the husband, who was the tenant, no longer lived with his wife and children in the home. Although the wife was a regular occupant of the property, she would not have been entitled to housing benefit, but she would have had to continue to make payments for rent while the family remained in the home. The amendment puts that right and enables her to receive housing benefit. I understand that this point is of special importance to some people formerly living in service accommodation.

Much has been made of consultation on the regulations. The regulations were made as much as anything to protect local authorities from the extremely difficult and anomalous tasks that they had to face as a result of one unintended loophole, and one device deliberately contrived to exploit the regulations. As I explained to the local authority associations in writing, there are bound to be occasions when we must move quickly in the interests of efficient local administration of the scheme. Of course, central and local government must work in partnership in this, and I regret that, on this occasion, one association evidently believes that we have not done so. I should make it clear to the hon. Member for Derby, South that the Social Security Advisory Committee agreed not to have the regulations referred to it in advance, because it accepted that they were either beneficial or essential. In other words, it accepted that this was a proper use of the emergency provisions under the social security legislation in relation to references to the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Mrs. Beckett: I was under the impression that it had been agreed that the first part of these regulations should not be referred to the SSAC but that particularly contentious regulations were to be referred to it. I believe that that appears on the back of the regulations.

Mr. Newton: May I look further into that matter? If I have misstated the position, I shall be very happy to correct it. I should not want to mislead the House.

The SSAC accepted that the use of the urgent procedure was appropriate. There was only a brief consultation period, because we felt that we had to move quickly, in view of the nature of the changes that we were seeking to make. We did all that we could to facilitate quick consultation, including offers to meet to discuss the proposals with the associations — offers that were not taken up. I accept that it would have been easier both for us and for the associations if more time had been available, but that would have made life acutely difficult for some of the local authorities administering the scheme, which in some places were faced with a considerable number of applications to exploit the scheme in a way that was never intended and which added unreasonably to their administrative problems.

Mr. Beith: The phrase the Minister has used is precisely the kind of phrase that led at least some of the local authorities to believe that the Department is telling them not even to pay those claims that were valid under the regulations before 19 December. Will he please do something to unravel this confusion and remove the injustice whereby people in some local authority areas are being told that, on the say-so of the Minister's Department, they are not entitled to benefit when in fact they are?

Mr. Newton: I shall turn straight away to the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. The position, as I understand it, is that there is no provision for backdating claims to housing benefit. If a claim was made before the change in the regulations, some discretion may be available to the local authority, but no provision is made under the regulations for backdating a claim. Therefore, any claim made after 19 December could not be backdated.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware of the injustice of that position, particularly in the case of those people who were advised before 19 December that their claims could not be entertained, because it was then thought that there was no entitlement? Therefore, people were discouraged from making claims. Is there any justice in the Minister's statement? And is not either the local authority or the Minister likely to find that they are arraigned before the Parliamentary Commissioner or the Local Government Commissioner if this line of argument is pursued?

Mr. Newton: I am not deploying a line of argument. I am simply stating that I have been advised that there is no provision within the housing benefit regulations for the backdating of a claim. Local authorities must make their own judgments about the legal position under the housing benefit regulations. It is not appropriate for me to determine what those judgments should be. However, the advice I have received is that there is no provision for backdating claims under the housing benefit regulations. There may be a provision for backdating an award once a successful claim has been made but that is not quite the same point.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Is my hon. Friend inviting the House to believe that the regulations are made by some power exterior to the House of Commons who is in his Department? If the regulations are clearly nonsense because people were told that they were not entitled to what they were entitled to, it is open to my hon. Friend or to the Secretary of State to lay amending regulations before the House. My hon. Friend cannot claim that the regulations are outside the control of the Government. He must give a proper answer to that point.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry if I have caused my hon. Friend some consternation. I hope that I have not in any way misled the House or suggested that I am attempting to discard Government responsibility for the housing benefit regulations or the possibility of the Government putting before the House potential changes in those regulations which the House can then seek to agree or disagree as it sees fit. All I have been seeking to do is to set before the House what I am advised is the position under the regulations, which is that there is no provision for the back-dating of claims.

Having been taken aback by the question of the hon. Member for Derby, South, let me confirm that I have been assured that the SSAC did agree in both cases that it was appropriate and reasonable for the urgency provision to be used.

I do not accept that in pressing on with the changes we have disregarded our obligation to consult. Indeed, the facts do not bear that out. There were two stages of consultation. The associations were given two weeks to comment on the proposals to close the loophole affecting non-dependants' ability to claim housing benefit on the rent element of their board and lodging charge and on the technical change in the definition of rent.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils and the London Boroughs Association all replied within the period that we asked, or within a day or two. They were given only a week to comment on the third proposal about joint tenancies because that issue arose at a later stage. However, we received comments from the AMA and from the other associations before the regulations were made. However inconvenient the short notice, they were able to reply; and I am grateful for that. Therefore, views were in practice sought and received, and they were taken into account in our formulation of the regulations.

However, as I have already said, I am unhappy that this problem has arisen and that the AMA in particular feels that it was not properly consulted; we shall be writing to the associations forthwith to offer a meeting to discuss how consultation might proceed in future in order to reach a better basis of understanding with them. I hope that there will be a mutual agreement about how urgent matters can best be dealt with.

At the moment, we are still unaware of what changes, if any, the AMA would wish to see in the regulations. My earlier understanding was that it did not object to their substance. If it does have comments of substance on them, we shall be more than happy to consider them. Having checked the mounting abuses of the scheme by making the regulations in December we can consider further changes to them if there are respects in which any association thinks that further change is needed. If the case for such changes is made out, there can be further consultation on the details of those changes, perhaps with less urgency than we felt necessary in December when the abuses still had to be checked. We shall be writing to the associations tomorrow to explain all that.

I hope that I have explained the regulations to the House, and, in particular, why we felt that they were needed to close the loopholes, and with some urgency. I hope also that I have been able to deal with at least some of the points that hon. Members have raised. However, I hope that, having heard those explanations and comments, the House will not accept the prayer tabled by the Opposition.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 31, Noes 121.

Division No. 104] **[11.29 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cowans, Harry
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Donald
Eadie, Alex
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Freud, Clement
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Russell
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Maxton, John
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Wainwright, R.

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Amess, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David John

Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

PETITIONS

Human Embryos

11.40 pm

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I beg to ask leave to present a petition entitled

"Petition for the Protection of the Human Embryo"

that has been signed by 1,589 of my constituents in Inverness, Carrbridge, Tomatin, Farr, Croy, Fort William, Kinlochleven, Wester Lochaber and Ardnamurchan, mainly from church congregations of the Free Presbyterian, Free Church, Church of Scotland and the Baptist persuasion, but also from other denominations and the general public.

The essence of the petition, which is in the same form as others that have been presented, is the assertion that the human embryo has a right of protection of the same kind as is afforded to a developed human being.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves the purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment . . . And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I beg to ask leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Buses

11.41 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the people of Jarrow regarding the White Paper on buses which is now enshrined in the Transport Bill which had its Second Reading this week. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Cowans) is here, because both he and I have at many meetings pointed out the dangers in the recommendations of the White Paper.

This petition contains almost 2,000 signatures. The people are concerned that the recommendations in the White Paper, now enshrined in the Transport Bill, will affect them adversely. In my constituency of Jarrow we have miners not millionaires, engineers not racketeers, shipbuilders not shipowners. There is a very low car ownership. The people will be hit hard by the legislation. It is a pity the Government did not attack car owners for the £2,000 million which is alleged to have been lost to the Chancellor through evasion.

I pay tribute to Len Symes and Hugh Carlin who organised the papers for the people to come to sign. They did not even have to take the petition round, because the people were so concerned about how the legislation would affect them. In my constituency, one out of every two people relies on housing benefit and one out of every three is out of work.

The petition says:

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the citizens of the Jarrow Constituency.

SHEWETH

That the proposals contained in the White Paper on Buses will have a detrimental effect on the residents of the Jarrow

Constituency who use public transport, will put in jeopardy the Tyne and Wear integrated transport system known as one of the best transport systems in the world.

Will put under threat the concessionary bus passes used by pensioners, disabled, unemployed and school children, and will cause further loss of jobs in the transport industry in an area of already high unemployment and will have a damaging effect on the wages and working conditions for those who are left in the transport industry.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges the Secretary of State for Transport not to put into effect the proposals of the White Paper on Buses.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Severe Weather Payments

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

11.43 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): The purpose of the Adjournment debate is to secure guarantees from the Minister about the future of heating additions for the 2·5 million households who depend on them and to ask the Minister now as a matter of urgency to make exceptionally severe weather payments available to thousands of the poorest pensioners and low-income households throughout the whole of Britain who are being denied urgently needed help because of his Department's system for administering Single Payments Regulation No. 26 on exceptionally severe weather allowances. It is a system that has never been debated or discussed in the House until tonight. It is a system that has no statutory authority whatsoever. It is a system that has so redefined our view of what is exceptionally severe weather that in some cases old people would have to freeze to death before any payments would be offered.

When respectable medical evidence shows that up to 900,000 old people in this country could be at risk from hypothermia, when deaths from cold and cold-induced diseases could have risen by as much as 40 per cent. during this winter period of bad weather, when many pensioners tell me and my hon. Friends that they have to choose in this cold spell between heating and eating, no one can deny that the cold weather and the Government's pitifully inadequate response to it has brought suffering and hardship on a national scale and is a national disgrace.

Single Payments Regulation No. 26 provides that cash help will be made available to the poorest of supplementary benefit claimants where there has been a period of exceptionally severe weather and where fuel bills are higher than normal as a result. Under that regulation, in 1982 the Department made payments amounting to nearly £4 million to 280,000 supplementary benefit claimants, including many thousands of pensioners. But since 1982 not a penny has been paid out. Until a month ago, not a penny had been offered to any claimants, simply because of the invention by the Department in 1982 of a new formula for administering the scheme. That formula has no legal standing; that formula has been described as legally irrelevant by the only social security tribunal that has scrutinised it; that formula, I have been advised, would not stand up in any court of law—at least in Scotland—because of the Court of Session Act 1868 that obliges public bodies to fulfil their statutory obligations.

Quite simply, what the Government have done is to redefine what exceptionally severe weather is. According to the Government, exceptionally severe weather does not exist in most of the country, even if the temperature is consistently below freezing point every day for a week, or even for a month. According to the Government, exceptionally severe weather does not exist in northern parts of the country—and Scotland in particular—even if the temperature hovers between zero and minus 4 deg.C or minus 5 deg.C each day for weeks on end. According to the Government, exceptionally severe weather does not exist even if temperatures fall as low as minus 23 deg.C —as they did on one day last month in the north of

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

Scotland — or if, in some areas, the temperature has been as low as freezing point for six days and is between zero and minus 30 deg.C on the seventh day.

The Government have decreed that our weather is almost never sufficiently cold to qualify as being exceptionally severe. By underestimating the degree of cold and by underestimating the need for heating, the Department and the Government are conspiring to underpay needy claimants. They have done it by the invention of a cold weather formula consisting of four elements, all of which are of dubious legal and technical standing.

On the Department's own admission, the heating needs of claimants are calculated from standards designed to measure and monitor temperature levels not in people's homes, but in factories. Pensioners with only a one-bar electric heater are assumed to have the same heating needs and requirements as factory workers surrounded by electrical equipment, power-loading equipment, lifts and even central heating. The assumption behind the regulation and formula is that 15·5 deg.C is an adequate temperature for an old person at home, when all respectable evidence shows that at that temperature pensioners are dangerously close to the risk of hypothermia.

The last Conservative Government of 1972 published what they called simple guidance notes for those engaged in helping old people, in which they said that with a temperature at freezing point outside, to keep old people warm in winter the living room temperature should be about 70 deg.F, which is about 21 deg.C.

If in 1972, when the present Secretary of State for Education and Science was Secretary of State for Social Services, the official view was that the safe temperature at freezing point in pensioners' homes was 21 deg.C why, under the present Government, is the safe temperature only 15·5 deg.C, 5·5 deg. less, and for some people the difference between life and death?

Have the heating needs of pensioners changed during the last 12 years? Have pensioners somehow become more resistant to the cold? Or have the Government changed in that they are pursuing policies that are vindictive even beyond monetarism?

The heating formula is even more flawed. Benefit is triggered for pensioners and others, if at all, not by how cold it actually is but by how much colder it has been than the coldest temperatures of the last 20 years. The colder it was in the past, the colder it must become for claimants to benefit. To claim for benefit, temperatures must stand at zero in places such as Aberporth, but at minus 3 deg. in Aberdeen; at 0·5 deg. above freezing point in Plymouth and the south-west, but at 2·5 deg. below freezing in Glasgow and most of Strathclyde.

Does the Minister expect the nation seriously to believe that pensioners in Cowdenbeath in my constituency are somehow less sensitive to cold than are pensioners in Kent; that families in Braemar in the north have lower fuel bills than families in Bournemouth; that the very old are less at risk from hypothermia in the Shetlands than in Surbiton?

This absurd system has already been declared irrelevant by the only social security tribunal seriously to have scrutinised it. When, in addition to all these matters, temperatures to calculate the qualification for benefit are gathered at only 19 weather stations in the country, some more than 100 miles away from where pensioners and others live, and when, for administrative convenience, five or six days of cold weather, however severe, are not enough to justify help, surely that social security tribunal which scrutinised the formula was right to conclude that the formula is arbitrary and that the DHSS has been unable to elucidate, explain and justify the reasons for it.

If heating an entire home with a one-bar fire were comparable with maintaining the temperature in a busy factory; if abrupt changes in temperature were to conform to the Department's idea of a weekly cycle; if it were true that old people in the country's colder areas were somehow less at risk of death by cold; if we were prepared to discount the Department of Energy's view of the whole system as unsatisfactory and not a reliable indicator of fuel needs among pensioners; if the best judges, as the formula implies, of the needs of pensioners for heating was the Factory Inspectorate of the Department of Energy, advised by Meteorological Office weather stations 100 miles away and reporting to statisticians burrowing in the weather records of 20 years ago, we might be able to convince ourselves that nobody died from hypothermia.

I am not accusing Ministers of lying about the weather. But they are, to say the least, guilty of meteorological inexactitudes when, no matter how cold it is, the sun shines out of their statistics—and for one purpose only; to cheat pensioners and other poor families of a few pence by way of allowance. Here are a Government who put saving money before saving lives, even when the sums involved are minuscule and when the lives involved are the most frail and vulnerable in society.

Rather than reassess the level of benefits for old people, the Government are prepared to reassess the level of weather at which benefits are paid, making weather at freezing point too generous, Siberian conditions too warm and Arctic temperatures too kind for a cold weather benefit.

The Minister will say that the new formula is the nearest objective test available for defining exceptionally severe weather. He will say that it was not conjured up with the objective of saving money and will speak in the way that the Prime Minister has constantly tried to assure us of the Government's generosity towards pensioners. If the Government are so generous, may we be told why, before the formula was invented, 250,000 claimants, many of them pensioners, benefited, whereas since then not one claimant has received a penny?

If the Minister is so generous, why is it estimated in my constituency and other constituencies that, under the formula, help would have been given to pensioners and others in only three weeks of all the winter weeks of the last 20 years? Why have statisticians, fuel efficiency inspectors and weather men been engaged in conducting surveys of dubious value at vast cost to the Exchequer, invariably to conclude that no Exchequer costs need to be incurred in helping pensioners and others with their fuel bills?

The fact is that a legal regulation which, if properly implemented, would give help to 250,000 people—the poorest citizens — has been systematically and deliberately undermined by a formula of dubious standing under which almost no one can benefit. Having deliberately forced up gas prices by more than 100 per cent. in four years, having deliberately forced up electricity prices by 74 per cent. in the four years from

1979, but having allowed pensions to increase by only 50 per cent.—half as much as the increase in gas prices—having made many thousands of pensioners £1 a week worse off with the so-called uprating in November last year, the Government can make no claim to have been generous to the elderly. In Scotland—I am surprised that no Scottish Minister is here this evening—the Scottish Office is so generous to the elderly that, because of a cost-cutting exercise, it has withdrawn what it calls "hypothermia thermometers" which were issued last winter to old people and which could be life-saving devices for many people.

Because the formula under which benefits are denied has no legal basis and no statutory authority, the Government should now concede for every low-income household a special payment to help with crippling fuel bills. They should urgently investigate the possibility of introducing a hypothermia warning whereby, in weeks during which the weather is deteriorating, people are warned of the risk of hypothermia and neighbours and relatives are alerted to the need to provide assistance to elderly people. The Government should urge old people to use their heating and offer to pay the additional costs in their gas and electricity bills.

Last Thursday the Prime Minister told the House that the Department of Health and Social Security was reviewing the system of cold weather allowances. She said specifically:

"there is a review of these provisions, and that is being undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1101.]

This week, when I asked about the nature of the review, its terms of reference, the committee members and the evidence that is to be invited, the Minister could only say:

"the Government are looking at the provision for meeting special expenses of this sort in the context of the supplementary benefit review".—[*Official Report*, 11 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 76.]

That is not a special review of the provisions for severe weather payments and not a review that is being carried out within DHSS. We all know that the supplementary benefit review has reported to the Minister; the Minister has now reported to the Cabinet; and the review has completed its work. The Cabinet is now discussing the recommendation. Having cynically undermined their own laws since 1972, having underestimated the needs of the community, and having done their best to withhold the most meagre of benefits from the poor, the Government are now retreating under smokescreen of a now completed review from all responsibility in this matter.

Now that these social security reviews have reported to Cabinet, I have to ask the Under-Secretary of State whether these reviews recommend the amendment and improvement of the exceptionally severe weather allowances to ensure proper help during this cold weather. Do they—as most of us fear—recommend their abolition so that the benefit will not be paid, no matter how cold the weather? Can the Under-Secretary of State give us a guarantee that pensioners and others—the 2·5 million householders which depend on heating additions—will not, as most of us fear, lose this vital help altogether under cover of a review which is becoming a cynical and heartless raid on the poorest and weakest in our society?

When the lives of elderly people are at risk, the House has a right to expect answers which are more detailed and frank than the empty rhetoric we have had so far from the Prime Minister and other Ministers. So that the cynical reassurances that the Prime Minister has given us do not become a callous betrayal in the spring, the House has a right to expect some detailed answers from the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Mr. Ray Whitney.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney) *rose*——

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I called the Under-Secretary of State. In an Adjournment debate, hon. Members need the agreement of both the hon. Member whose debate it is and the Minister.

12 midnight

Mr. Whitney: I am delighted to offer the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) some direct answers, in particular having heard such a farrago of misrepresentations. I am more pleased than I thought that I would be to offer corrections to his facts. First, we must put the situation into perspective—and after those flights of fancy, that is particularly necessary. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have been seeking to fill the Scottish media with similar fantasies in the past few weeks.

Payments for exceptional weather conditions represent only a small addition to the great help with heating costs that the Government give to those in need in Scotland and elsewhere. We spend billions of pounds on social security, and we have maintained all the major benefit rates ahead of rises in prices during the lifetime of this Government. We are now spending no less than £400 million a year on extra fuel for consumers on low incomes.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the increase in fuel prices, but he should consider that there were times, under the Labour Government, when he was not in the House, when fuel prices were increasing by 2 per cent. every six weeks. During the period of this Government, while fuel prices have increased by about 108 per cent. between November 1978 and November 1984, the heating additions paid in the supplementary benefit scheme have increased by 147 per cent. over the same period.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of a pitiful and inadequate response, but he should study the record of the Labour Government.

He spoke about hypothermia among pensioners, but he should study the rise in fuel energy costs during the dreadful years of the Labour Government.

All that means that, despite the inescapable constraints on public expenditure, the least well-off in society, be they pensioners or others, are better off than they were when the Conservative Administration took office in 1979.

Dr. M. S. Miller *rose*——

Mr. Whitney: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has left me little time to make the many corrections that I must put to the House.

The least well-off in our society have substantially higher additions to pay for the fuel that they need to keep warm than they did when the Labour Government were in office. Quite apart from ignoring those major facts, the

[Mr. Whitney]

remarks of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East showed that he, like many other people, is mixing up—I suspect sometimes deliberately—two separate issues.

One issue is whether those on supplementary benefit, and who are therefore likely to have their financial affairs on weekly budgets which are very tightly balanced, should be given a little extra help when the weather becomes extremely severe and those budgets come under strain.

The other issue is whether there should be permanent differences in the rate of supplementary benefit paid in various parts of the country to take account of the fact that some parts generally have somewhat lower temperatures than others.

Let me deal, first, with the question of the special payments for exceptionally severe weather conditions. It is important here to make absolutely clear what we are talking about. The essential basis of the "exceptionally severe weather" provision is that it is an emergency arrangement to provide budgeting help, if necessary, in periods of exceptionally—and I stress the word——

Dr. M. S. Miller: Get off the brief!

Mr. Whitney: If the hon. Gentleman would listen, he would learn a great deal to his advantage. He has only just arrived.

Severe weather means conditions so bad that the claimant could not be expected to foresee and budget for the fuel that he used.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The hon. Gentleman should leave his brief for a moment and look at the humanitarian aspects of this matter. People are dying of hypothermia, not only in Scotland but in every part of the country. I know that the hon. Gentleman is humanitarian, and he should not be sticking to a brief that he has been given by his civil servants. Instead he should be seeing what he can do to improve the situation.

Mr. Whitney: We have paid considerably more in heating addition than the Labour Government—£140 million more. Of course we are concerned about the problems suffered by old people because of the cold, but we are showing that concern in a practical manner which the Labour Government did not.

Payments before 1980 were made at the discretion of the local DHSS office or of individual officers. The rules were not made public and no objective test was applied. The regulated scheme was introduced in 1980, but there were still problems in applying the scheme in the winter of 1982. Following that winter, the Chief Adjudication Officer decided to introduce a new system which would be clearer and fairer in its operation. In consultation with the Meteorological Office, he devised an objective means of deciding when payments were due and how much should be paid. Details of those procedures are available in the House. The details are clear, and any hon. Member can study them.

The effect is that what is regarded as "exceptionally severe" weather in Cornwall might not be regarded as such in the north-east of Scotland. However, the differences are not large—the biggest being between the average daily temperature required to reach the trigger point in Aberdeen and that needed in Plymouth, which is less than 3½ deg. C.

There are other differences which many people might find surprising, particularly in view of the hullabaloo to which the public have been treated in recent weeks. For example, it has to be slightly colder in Birmingham or Suffolk than in Glasgow to reach the trigger point. The levels at which the trigger points are set reflect meteorological data collected over many years.

Hon. Members have mentioned exceptionally low temperatures reached at a particular time in a particular locality. We have heard much about Braemar. It is suggested that we use shorter and different periods and act more frequently. There is talk of temperatures reached in one day. The Chief Adjudication Officer will take note of such comments, but I must make two points clear.

First, a fairly brief cold snap—for only a few hours—would not make the difference to individual fuel bills that we are considering. Secondly, our supplementary benefit system is already complex and overburdened. One of the objectives is to simplify it.

Reference has been made to the coverage by weather stations. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that there were 19 such stations, when there are only 17, seven of which cover Scotland. They were chosen on expert advice, and the Chief Adjudication Officer will be examining again which weather stations he should use for this purpose.

Anxiety has been expressed about the complications of the scheme and the need to publish details. We take all reasonable steps to publicise the help available. Posters are put up in local social security offices and elsewhere and claimants can obtain leaflets explaining how and when to claim. The Department also tries to ensure that the local media in the areas affected are fully briefed.

The formula might be complex, but claiming is simple. It is possible to apply a ready reckoner to the fuel bill to work out how much a claimant is entitled to.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is the Minister defending the present system, or is he, as the Prime Minister appears to be saying, unhappy with the present system? Does he realise that it is possible for the DHSS to discard the formula and to pay the benefit now?

Mr. Whitney: I am seeking to set right the hon. Gentleman's complete misapprehension, which he is seeking to carry throughout Scotland for his own well-known political reasons. When he understands that, we shall go on to discuss what we propose to do in the future.

Let me now deal with the issue with which the concept of payments for exceptionally severe weather conditions is frequently confused—the idea that there should be some sort of "cold climate allowance" for particular parts of the country. Like Ministers in previous Governments, we have consistently taken the view that there are strong arguments against any deviation from the principle of national benefit levels. Apart from heating, there are many regional variations in prices which affect the amounts which people spend on different items. It would be possible to make a case, for example, based on the variation in transport costs in different parts of the country, and others would seek to point to other variations in living costs. If we do that, the task of setting and changing all the benefit rates each year would become impossibly complicated, at a time when one of our objectives is to make the system simpler and therefore better understood by claimants. Besides that, there is evidence that there is

little variation between the amounts spent, on average, on fuel by people in different parts of Great Britain, and that that remains true at all levels of income.

In conclusion, let me return to the issue of payments for exceptionally severe weather conditions. I should stress that this winter is the first time that this new objective method has been triggered, and I know that the Chief Adjudication Officer will be looking carefully at the guidance he has issued in the light of experience gained this winter——

Dr. M. S. Miller: People are dying.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman says that people are dying. Many more people would be likely to die if we were to make payments for heating of the kind that the Labour Government made. The Chief Adjudication Officer will no doubt be considering whether any changes are called for.

More generally, I would remind the House, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done, that we are looking carefully at all the provisions for meeting special expenses of that sort in the context of the review of the supplementary benefit system. It must be right to await the outcome of this fundamental exaination of the whole scheme which we have been conducting before taking further decisions on the future of this particular regulation.

I welcome the opportunity to set the record straight about the deliberate confusion that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and many of his hon. Friends and members of the Scottish National party have sought to sow in the minds of many people in Scotland. It is not a cold climate allowance; it is help with exceptional budget circumstances occasioned by changes in climate. The allowance is available to people north and south of the border on published, known and objective criteria.

I understand that this approach gives Opposition Members problems, but I am sure, now the matter has been explained, that at least fair-minded people—I must exclude Opposition Members who have listened to the debate—will understand the objective.

The main help with heating, as with all other assistance on supplementary benefit, relies on social security payments which have increased in real terms since the Government came into office by no less than 27 per cent.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

C-POULTRY COMPANY LIMITED BILL *(By Order)*

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 21 February.

GOSPORT BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

HARROGATE STRAY BILL *(By Order)*

LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

PLYMOUTH MARINE EVENTS BASE BILL *(By Order)*

SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

STREATHAM PARK CEMETERY BILL *(By Order)*

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 21 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Home-produced Food (Consumption)

1. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the drop in food consumption from United Kingdom production over the last four years.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): Agricultural production, at constant prices, has increased by about 12 per cent. over the last four years. During the same period home-produced food has maintained its share of a static domestic market but exports have increased significantly.

Sir Peter Mills: I thank my hon. Friend for her answer, but is it not true that there has been a considerable drop in the consumption of certain products? Is that not a serious matter for British agriculture? Will my hon. Friend be careful not to over-react in company with the health lobby, which is always saying that certain products are bad for us? Finally, is it not the height of folly to seek to do away with the beef premium, which encourages people to consume beef rather than to put it into intervention?

Mrs. Fenner: There is no question of over-reacting. The report represents the best scientific and medical advice available to the Government, and the nation's health is of vital importance. My hon. Friend is right to say that the beef variable premium plays an important role in maintaining the consumption of beef in this country.

Dutch Horticulture Industry

2. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in attempts to prevent the Dutch Government from subsidising its horticulture industry through cheap gas prices.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): The Commission is now considering what action to take in the light of comments received from member states and other interested parties since it instituted proceedings under article 93(2) of the treaty of Rome.

Mrs. Roe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply, but will he accept that the reintroduction of preferential gas prices for Dutch growers has been a matter of concern to United Kingdom glasshouse growers? Even if it is halted now, a competitive advantage, particularly against the long-season protected crop producer, will have been gained by the Dutch during the winter months because of lower energy costs for produce to be marketed now and in the coming months. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it seems to be a calculated policy of the Dutch Government to create an unfair advantage so that our producers simply cannot compete?

Mr. Jopling: I have the greatest sympathy with my hon. Friend in her forthright and clear views. That is why the Government have put the strongest possible pressure on the Commission to require the Dutch to suspend the preferential gas price while considering whether the practice is compatible with the terms of the treaty.

Mr. Torney: In view of the struggle that our horticulture industry will have when Spain and Portugal join the EEC, and as this is the second time recently that the Dutch have kicked the question of fuel prices, thus seriously affecting the United Kingdom industry, does the Minister agree that it is time for concerted action by the Government, without waiting for the EEC to agree, to police the Dutch, otherwise the industry will go bang?

Mr. Jopling: We have raised this matter at every meeting of the Council of Ministers since it became apparent. The hon. Gentleman is right, in that in 1981 the Commission decided that the practice of a state controlled company operating a preferential gas price for horticulturists was incompatible with the treaty of Rome. I am not aware that matters are at all different now. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall keep up the pressure.

Mr. Hunter: As the Dutch Government are providing comparable assistance for the poultrymeat and egg sectors, what representations does my right hon. Friend intend to make to combat this form of unfair competition?

Mr. Jopling: If I can be provided with firm evidence of unfair competition by the Dutch in those sectors, I shall be glad to take the matter up with the Commission.

Mr. Stephen Ross: As the Dutch Government have been found guilty of subsidising their growers, why is it not possible to impose a levy on their products? They are swamping our growers. Growers in my area pay 10p a gallon more for their diesel fuel than anyone else on the mainland. They are going to the wall.

Mr. Jopling: At the most recent meeting of the Council of Ministers I proposed to the Commission that it ought to take steps to recover the unfair advantage that Dutch growers have had through what we regard as an illegal subsidy.

Mr. Mark Hughes: In view of that reply from the Minister may I ask whether, if the Government do not get a satisfactory answer from the Commission, the right hon. Gentleman will take unilateral action to protect our growers?

Mr. Jopling: We shall be prepared to do whatever we can, within the law, to ensure that Dutch growers do not get this type of unfair advantage. We shall press the Commission hard to ensure that the Dutch enact the law.

Beef and Sheepmeat

3. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the beef premium and the sheepmeat regime.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): In its proposals for the 1985 common agricultural policy price fixing the Commission has made no provision for keeping the beef variable premium scheme. I believe that the scheme has served producers and consumers well and, in the current market situation for beef, should be maintained. As in previous years, we shall be pressing for its continuation. As to the sheepmeat regime, it has worked reasonably well but we shall continue to seek changes which will make it easier for our lamb to be exported to the rest of the Community and which will improve the stability of the home market.

Sir Hector Monro: Is my hon. Friend aware of the crucial importance of these two subsidies to the livestock areas of the west and north? Is he further aware that, without those subsidies, income from the hills of the west and north will be affected disastrously and that he must make every conceivable effort to ensure that the subsidies are maintained this year and in the future?

Mr. MacGregor: We had a tremendous struggle last year on the beef variable premium scheme, but my hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister was highly successful in maintaining that scheme, albeit in a somewhat changed form. We shall do everything that we can to persuade other member states of the merits of the scheme, which we believe benefits both producers and consumers and reduces the need for costly intervention. We shall resist any changes to the sheepmeat regime that discriminate against our producers.

Mr. Nicholson: I welcome the Minister's firm declaration in support of the beef variable premium scheme. I assure him that it has the support of farmers in Northern Ireland, who recognise the great need for it. In view of the continuing delay in the payment of the 1984-85 ewe premium, will he ensure that an interim payment is made to alleviate the hardship that is felt especially by hill livestock producers?

Mr. MacGregor: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments on the schemes. As for the delay in payment, I think that he is talking about the rates of advance payment in less-favoured areas. I know that they are important to farmers at this time of year, but a new method of calculation, which we do not believe is quite right, has been introduced. It is important that we get it right. There have been discussions this week on the advance payment issue, and I hope that there will be progress on the matter before too long.

Mr. Cockeram: Does my hon. Friend accept that both the beef premium and the sheepmeat regime are vital to the continued viability of farming in hill areas, not merely around Ludlow, but elsewhere? Does he agree that if the two schemes were to be ended it would be a sad day, because many hill farms would cease to be viable?

Mr. MacGregor: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that he also welcomed the improvements in the hill livestock compensatory amounts last year for hill farmers, in that they are now also payable in marginal areas.

Mr. Strang: Is it not scandalous that yet again the variable premium is under threat? Will the hon. Gentleman ensure that it continues and seek to establish it on a permanent basis, so that year in, year out we are not threatened with its removal?

Mr. MacGregor: The problem is that the scheme is not permanent and it was not this Government who negotiated the position of not making it a permanent scheme. It is difficult to get the beef variable premium on the table every year. As I said, we did it last year, and we continue to believe that it is not in the Community's interest to end the scheme.

Mr. Andy Stewart: In view of the speech of the president of the National Farmers Union on Tuesday, when he claimed that every success in agriculture, including the retention of the beef variable premium scheme, was due to the union and every failure was due to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, would my hon. Friend care to put the record straight?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It was entirely due to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Minister, whom I was pleased to assist, and not to anyone else, that we managed to retain the beef variable premium scheme.

Mr. Kirkwood: In addition to the threat emanating from the European Community Commission's proposals on the sheepmeat regime, will the Minister take careful account of the problem faced particularly by Scottish producers because they do not have access to the new qualifying group of animals?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not sure precisely what the hon. Gentleman has in mind. One or two points are worth taking up with the Commission, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman will write to me about the matter.

Sir John Farr: Is my hon. Friend aware that although most beef producers have received the beef premium for most of the weeks of the present year, beef has still been largely unprofitable and people are already leaving beef production? Will he do whatever he can to ensure that the scheme, which is so valuable, continues, otherwise, with the milk quota production, whole sections of the British countryside will change their character as people leave horn and find an alternative?

Mr. MacGregor: Both the variable premium scheme and the changes in the intervention system have had a beneficial effect on the market this year, in that the returns to the producers have been about 98 per cent. of the target price. I repeat that the variable premium scheme is beneficial to both producers and consumers and ensures that beef is consumed instead of going into intervention.

Mr. John: Since the schemes are justifiable on their own merits because they benefit producers and consumers, will the Minister resist any attempt to use the retention of the schemes as a lever to get unjust padding in other parts of the common agricultural policy, under which too much subsidy is already paid?

Mr. MacGregor: Our position on subsidies for products in surplus is extremely clear. The hon. Gentleman will know that we are to enter into negotiations, but these have not yet begun. Last year we had considerable difficulties with the schemes, and obviously we shall have to see how we get on in the negotiations.

Drainage

5. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish his review of drainage.

Mrs. Fenner: We expect to issue the consultation paper on the financing and administration of land drainage, flood protection and coast defence in March.

Mr. Yeo: I welcome that reply. Is my hon. Friend aware of the urgency of this issue? It is well illustrated by the proposals of the Anglian water authority for the River Stour, which will desecrate the world-famous landscape in Dedham Vale. Does my hon. Friend agree that the only way, ultimately, to prevent that from happening will be to use yet more taxpayers' money to persuade landowners to refrain from growing products which the country neither needs nor can afford?

Mrs. Fenner: I regret the delay in the publication of the paper, but I am confident that it will now be issued in March. It will not cover conservation issues as such. Its prime purpose is to seek views on financial and administrative issues.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that there is a firm in my constituency which makes pipes for land drainage? Will the Minister bear in mind what I have just said, because that firm has a marvellous record for exports, which are important to the economy, but it desperately needs some help with the home market?

Mrs. Fenner: The purpose of the paper is to consult interested parties on the present arrangements and to obtain their views on any improvements that are considered necessary. I do not believe that it will affect the hon. Gentleman's firm.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend reconsider the reply that she gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and accept that conservation is of widespread interest and is extremely important?

Mrs. Fenner: Yes, I wholly agree with my hon. Friend that conservation is important. I merely pointed out that that was not the purpose of the drainage paper.

Mr. Beggs: Is the Minister aware of the importance to agriculture of capital grants for land drainage and reclamation schemes in maintaining the jobs of employees of agricultural contractors, quarry operators and those who supply stone and gravel for drainage schemes? Will the Minister advise the House of the estimated number of job losses that will arise from the proposal to cut £13 million from the allocation to Northern Ireland and £27 million from the funds allocated to the mainland for capital grants?

Mrs. Fenner: Land drainage has had an enhanced rate of grant for some time now, and it is only fair that it should take its share of public expenditure cuts. The paper will review the present grant-aid arrangements, not fix future levels of grant-aid.

Mr. Mark Hughes: Will the paper deal with the problem of Wakefield, which is in a most difficult position between the hon. Lady's Department and the Department of the Environment? Does she accept that there are major difficulties in balancing conservation and agriculture, and that her answer that conservation is not included is disturbing?

Mrs. Fenner: I have had a good deal of correspondence on this issue with the right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison). I am aware of the problem. I note that the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Hughes) is interested in conservation, and I share that interest. The paper is about financial and administrative arrangements and seeks consultation about changes or improvements.

Agricultural Smallholdings

6. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the practice of Somerset and other counties in selling off their agricultural smallholdings.

Mrs. Fenner: It is the Government's policy to leave decisions on the sale of smallholdings to the smallholdings authorities concerned.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Minister aware that such is the opposition of the National Farmers Union to Somerset's attempts to flog off its smallholdings for a little one-off help with the rates that the union is currently considering advice from a QC that there may be a reason to take Somerset to the courts to test the legality of the matter? In view of the Government's recent embarrassment over court decisions, will the Minister advise Somerset and other county councils which are considering agricultural asset stripping to stay their hand, at least until the legalities of the matter are established?

Mrs. Fenner: I note with interest the hon. Gentleman's statement about the NFU. There is no intention to reimpose any limitation on the freedom of local authorities to act in the way that they think best on smallholdings.

Mr. Hardy: Has not hon. Member after hon. Member on the Conservative Benches in recent years prated about the need for young people to have an opportunity to enter farming? Is it not the case that those authorities which are selling their smallholdings are merely emulating the dogma of selfish and shortsighted privatisation which is so eagerly served by the same hon. Members who talk about opportunities?

Mrs. Fenner: On the contrary. Unfortunately, smallholdings have not generally proved effective in providing that first rung on the farming ladder, largely because of the absence of further rungs, which owes a great deal to the Labour party's Agricultural Land Holdings Act 1976. In the 10-year period to 1980-81 only about 14 tenants per year succeeded in making that transition.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister aware that the Northfield report said that smallholdings should not be sold in view of the urgent need to retain farm holdings to let? As recent legislation has only too plainly failed to encurage private landlords to let more farming units, has the Government any policy to deal with that?

Mrs. Fenner: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that the Act has hardly been in force for long enough to have made any considerable difference. It is our hope that it will in time, but that is no excuse for contending that smallholdings have provided that rung, when all the figures show that they have not.

Protein Crops

7. **Mr. Key** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action the Government are taking to promote the output of protein crops such as peas and beans.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government have actively supported Community action to encourage the protein sector, which includes the payment of a subsidy on peas and field beans production. We fund research designed to produce improved varieties of these protein crops and advice to growers is available from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

Mr. Key: In view of the need to reduce cereal output next year, to what extent does my hon. Friend regard protein crops such as peas and beans as a viable alternative? As the yield is about 3 tonnes per hectare, but Rothamstead says it should be 8 tonnes, what is he doing to encourage that experimental station?

Mr. MacGregor: As I indicated, we are funding quite a lot of research into improving consistency of yield and uniform ripening of the crop, and also into high resistance to pests and diseases. On his first point, my hon. Friend will know that United Kingdom pea production increased by 60 per cent. between 1983 and 1984. He is right in saying that it provides an alternative to cereals and other surplus products. That is one of the two reasons why it is sensible to encourage it, the other being that we are still in substantial deficit in protein crops.

Mr. Haselhurst: Has my hon. Friend made a careful assessment of the extent to which this could be a help to farmers to get out of grain, and thus to deal with the overall problem of surpluses?

Mr. MacGregor: Farmers must make up their own minds about what they wish to do, but we have been giving encouragement in this area.

Mr. Mark Hughes: What advice are the Government giving about lupins?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman will know, there is quite a lot of discussion about lupins in the United Kingdom. There are still considerable difficulties in growing them successfully, but some day that may be an alternative crop. Some producers are certainly getting interested in it.

Potatoes

8. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Eood if he is satisfied with the operation of the scheme for the sale of potato quotas.

Mr. MacGregor: This is a matter for the Potato Marketing Board. However, at my request the board has re-examined the operation of the quota system and has introduced greater flexibility.

Mr. Howarth: Given that about half our potato consumption consists of imports, does my hon. Friend agree that it would be best to wind up the board? If the producers want the board, let them finance it out of their own resources, rather than making further calls on taxpayers' funds.

Mr. MacGregor: Just this morning in Committee we passed amendments relating to the Potato Marketing Board which have had thorough consideration and are supported by more than 97 per cent. of growers. If the proposals go through Parliament as a whole, the growers will be paying a higher levy and the Government's open-ended commitment on deficiency payments will be withdrawn.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Can the Minister give an assurance to potato producers that the Government have no plans to abolish the Potato Marketing Board?

Mr. MacGregor: As today, with the approval of the Committee, I have carried amendments in regard to the Potato Marketing Board which will last for five years. I think that the position is clear.

Mr. Colvin: Now that we have a scheme for the sale of potato quotas, why can we not also have a perfectly controlled scheme for the sale of milk quotas, which is a form of marketing that is favoured by both the National Farmers Union and the Milk Marketing Board?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend will know that that was in response to a paper which we put out recently suggesting various alternatives for greater flexibility in the milk levy sytem. That is one possibility that we will consider in response to all the representations that we have received, but it will have to be negotiated in Brussels.

Milk Quotas

9. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he is

making for allocating secondary milk quotas in the year following 31 March 1985 and subsequent years in relation to the needs of farmers who are part way through development plans.

Mr. Jopling: The Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations allow the tribunal to make awards of secondary quota only in respect of expansion plans giving rise to production in the 1984-85 milk year. If we had made provision for plans extending into later years, this would have necessitated a bigger reduction in calculating quotas for other producers, and I do not think this would have been the right course.

Mr. Ross: Is the Minister aware that many producers, particularly those undertaking development plans, will have a rude shock at the end of March when they find that their quota is 30 per cent. less than they had bargained for? Is not the answer for the Minister to extend the outgoers scheme so that there will be more money to provide a fairer quota for those engaged in milk production?

Mr. Jopling: I think that we did immensely well to get £50 million for the outgoers scheme, and it has been a satisfactory sum. However, I am aware of the problems of producers who made firm plans before quotas were introduced, but who will not have finished the work until the end of 1984-85. I am prepared to give the matter further thought. The amount of quota available is very limited, and I would find it hard to justify going beyond 31 March 1985, when awards in respect of the current year will themselves be subject to scaling down.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister comment on Mr. Andriessen's proposal that the regional quota be spread over the whole national territory so that this year Northern Ireland will be exempt from paying superlevy?

Mr. Jopling: We have arrangements that are being discussed in Brussels at the moment, which would allow one to redistribute quota beyond the area of the dairies that were originally in the regulations. Those are still matters for discussion. However, I see that the amount of milk being produced in Northern Ireland is coming back towards the quota level.

Miss Maynard: In view of the fact that we now know that farm workers, dairy workers and some transport workers are losing their jobs because of the milk quotas, is the Minister prepared to go back to the EEC to get some money in compensation for workers who have lost their livelihood as a result of the milk quota scheme?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Lady, to whom I have answered a similar question before, will know that we have arrangements for redundancy payments in this country and that some firms, for instance the Milk Marketing Board, provide redundancy terms that are considerably more generous than those of the state scheme.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Is my right hon. Friend aware that producer-retailers are still unable to sell the full amount of their production quota direct to the public? Is he further aware that flexibility of wholesale quotas does little to alleviate that situation? Does my right hon. Friend remember that some nine months ago he committed himself to sort out the situation as soon as possible?

Mr. Jopling: We have been raising that matter at every meeting of the Council of Ministers since the middle of last summer, and I am glad to say that one of the first things that the new Commissioner did was to introduce some proposals that sought to deal with the problem of inflexibility between a direct and a wholesale quota when they are on one farm. We are continuing to discuss that. I hope that we shall be able to sort it out and finalise it at the next meeting of the Council at the end of the month.

Mr. John David Taylor: Does the facility that makes it possible to transfer quotas from one part of the United Kingdom to another apply to this year only?

Mr. Jopling: We have limited arrangements, as the right hon. Gentleman will know, for transferring milk from one farm to another. He will also know that my Department recently issued a consultation paper to try to find ways in future of making that simpler.

Mr. Maclean: Notwithstanding my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), is he aware that there are a few farmers in my constituency who are halfway through a development scheme, who will have no quota at all from 1985 onwards? In addition to trying to bring the 200,000 litre men up to full strength, will my right hon. Friend change his mind and attempt to find some quota for those small farmers who will have no livelihood unless they get some quota for 1985-86?

Mr. Jopling: I am not absolutely clear in my mind about the question that my hon. Friend asks because, as I understand it, the problem concerns quota being available for future expansion after 1 April this year. However, if my hon. Friend cares to send me details of specific problems, I shall have a look at them and see what can be done.

Mr. Home Robertson: Since the tribunals' recommended allocations of secondary quota are being scaled down by 42·5 per cent. in Scotland and 35 per cent. in England and Wales, and since it is likely that Britain could be 200 million litres short of its national quota this year, which is equivalent to the production of about 40,000 cows, will the Minister now accept that he has made a shambles of this and do something about it by expanding the outgoers scheme and allowing the milk marketing boards to do something about transferring quota between producers?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has the wrong end of the stick altogether. The awards of the panels and tribunals will have to be scaled down, but that is a function of the extra 2·5 per cent. by which we lowered the primary quotas of milk producers in order to deal with hardship cases. I took advice from the National Farmers Unions at the time on whether it had a better figure than 2·5 per cent. in mind. Of course, we could have helped if we had taken 3 or 3·5 per cent. off milk producers' primary quotas, but the unions told me that they did not have a better figure than 2·5 per cent. in mind.

Caribbean (Ministerial Visit)

10. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the purpose of the official visit by a Minister in his Department to the Caribbean in late January; how many persons were in the official party; and what was the total cost to public funds.

Mr. Jopling: For the purpose of my hon. Friend's official visit, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 4 February. The party comprised four persons and the total cost is now estimated at £9,900.

Mr. Hamilton: Was that extravagant jaunt approved by the Prime Minister, or was she on holiday at the time? Was the cost of the Minister's husband, who was in the party, paid for by the taxpayer, and did she bring back with her any banana skins for the use of Ministers?

Mr. Jopling: I see that the hon. Gentleman is up to his usual rather snide form. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary embarked on that visit on my instructions to ensure that the promised steps were being taken to improve the quality of bananas coming to the United Kingdom—which enjoy preferential access—from the Windward Islands and Jamaica. We have in the past received many complaints from importers about the quality of imports, but I am glad to say that British housewives are already enjoying better quality fruit as a result of our pressures, not least those from my hon. Friend.

The hon. Gentleman probably does not understand how much help on overseas visits a spouse can be. My view is shared by right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench, because I understand that between 1974 and 1979 Ministers from my Department, accompanied by spouses, took part in 14 visits, to Venice, Warsaw, Copenhagen, Moscow, Amsterdam, the United States, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, Italy, Martinique, Guadaloupe, Canada, Scandinavia, West Germany, Brazil, Mauritius, India, Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong.

Mr. Budgen: Was the visit perhaps with a view to setting up a banana regime within the enlarged EEC? If banana growers within the enlarged EEC were given what they would call an adequate rate of return, might it not be possible for the EEC to become self-sufficient in bananas? Would that not be in the finest traditions both of the Ministry of Agriculture and of the common agricultural policy?

Mr. Jopling: There is no intention in my mind of having a banana regime. If my hon. Friend cannot do rather better than that, he would have done better to stay in the Whips' Office.

Farm Incomes

11. **Mr. Jackson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider reviewing the presentation of statistics about farmers' income in the Annual Review of Agriculture.

Mr. MacGregor: The tables on these matters have all undergone considerable changes during the last two years and now provide more detailed and better information about farming income than was previously available. But I am always willing to consider suggestions for improvements to these statistical tables.

Mr. Jackson: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the presentation in the White Paper insufficient weight and prominence are given to the many qualifications which the White Paper admits must be attached to the estimates of farm incomes?

Mr. MacGregor: We have gone to considerable lengths to try to get this right in this particular year, and I believe that that is reflected in the comments on the figures in the media and elsewhere. My hon. Friend is entirely right to say that we should not look at just one figure and that there are very considerable variations between different sectors of agriculture, which are very firmly brought out in tables 26 and 27. He is absolutely right to draw attention to that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister ignore the current cant of the National Farmers Union, which is only bleating on behalf of its membership? Is it not right that for the next 10 years the farmers have to face some pretty rough justice, because, increasingly, money must be transferred within the European Community's budgets from agriculture to industry and they will have to take their fair share of the cuts?

Mr. MacGregor: We have made it clear that we believe that change has to come in agriculture where we have surpluses in the Community and in this country. That is what we are doing in all the negotiations on price fixing. But it is a great mistake to concentrate on certain sectors of farming. It is very important to stress that there are many farmers with extremely modest incomes who work all hours of the day and night to achieve them.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend consider including, as well as income figures for the farming community, the capital value of their assets, which are rarely reflected when these matters are considered and reported?

Mr. MacGregor: Those figures also are contained in the White Paper. The difficulty is that so much information is contained that it is very important to get the balance right, and that is what we endeavour to do.

Mr. John: However the statistics are presented, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the 22 per cent. rise in farmers' incomes must mean that the cereal sector, where we are already heavily into over-production, must have done very well indeed? Can he justify the continuance of that?

Mr. MacGregor: We have made it clear for some time now that we are endeavouring to get a better balance between the cereal and livestock sectors, and we shall continue to do so.

12. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present structure and balance of farm incomes.

Mr. MacGregor: I am concerned that broadly there continues to be an imbalance between the arable sectors and most livestock sectors. We will take account of this imbalance during the forthcoming CAP price fixing.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister accept that the large cereal producers, many of whom are to be found on the Government Back Benches, have done extremely well and continue to do well despite the great difficulties the small farmer generally faces? May we take it that the Minister will acknowledge that the small farmer today is for the first time feeling the cold breath of the 1930s, and does the Minister still expect the small farmer to continue to support the Conservative party?

Mr. MacGregor: Again, one has to look at different types of small farmer and different areas, but I certainly accept that in some areas the small farmer is having a difficult time, and I have made that clear. It is precisely because of our anxiety to help farmers of this sort that we are seeking a better balance between cereals and livestock. After all, the drop in cereal prices this year has undoubtedly benefited the livestock sector, and we shall continue with that approach.

Sheepmeat

13. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he expects will be the total percentage self-sufficiency in sheepmeat production in the United Kingdom for 1984-85; and what is the anticipated self-sufficiency of the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: Forecasts are not available for the 1984-85 marketing year. Self-sufficiency for the 1984 calendar year is now estimated at 77 per cent. for the United Kingdom and 75 per cent. for the European Community.

Mr. Shepherd: Does my hon. Friend agree that the profound changes now taking place in agriculture mean that sheepmeat production will assume ever-increasing importance in British agriculture? Is he aware that his commitment to resist strongly any change in the variable premium schemes will be well received? Will he especially resist the Community proposal whereby any loss of return from the operation of the limited gap in the variable premium is not compensated by an increase in the ewe premium?

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has proposed this year to put a ceiling on the variable premium. As this would help our exporters and could save money, we shall need to examine it carefully. We shall not, however, accept any mechanism of the kind to which my hon. Friend has referred, which is known as a recovery bar and discriminates particularly against British interests.

Milk Quotas

14. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has submitted to the European Economic Community Commission any proposals to introduce greater flexibility into the milk quota scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: As a result of our repeated pressure the Commission has now made proposals designed to provide greater flexibility between wholesale and direct sale quotas. I shall be pressing for the urgent adoption of these necessary measures.

Mr. Hicks: I welcome my right hon. Friend's efforts in this direction. Is he aware that many producer retailers find themselves in a ludicrous position and look to my right hon. Friend to improve the situation as quickly as possible?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. We have been pressing for this since last summer and I am very glad that the new Commissioner, almost within the first week of his duties in Brussels, has put forward proposals to make these necessary changes.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 14 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Italy.

Mr. Kirkwood: As the flaws in section 2 of the Official Secrets Act have come to a head in the Ponting trial this week, but were originally brought to the attention of the House by Lord Franks in 1972, and as the present Attorney-General and Home Secretary condemned the provisions of that section as long ago as 1978, will the Prime Minister find time in her busy schedule today to convene a meeting with the express and urgent purpose of planning the early repeal of that section so as to create greater freedom of information and reserve only explicitly stated matters which must be subject to confidentiality?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman has said, the Franks report was produced in 1972 by three Privy Councillors and a number of other hon. Members. A White Paper was issued six years later in 1978. In 1979, when the Conservative Government which I led came to power, we introduced a Bill to implement the Franks recommendations, but that Bill did not find favour with Parliament and we have not tackled the matter since. Many people want section 2 changed, but there is precious little agreement on how to change it.

Q2. **Mr. Robert Adley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 14 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: In the light of the barrage of allegations following the Ponting trial, does my right hon. Friend agree that the disclosure of intelligence information is inevitably bound to be useful to potential enemies? Will she assure the House that if there is any conflict between disclosure to the House and national security she will give first priority to national security?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree wholly with my hon. Friend. There is no right to information which may imperil the safety of the armed forces. Indeed, the Government have a duty to prevent the release of such information, and it is a duty which I shall continue to discharge.

Mr. Kinnock: May I first say how completely I agree with that last answer on the matter of national security. The Prime Minister will know that I have today written to her, having received her assurances that she was not involved in the joint decision to prosecute made on 17 August 1984 by the Law Officers, and on that point I am prepared to accept her assurances. I have said this to the Prime Minister in my letter of reply, and I have also enclosed several other questions relating to the decision to prosecute Clive Ponting. I now want the right hon. Lady to answer the question which she avoided answering on Tuesday.

A vetted jury unanimously concluded that Mr. Clive Ponting had not broken the law by exposing the attempts of Ministers deliberately to mislead Parliament and the public. Did the Prime Minister know about the proposed deception of Parliament and, if she did, did she endorse it? If she did not know about it, will she now condemn it, and condemn it strongly? Will she now answer the question?

The Prime Minister: I have received the right hon. Gentleman's letter. It contained no trace of apology or

withdrawal of anything which he said — no trace whatsoever. Indeed, in many respects he repeated the assertion. He quoted from a letter written by—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I shall answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the House that it is unseemly to shout.

The Prime Minister: In his letter, the right hon. Gentleman referred to a letter written by the former Labour Attorney-General. The right hon. Gentleman quoted from it, but what he did not say was what the former Labour Attorney-General said at the beginning of his letter. The letter was written to *The Times* on 26 September 1984. The former Labour Attorney-General, Mr. Sam Silkin, said:

"the Prime Minister emphatically asserted that 'the Law Officers did not seek the view of, or consult with, any other minister, nor was the view of any other minister conveyed to them, before they took their decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting.'"

Mr. Silkin continued:

"As a statement of fact I do not question this assertion."

Do I understand the right hon. Gentleman to be making a similar statement? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]

Mr. Kinnock: I am more than content to have the whole of Sam Silkin's letter quoted, but unfortunately the right hon. Lady, with her selective tastes, still does not answer the question which I asked.

As far as my repetition of assertions is concerned, may I say that that is still because the primary points have not been answered in anything that the right hon. Lady has sent to me.

On the matter of apologies, yes, apologies are in order —*[Interruption.]*—apologies from the right hon. Lady for the utterly disreputable action of her Ministers in seeking to mislead and let down Parliament, as the documents leaked by Clive Ponting conclusively demonstrate.

The Prime Minister: I notice that the right hon. Gentleman does not have the grace to agree with the former Labour Attorney-General.

May I now come to his question, and answer it in my own way. There has been no attempt whatsoever to mislead the House. *[Interruption.]* I have made it absolutely clear that the Government have a duty not to reveal intelligence which could be of assistance to the enemy or which could imperil the safety of our own forces. I notice that our enemies are very careful not to let us know how much and when they knew of our movements and operations. They are not being questioned in that way. We have a duty not to disclose that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Foulkes: Rubbish. Everyone knows it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very serious matter, of very great interest to the House and to everybody. I ask the House to give the Prime Minister a fair hearing.

The Prime Minister: Where information has lost its operational significance, we have given a full account of the facts, which have been published in the *Official Report* and have not been challenged. Other information still has great operational and intelligence significance, especially in a situation where the Argentine has still not ceased permanent hostilities against this country.

Mr. Kinnock: Wherever the national security or the safety of our troops and sailors is concerned, or wherever they may be imperilled, this House should be at one. Where questions of the integrity of Ministers is concerned, this House should be at one. The knowledge of movements of the battleship Belgrano is now encyclopaedic and detailed, and has been for many, many months. There are now no longer any details that could conceivably be related to any possibility of imperilling our troops.

Those documents and matters being considered by Ministers have been released. Is the right hon. Lady saying that the documents that were disclosed by Mr. Ponting were forgeries, or is she saying that he committed perjury, or is she saying that the jury was wrong?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is going right off beam. What I said, and have made perfectly clear—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman is right off beam. He clearly knows nothing about intelligence matters. Where information has lost its operational significance, we have given a full account of the facts. Indeed, I think that if there is a charge to be made against me, it is that I have given too many facts that might best not have been given.

I want to say this to the right hon. Gentleman about intelligence—if an enemy or anyone who has been in hostilities with us has intelligence information and knows not only what it is but the time we got it, he will be well on the way to knowing where we got it and he will take the appropriate action. Those methods are still in existence. To give away intelligence now, when the Argentine still has not ceased hostilities, would imperil our armed forces. It is no earthly good the right hon. Gentleman saying that we are all at one—his actions reveal that we are not at one.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the majority of people in this country feel that the action taken over the Belgrano — whether it was steaming away at 50 knots or sailing round in circles— was the right action to take? Does she further agree that the Leader of the Opposition is naive in thinking that we should disclose how we got the knowledge, when and where, when it still has great military significance for our armed forces?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has it absolutely right. The interesting thing is that out of the whole Falklands affair, brilliantly conducted and carried out, the Opposition can find only a couple of little quibbles. That shows what sort of people they are.

Dr. Owen: The Prime Minister must be aware that the charge of misleading the House is not a quibble—it is a very serious charge. Therefore, is it not incumbent upon her to come to the House on Monday to defend the position that she adopted following November 1982, when she became aware of the fact that some of the statements that had been made in this House were incorrect? That is a simple thing. The Prime Minister is, quite rightly, intent on getting a proper apology out of the Leader of the Labour party because there is a convention in this House that we trust each other's word. That convention is also based on the understanding that the record in *Hansard* is corrected at the earliest opportunity. That the Prime Minister did not do. She, as the head of the Government, should explain why it is that civil servants and Ministers appear to have misled this House and a Select Committee. She should do that in debate on Monday.

The Prime Minister: The debate on Monday will be taken by the Ministry of Defence and by my right hon.

Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I have already told the right hon. Gentleman, had he listened — I understand that he might not have heard, because it was a bit noisy — that where information has lost its operational significance we have given a full account of the facts. That full account of the facts was published in several columns of *Hansard* on, I believe, 29 October. Not one single fact or figure there has been challenged.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does it relate to Question Time?

Mr. Nellist: Yes, Sir. You will no doubt be aware, Mr. Speaker, and the House will be interested to know, that a couple of hours ago Mr. Clive Ponting was sacked by the Ministry of Defence—[HON. MEMBERS: "Quite right."] My point of order is that although Mr. Ponting was cleared by a jury——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that I have anything to do with that. There is a debate on the matter on Monday, and I should have thought that that would provide an admirable opportunity for the hon. Gentleman to raise the issue.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman can only raise a point of order that I can answer, and I cannot answer the question that he is asking me.

Mr. Nellist: My point of order is simply this, Mr. Speaker. Have you received a request from the Ministry of Defence for permission to make a statement that will clear up the question of how a man can be found not guilty in a court of law and then sacked for the same offence?

Mr. Speaker: I have not.

Mr. Flannery: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In Question Time there are now so many leaders around us all over the place—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I got as far as "leaders".

Mr. Flannery: There are now so many leaders that it is increasingly difficult for a Back-Bencher to be called. Interesting as the exchanges are, will you, Mr. Speaker, take note of that and question yourself about it?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised a very fair point. Indeed, I mentioned it this week, last week and, I believe, the week before that. It would be a great pity if Question Time involved only exchanges between the Front Benches. However, I do my best where I can to ensure that Back Benchers have an equal share of the time.

Business of the House

3.33 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 18 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the sinking of the General Belgrano, which will arise on a Government motion.

Motion on the Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation Scheme.

TUESDAY 19 FEBRUARY — Second Reading of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Water Fluoridation Bill.

Motion on the European Community Document No. 4421/85 on the Milk Supplementary Levy Scheme.

WEDNESDAY 20 FEBRUARY — Motion on the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order.

Remaining stages of the Trustee Savings Banks Bill.

THURSDAY 21 FEBRUARY—Remaining stages of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill.

Motion on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order.

FRIDAY 22 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 25 FEBRUARY — Remaining stages of the Representation of the People Bill.

[Debate on Milk Supplementary Levy Scheme February 1985:

Document
4421/85 Milk quotas and levy.
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 5-ix (1984-85), para. 2.]

Mr. Kinnock: I am glad that the Government have changed their mind and will after all, be tabling an amendable motion for Monday's debate. However, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that my hon. Friends and I consider that the choice of subject by the Government is nothing more than an evasive gimmick designed to distract attention from the main current issues of the conduct of Ministers and the decision of the Government to prosecute Mr. Clive Ponting? The Government will not succeed in their efforts to distract attention by the use of this stratagem.

Will the Leader of the House confirm that we will shortly have the debate on the public expenditure White Paper to which he said he has been giving consideration?

May I ask the right hon. Gentleman once again whether the Government will provide their own time for a debate on the problems that will arise from the closure of a third of the skillcentre network, particularly as we now discover that there is no majority on the Manpower Services Commission for that course of action?

Will the Government provide time for an urgent debate on Britain's immigration laws in view of the disturbing evidence in yesterday's report from the Commission on Racial Equality that our immigration system operates unfairly and unjustly against black families and is a source of tension in race relations?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps we might pursue through the usual channels the question of a debate on the report of the Commission on Racial Equality on the application of the immigration laws. I make the same comment as I did last week about the possibilities of a debate on skillcentres.

To answer the right hon. Gentleman's question about a debate on the public expenditure White Paper, I understand that the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service will shortly report on the matter. I hope that a debate can take place soon thereafter, and certainly ahead of the Budget debate.

I note that the right hon. Gentleman is happy that Monday's debate should take place on an amendable motion. I listened to his rehearsed trailer for the whole character of the debate on Monday, and I can only comment, in all generosity, that if it is to be a question of an evasive gimmick, he is giving us a generous standard by which to measure ourselves.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will my right hon. Friend try to find time for an early debate on the need to reform the Official Secrets Act? Is he aware that some of us are disturbed by the somewhat doubtful line which appears to be emerging from the Treasury Bench to the effect that there is no need to tackle this subject again because previous attempts, particularly the 1979 Bill, ran into difficulties? As he will recall that the 1979 Bill was never debated on the Floor of the House but was withdrawn by the Government because of difficulties over the Blunt disclosures, will he agree that that is not a valid comparison and that there is now a new situation which merits an early debate?

Mr. Biffen: As my hon. Friend reminded a radio audience earlier today, he has himself done his time in dock in respect of the Official Secrets Act and therefore he speaks on the matter with added authority. I cannot give him an optimistic reply today, but I shall draw attention of the Home Secretary to the point that he makes.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Will the Leader of the House take note of what I think is a widespread view, not only inside but outside the House, that as the Prime Minister is in charge of the nation's security and is the only member of the War Cabinet still in office it would be treating the House with contempt for her not to take part in the debate on Monday and to clear up the remaining issues once and for all?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman will have heard the answer that my right hon. Friend gave to his master, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). I shall put to her the point that the right hon. Gentleman makes.

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): Has my right hon. Friend noted that the Secretary of State for Social Services has promised a decision on the Government's policy on limited lists before the end of this month? If that decision is made next week, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement to be made? Although the House has been promised a regulation for debate, in the light of other factors that have emerged in recent weeks, particularly relating to the behaviour of the pharmaceutical industry and some in the medical profession, will the Leader of the House arrange for a much longer debate than might normally be associated with the consideration of a mere regulation?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend underlines the importance of this topic. I shall certainly bear in mind the importance

of a statement being made. I shall take account of his representations that there should be a longer debate than is normally the case.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Prime Minister's refusal to take part in the debate on Monday will confirm the growing feeling that, when there were military victories bought with British lives in the Falklands, she was very ready to step forward to claim the credit but that when there are criticisms of her conduct she offloads the responsibility on to other Ministers or shields behind an artificial defence of national security? The impression which she gave today and which emerges from her decision not to speak is that under the image of a great war leader, which she so sedulously cultivates, lies the heart of a coward.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the right hon. Member to withdraw that last word.

Mr. Benn: It is not my wish to use unparliamentary language, Mr. Speaker, but I think that I am entitled to draw a contrast between the Prime Minister's conduct when——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member is a very experienced Member of the House. He knows that he may not use that word in relation to another right hon. Member.

Mr. Benn: I withdraw the word "coward", Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Biffen: May I say in the cause of the virtues of anodyne language that, on reflection, I think that I was unnecessarily rough in the comment I made to the leader of the Liberal party about his relationship. It was meant in the kindest of spirits.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is an experienced debater. I have no doubt that he believes that a legitimate part of politics is playing the man, or woman, as well as the ball. I have no doubt that he will be able to do that next Monday. I have no doubt also that the right hon. Gentleman heard the answer that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). I believe that, on reflection, he will realise that that was a perfectly valid explanation.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Will my right hon. Friend consider the difficulties facing the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, and other Select Committees? When recommedations are made by the Committee of Selection that hon. Members should join a particular Committee, such as the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, there has been an increasing blockage in implementing the Selection Committee's recommendations. For instance, the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Mr. Conlan) was prevented for three months last summer from joining the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) has been prevented for more than a month from joining the Select Committee because the Liberal/SDP alliance will not accept the membership of those hon. Members on the Committee.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has referred to a real problem. I shall certainly look into the matter, although I have a limited role in this regard, to ascertain whether anything can be done.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): May the Secretary of State for Energy be called here next week to explain why he has refused on numerous occasions to disclose to the House the state of the electricity board's accounts? A member of his own party, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, has confirmed that the electricity board has lost £2 billion as opposed to its £240 million profit in the year before the strike. Surely it is high time the Secretary of State for Energy made a statement to the House on that matter and disclosed the current state of stocks. The right hon. Gentleman is refusing to answer parliamentary questions that have been tabled continuously since Christmas. There are many aspects of this strike, including costs, about which the House should know. It is high time the right hon. Gentleman was brought here to explain himself.

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend is first for parliamentary questions on Monday. Although the hon. Gentleman may feel disposed to disparage the technique of parliamentary questions, I think that he is rather good at it, and I hope that he will persist.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): On next week's business, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the unwritten constitution can work only if all hon. Members behave as gentlemen and not as cads?

Mr. Biffen: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It would be totally impossible, and out of the character of this place, to try to prescribe with precision how we conduct relationships. We must proceed on the basis that my hon. Friend has suggested.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Has the Leader of the House seen the amendment put down to early-day motion 341 by a group of Conservative Members?

[That this House congratulates the Newcastle Evening Chronicle for its report on Tuesday 29th January, revealing that a meeting of senior National Coal Board officials was held in the National Coal Board Staff College, Longbenton, in September 1981, to hear a statement that it was the intention of the current government to 'privatise' the coal industry, the objective was to make the reduced coal industry attractive to outside speculation, and the future would be with around 100 profit-making pits, largely in the central coalfield of Britain; considers that the revelation vindicates the National Union of Mineworkers' reasons for their splendid defence of the mining industry and exposes the real reasons for Her Majesty's Government's desire to prolong the strike; and accordingly condemns any suggestion that the nation's coal industry assets should be sold off.]

The amendment calls for the privatisation of the coal industry. As the Secretary of State for Energy has now written to me saying that he has no plans to privatise the coal industry, may we be told whether the Government reject the views of their own Back Benchers or those of the Secretary of State?

Mr. Biffen: That is an issue that could profitably be tossed around during Question Time on Monday.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The famine in Africa has been called the greatest disaster ever to afflict the globe. Will my right hon. Friend try to find time to debate both the issue itself and ways and means in which we can give additional help?

Mr. Biffen: I recognise the importance of that point, but no provision has been made for a debate in the near future. I hope that, in any case, my hon. Friend will try his own luck with such chances as may be offered by the Adjournment.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): As the Leader of the House is still using the Select Committee as an excuse for his failure to arrange a debate on the public expenditure White Paper, will he have a word with the Chairman of that Select Committee and ask him to hurry up?

Mr. Biffen: I will most happily draw the Chairman's attention to the hon. Gentleman's observations.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): When is it likely that we shall have a debate on the important subject of the north-south divide in this country, which is gradually manifesting itself more and more clearly in the public mind? Should we not be given an opportunity to discuss the matter?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is a robust campaigner —and properly so—for the region and the constituency that he serves. Alas, however, Government time is at a premium, and I think that it will fall to my hon. Friend to find the occasion for such a debate.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House reflect on his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about the Secretary of State for Energy? May we be given an assurance that, on Monday, we will be given a definitive view by the Secretary of State for Energy — perhaps backed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer — on the question whether the exorbitant cost to the nation of the strike is still considered by the Government to be a worthwhile investment?

Mr. Biffen: I believe that Question Time on Monday will provide an opportunity for such questions, but I will buttress that reply by referring the hon. Gentleman's point to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Did my right hon. Friend have the good fortune to see the excellent inquiry into the need for safe riding hats that was conducted by the BBC programme "That's Life" on the past two Sundays? Is he aware of the enormous concern of those who ride, and of their understanding of the need for proper riding hats approved by the British Standards Institution? Will he ask the appropriate Minister to come to the House at an early date to make a statement to reassure the public and to answer questions with a view to banning unsatisfactory foreign imports?

Mr. Biffen: I think that my hon. Friend has in mind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport as being responsible for such matters. I shall cheerfully pass my hon. Friend's message to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The Leader of the House will remember that, last week, I raised with him the desperation of miners who are in a dispute that should never have been. The Government's policies have also driven the teachers to desperation. Strike action is imminent and a second front will be opened. May we have a debate on the problems facing teachers, especially on the miserable wages that they are given?

Mr. Biffen: Without going into the merits or otherwise of what the hon. Gentleman has said, may I remind him that, on Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will be top for questions. The hon. Gentleman might find that a useful opportunity to make his point.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): In view of the importance of the issues dealt with in the recent White Paper on financial services, does my right hon. Friend think that there is any chance of debating that White Paper in the reasonably near future?

Mr. Biffen: It is an important topic and I am aware that my hon. Friend is not alone in wanting a debate on it. However, I had better say at this stage that such a debate is not contained in the programme for the immediate future.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Although I welcome Wednesday's debate on rate capping, which no doubt gave the impetus to the Secretary of State for the Environment to admit the catastrophic errors that he has made in connection with rate capping for Leicester and other cities, surely the debate is far too short for such tremendously important issues for many cities. Will we not be sitting in on another edition of the funeral rites of local democracy?

Mr. Biffen: No; I do not think that it quite bears that interpretation. The hon. and learned Gentlemen will find that the debate is of reasonable length and on an important subject. It will be made that much more sharp and enjoyable if he makes a short speech.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call those hon. Members who have been rising in their places as they have had rather a rough time today in terms of the time element.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that it would be intolerable if a senior civil servant who put his first duty and responsibility to the House of Commons were witch-hunted out of the Civil Service? Does he agree that it would be wise for the Government to bear in mind the events that troubled the United States which involved Richard Nixon? Perhaps the Leader of the House will ensure that a statement is made about Mr. Ponting's future. We should like such a statement quite separate from Monday's debate.

Mr. Biffen: I shall convey that comment to the appropriate Minister.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Has not the time come for a debate on the arts? *[Interruption.]* The Government's closing of one of our national theatres is no laughing matter. The crisis has been referred to, in the context of cuts in local authority expenditure, by the chairman of the Arts Council, the director of the National Gallery, the director of the British museum and now by the director of the National theatre. The award that has been given is about one third of the rate of inflation. The name of the play currently being performed in the Cottesloe theatre is "Doomsday", and it seems that the Government intend to bring that about for the arts. May we have a debate soon?

Mr. Biffen: I am afraid that I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman the debate for which he asks. I agree that this is an area of public affairs in which there is, albeit a minority——

Mr. Buchan: Come on.

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman must be aware that the arts world is a valued but none the less elitist minority.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Has the Leader of the House noticed that there are now several all party early-day motions arising out of the report of the chief medical officer that 100,000 premature deaths are caused by cigarette smoking? The motions have been tabled by the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts) and me. Will the right hon. Gentleman find time for the House to debate this matter before the Budget, with a view to taking some clear action to prevent those deaths?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is a doughty campaigner on this issue, and on more than one front. However, any debate could more appropriately arise in private Members' time.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Leader of the House aware that his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was utterly unsatisfactory as, although the Ponting case, which ended last Monday, has occasioned a statement to the House and a debate on Monday, two or three hours ago Mr. Ponting was told that no position is available for him in the Ministry of Defence? That should at least justify a statement from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on how the dismissal took place.

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry that my previous answer did not satisfy the hon. Gentleman but alas, I must refer him to it.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Leader of the House is already aware of the Government's determination to restrict expenditure in the National Health Service. In the light of disclosures contained in last week's "TV Eye" programme, which highlighted the gross way in which certain consultants are manipulating and swindling the nation of fees that should be paid to the NHS, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is high time we had an early opportunity to explore that position further and to give the House a chance to express its opinion about it?

Mr. Biffen: I did not see the "TV Eye" programme to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. I can offer no prospect of any early debate during Government time. However, I shall refer his point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Has the Leader of the House found time to consider the views of his hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw), who offered widely shared criticisms of the European Commission's record on providing food aid to the Sudan? Does he recall that his hon. Friend described that record as representing bureaucratic arthritis? Given the fact that the British public are becoming increasingly impatient about those problems, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that as a matter of urgency the House should have a debate about it?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises a point that is broadly similar to that raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). This afternoon I must rest my reply to the hon. Gentleman on the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier (Sunderland, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the north-east county council association understands that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is requesting a cut of 28 per cent. in the grant to the North of England Development Council? Will he ensure that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry comes to the House next week and makes a statement about it, especially in view of the tremendous unemployment problems in the region,, and the fact that this seems to be a cost-cutting exercise in an area that is already devastated by unemployment and cannot afford to lose that money?

Mr. Biffen: I understand clearly the economic factors that give rise to the hon. Gentleman's anxiety. I shall refer his argument to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the right hon. Gentleman find time to rearrange next week's business so that the House can debate with him his problems as Leader of the House, which he discussed at the constitutional Conservative Back-Bench committee last night?

Mr. Biffen: Just as I do not watch much televison, I am a slow reader. I have yet to read any reports of that private meeting. If the hon. Gentleman can enlighten me, I shall do my best.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 364 about the military attack on the Molesworth peace camp?

[That this House expresses its utter disgust at the decision of the Secretary of State for Defence to mount a full-scale military operation against the Peace Camp at Molesworth; and believes that the stark contrast of barbed wire and troops — paving the way for United States nuclear missiles — with wheatfields for the starving people of Ethiopia, illustrates vividly the priorities of the Government; notes that this nocturnal attack is a further major escalation of the harassment and intimidation of Britain's mass movement against nuclear madness; and pledges its support to the continuing resistance to United States nuclear bases throughout Britain.]

In the light of that, the growing anxiety about telephone tapping, the possible destruction of the chapel at the camp, the road blocks, and the fact that the Ministry of Defence denied that a shooting took place at Greenham common on Tuesday night, despite the fact that a tape recording exists, which contains the internal communications of the base and demonstrates clearly that a serious shooting took place, may we have a statement, or preferably a debate, on what is happening at the American bases at Molesworth and Greenham common?

Mr. Biffen: I can offer no prospect of a debate in Government time—at least, not for some time. I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's points to the relevant Minister.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I thank the Leader of the House for the undertaking that he gave earlier this afternoon to consider the possibility of a debate in Government time on the recent report by the Commission

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

for Racial Equality on immigration procedures. Will he ensure that the debate is held soon, that it is a whole day debate, and that it is not relegated to an obscure Friday?

Mr. Biffen: I know that the hon. Gentleman is trying to be helpful. My terminology referred to the "usual channels". I object to the concept of an obscure Friday. No Friday is obscure. It is valuable parliamentary time, and its status depends upon the use to which Members of Parliament put it.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will the Leader of the House ensure that the Foreign Secretary comes here next week to explain his visit to Turkey this week where he said that he firmly supported the restoration of £400 million in EEC aid to that country despite the fact that other EEC countries say that that aid should be withheld until full democratic rights are restored in that country and despite the fact that Amnesty International briefed him on the fact that thousands of people are still being tortured in Turkish prisons and that those prisons hold thousands of political prisoners including trade unionists and peace protesters? Will the Leader of the House ask the Foreign Secretary to explain why the Government firmly support a country which continues to deny human rights to its citizens?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will be in the House on Wednesday afternoon next week to answer questions. I have no doubt that the hon. Lady will then have an opportunity to make those points. In any case, I shall ensure that he is appraised of her comments beforehand.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Will the Leader of the House consider arranging an early debate on housing in view of the Government's 1985-86 HIP allocations which councils throughout the country of all political persuasions are saying will create major housing problems? The building employers are also saying that the Government's policies will result in a large increase in unemployment. A debate is needed on that important issue.

Mr. Biffen: I cannot offer any hope of an early debate in Government time. I am not sure to what extent the broad issue might be included in any comments on rate limitation. I shall of course draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the points that have been made.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Government's proposed cuts in social security payments for homeless people living in board and lodging hostels will mean that many of them have no money left for food? They will have to choose between a bed and food, between the streets and starvation? Is he not ashamed to be part of a Government who are creating a society in which some people sleep in a bedroom inside a house and others have to sleep outside under arches in cardboard boxes? Is it not time that we had a full debate on the problems of homeless people?

Mr. Biffen: No provision has been made for a debate upon the homeless. I recognise at once that it is a most important topic. The hon. Gentleman might consider the opportunities that are open to him as a private Member to pursue it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Now that it is clear that the Prime Minister is running scared of coming to the Dispatch Box next Monday and has decided to appoint two Defence Ministers to run up the flag in a most disgraceful way, will the Leader of the House give the House an assurance that the Prime Minister will be in her place during the debate next Monday?

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I fancy that he is rattling his sabre to drown the knocking of his knees.

Coal Industry Dispute

4.3 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the cost of the current mining strike to the Central Electricity Generating Board, the level of coal stocks and the possible increase in electricity prices to consumers."

I believe that the matter is important in view of the leaked document that was broadcast to the nation at 7 pm yesterday by Channel 4 news that the estimated loss by the CEGB this year will be about £2 billion and that only £450 million of that can be accounted for by interest payments. Its estimate is that £1·8 billion is directly related to the current miners' dispute. I believe that the House should debate that issue in view of the statements made by the CEGB when giving evidence to the Select Committee and by Ministers on the Floor of the House. That issue alone should be debated.

The House should have the opportunity to debate the matter with the Minister responsible for the present level of coal stocks at power stations. I say that for two reasons. One is that we have never been able to get an up-to-date estimate of the level of coal stocks and the other is that in my constituency and the neighbouring one, yesterday, for the first time for 11 months, strike-bound coal that was mined before the dispute started has been moved by lorries that I suspect are non-trade union. There has also been a massive police presence in my communities once again. That presents problems for the communities.

Ministers have stood at the Dispatch Box over the past 11 months and told the House that there has been no need to move any of that strike-bound coal and that coal stock levels were adequate to provide electricity. We should be given a chance to debate that issue. The CEGB's estimated loss for the current year implies a rise of 20 per cent. to electricity consumers. It would be intolerable to make that increase in view of the fact that the Select Committee on Energy earlier last year made a report to the House saying that the Government had deliberately put up the price of electricity, and gas by the use of the gas levy, to tax energy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has used electricity price increases as a means of raising revenue for the Estimates. He made a statement to the House that he felt that the cost of the strike was money well spent for the nation. Consumers might have a 20 per cent. increase in their bills. I believe that the matter should be debated urgently in the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the cost of the current mining strike to the Central Electricity Generating Board, the level of coal stocks and the possible increase in electricity prices to consumers."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

BILLS PRESENTED

Interception of Communications

Mr. Secretary Brittan, supported by the Prime Minister, Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Secretary Younger, Mr. Secretary Hurd, and Mr. David Waddington, presented a Bill to make new provision for and in connection with the interception of communications sent by post or by means of public telecommunication systems and to amend section 45 of the Telecommunications Act 1984: And the same was read the first time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 83.]

Re-Acquisition of Public Assets

Mr. John Golding, supported by Mr. Jim Craigen, Mr. Reg Freeson, Mr. Gregor MacKenzie, Mr. Harry Ewing, Mr. Alexander Eadie, Mr. Martin O'Neill, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Bernard Conlan, Mr. Frank Dobson, Mrs. Renée Short, and Mr. Sydney Bidwell, presented a Bill to take back into public ownership those assets privatised since May 1979: And the same was read the first time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 March and to be printed. [Bill 85.]

Reform of the House of Lords

Dr. John Marek presented a Bill to abolish the present composition of the House of Lords and to provide for a new membership based solely on an equal directly elected representation from all the regions of the United Kingdom: And the same was read the first time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 July and to be printed. [Bill 86.]

Control of Political Expenditure

Mr. Bernard Conlan, supported by Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier, Mr. John Golding, Mr. Harry Cowans, and Mr. Hugh McCartney presented a Bill to control the amount of money spent by political parties during general elections; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the first time; and ordered to be read a Second time and to be printed. [Bill 84.]

Orders of the Day

Representation of the People Bill

Considered in Committee

[Progress 13 February].

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 12

DEPOSIT BY CANDIDATES AT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Amendment No. 51 proposed [13 February], in page 16, line 6, leave out '£1,000' and insert '£500'.—[Sir John Farr.]

The Chairman of Ways and Means: With this, we may take the following amendments: No. 70, in page 16, line 6, leave out '£1,000' and insert

'£500 or such amount as the Secretary of State may by order determine; no order shall be made under this section unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament'.

No. 52, in page 16, line 9, leave out 'one twentieth' and insert 'one tenth'.

No. 85, in page 16, line 9, leave out 'one twentieth' and add 'three fortieths'.

New clause 7—*Abolition of deposit and increase in number of nominations—*

'(1) In Schedule 1 of the principal Act, paragraph 9 ("Deposit") shall cease to have effect;

(2) In paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 1 in the principal Act, for the word "eight" there shall be substituted "at least one hundred".'.

New clause 8—*Nomination papers—*

'In Schedule 1 to the principal Act paragraph 7(2) shall cease to have effect.'.

New clause 11—*Exemption from deposit—*

'In Schedule 1 to the Principal Act (Parliamentary elections rules) shall be added a new rule 1013

"(8A) A candidate shall be exempted from the requirement of depositing a sum with the returning officer provided that he is the nominated candidate of a registered political party as defined in the Schedule (Registered Political Parties)".'.

New clause 23—*Conditions for nomination—*

'Schedule 1 to the principal Act shall be amended by substituting for rules 9 and 53 the following rule—

"A nomination shall not be valid unless it is signed by 500 electors of the Division for which that nomination is made; the nomination shall remain valid notwithstanding a margin of error in the number of five per cent.; and any such nomination may be presented for checking by the returning officer during a period of six months prior to the date of a parliamentary election".'.

Amendment No. 65—new schedule—

'REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES

(1) The Secretary of State for the Home Department may, by order, establish a scheme for the registration of political parties. No condition of eligibility shall attach to such a scheme, except that a registration fee, prescribed by the Secretary of State shall be payable.

(2) Any party so registered shall be a registered political party for the purposes of this Act.

(3) No political party will have to register to be able to participate in an election. Political parties not wishing to register will be able to continue to field candidates by the method otherwise prescribed in the principal Act.'.

4·9 pm

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The reasons for an election deposit were outlined by the Home Secretary yesterday. I cannot see any objection to a deposit, but, at the same time, I am not over-enthusiastic about such a large increase from £150 to £1,000. I take the point that the equivalent of the 1918 £150 would be in the region of £2,000; nevertheless, a jump from £150 to £1,000 in one go is unnecessary. I think that the point has been established.

It is important in these matters, which are not dealt with frequently in Committee, for obvious reasons, that we should try so far as possible to reach a consensus. The idea of the collection of a certain number of signatures has some support on the Government Benches, but I do not believe that that would be an adequate substitute for a deposit. It would be easy in some circumstances to collect signatures. As the Select Committee rightly said, the getting of signatures would be an easy step for certain candidates whose interest in the democratic system can be questioned. There are merchants of racial hatred involved in standing for election. Such people know full well how, in certain circumstances, at sensitive moments, it is possible to collect signatures by making the point that people do not have to vote for the person concerned, but that he merely wants to stand as a candidate and should not be denied that right.

I am not concerned about the frivolous candidate. I accept the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on Second Reading that there is little evidence that frivolous candidates cause any harm to the democratic system. I do not mind whether Lord Sutch or Lord Double Sutch stands as a candidate. Indeed, it can be argued that such candidates bring a certain amount of gaiety to the hustings—more so at by-elections, for obvious reasons. Like my right hon. Friend, I see no argument that having a large number of these candidates, as there were in the Chesterfield by-election, does any harm to the democratic process. If harm is done, let us see the evidence. Those candidates do not cause me sleepless nights.

I am concerned about candidates whose motive in standing, particularly at by-elections, but sometimes at general elections, is race hatred. They do not bring any gaiety to the hustings or to any other feature of national life.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that class hatred would be equally obnoxious? If he is moving in the direction of taking a stance on what he is calling race hatred—I hope he will expand on it if he is to give it any meaning—would he bring into the category people on the extreme Left generally who make class hatred one of their main platforms and who seek to divide society in the same way?

Mr. Winnick: Not surprisingly, I anticipated such an intervention. If the hon. Gentleman puts his question seriously, I will answer it.

Mr. Forth: It was.

Mr. Winnick: If the hon. Gentleman wants an answer, I shall be only too pleased to give him one. If he was just making an intervention for the sake of it, I shall not waste

my time. He may not be satisfied with the answer. It can be said in regard to class hatred that the Government need no lessons from anybody, not only on the promotion of class hatred, but on carrying out policies which cause the maximum difficulty to working people through mass unemployment.

I would have no objection to any party to the right of the Conservative party, which I suppose is possible, which was not concerned with matters of race hatred, putting forward an extremely Right-wing point of view. I would not say that that is necessarily an obstacle to, or a difficulty for, the democratic system. I shall try to answer the hon. Gentleman by saying that it is the same with candidates on the ultra-Left, if I may use that term. I know that I may not carry the hon. Gentleman with me, but this is my reasoning. The difference is that the candidates on the ultra-Right, such as the National Front, are concerned with trying to stir up as much hatred, suspicion and xenophobia against ethnic minorities——

The Chairman: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has not noticed that the revised selection list includes new clause 29, which deals specifically with the matter on which he is touching and which seems unrelated to the amendments that are before the Committee. It might be in the best interests of the Committee to wait until then to raise these matters.

4.15 pm

Mr. Winnick: I am pleased that new clause 29 has been selected for debate, but the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) asked me a question which I was trying to answer. If I may say so, it is related to the reasons why I believe that a deposit, and not simply a collection of signatures, is necessary. I think that I have answered the hon. Gentleman. We shall see later whether he has been persuaded by what I have said.

Referring again to the candidates of race hatred, to save their deposit is a sign for them, though not in our eyes or in the view of the community, that they have achieved electoral credibility. They can say that they have saved their deposits in so many constituencies. This is why I make the same point to the Minister as I made yesterday during the Home Secretary's speech.

I favour a more modest increase in the deposit. I accept that there should be some increase. It might have been increased to £250 or £300, with the retention of a threshold of 12·5 per cent. of the total votes cast, as now, or a threshold of 10 per cent. I should have thought that that would achieve a wider consensus in Committee than what is proposed. That is why I argued that point of view in the appropriate place, but at the end of the day one has to accept the position outlined by the Home Secretary yesterday.

I do not want to exaggerate the danger of the National Front. It would be wrong to do so. Fortunately, our society is sufficiently mature not to support candidates who clearly stand for election, in the same way as the Mosley movement stood in elections before the second world war, to stir up as much racial trouble, strife and hatred as they can although they try, usually unsuccessfully, to keep within the law. By and large the latter-day movement, like the pre-war movement, has hardly got off the ground.

Although I do not have the figures for the last election, in the 1979 contest the National Front obtained more than 5 per cent. of the votes though, fortunately, only in five constituencies. The very fact that it was able to get that amount of electoral support, limited and modest as it was, gives rise to anxiety among people like me who believe that a 5 per cent. threshold is too low. I know that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) does not agree with me because, if I may say so, he is a kind of fanatic for the collection of signatures as a substitute for a deposit. Clearly I shall not carry him with me. There is a divide in the Committee, and why not?

Mr. William Powell (Corby): The hon. Gentleman says that he accepts the need for an increase in the deposit. He wants a rather more modest increase. Can he explain to the Committee why any increase in the deposit is necessary?

Mr. Winnick: With respect, the hon. Gentleman should direct that question more to his own Front Bench. Ministers were concerned that there should be an increase. I do not usually like to be associated with Ministers in argument, but fairness demands it. The Select Committee looked into those matters and recommended the figure of £1,000. Obviously, the hon. Gentleman is aware of that. As I have already prayed in aid the Select Committee, perhaps I could also pray in aid the fact it recommended a threshold of 7·5 per cent. An amendment along those lines is being taken with this group. In my view, it would be better to have a threshold of 7·5 per cent. I imagine the Committee will agree that the deposit should be £500. However, perhaps the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West will divide the Committee on that. We shall wait and see.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Winnick: I see that the hon. Gentleman will not do so, as he is shaking his head.

I hope that on Report the Home Secretary will consider the possibility of increasing the threshold from the proposed 5 per cent. to 7·5 per cent. That would serve the democratic process better. I stress that I speak for myself on those issues.

It would be difficult to change the threshold and deposit on a later occasion. We all know that they were established way back in 1918. If there were a change in the electoral climate, which I do not expect for one moment, or if there were a danger, as we have seen in France, of a Fascist revival, it would be difficult to change the law, because the people to whom I have been referring would say that the law was being changed purely and simply because of them. These matters should be considered in a proper way, bearing in mind that we are not likely to deal again with the issue of the deposit or threshold for a long time to come. Those are the reasons why amendment No. 85 should be given sympathetic consideration.

I agree with those who argue that standing for Parliament is first and foremost a serious business. There are advantages to be gained, as was stated last night. Candidates receive about £800 worth of free postage, and there is publicity. Other advantages are given—in my view rightly so—to a candidate. That is why I feel that it is right and proper that, unlike in local elections where those facilities are not given, there should be a deposit. If we cannot retain the present deposit and threshold, we should try to reach a consensus. Presumably we have done so on the basis of what the Home Secretary said last night.

Before we come to a final conclusion on Report and Third Reading, if I may say so with due modesty, we

[Mr. Winnick]

should bear in mind some of the points that I have raised. At the end of the day we are concerned with preserving our democratic system, with all its faults—and no doubt there are many. Living in any dictatorship, Left or Right —*[Interruption.]*—though my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) and I may disagree about whether it is really Left—is a nightmare. We have the virtue of living in a democracy, and long may it remain so. Part of our job is to try to ensure that the manner in which we go about our business, laying down rules and regulations for standing at elections and so on, is such that we can say that we, as a House of Commons, are making our own contribution to ensuring that our democratic system survives and is in safe hands, and does not give an opportunity to those whose main motive is——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I cannot for the life of me understand why my hon. Friend should introduce me in a debate about what is Left and what is not. The point that I was making under my breath was that one can say that a candidate gets advantages, but if he does not have the organisation behind him, all the free postage in the world does not mean a damned thing. There is not much of an advantage unless one has support.

Mr. Winnick: I was praying in aid my hon. Friend because I thought that he would agree with me. I did not want to cause controversy between the two of us. When the Liberals and the smaller parties argue about how difficult the obstacles are, let us bear in mind how our party came into existence. We did not have the aid of television, press coverage or much sympathy, yet despite all the difficulties, within 24 years, fortunately, we became one of the two main parties in the state. I know that my hon. Friend agrees with me that we shall remain one of the two main parties in the state.

Mr. Parris: What the hon. Gentleman's party did have were the combined financial resources of the trade union movement to draw upon for putting up parliamentary deposits.

Mr. Winnick: In the beginning the amount of trade union support that we had was minimal. At any time the amount of financial support that we get from the trade unions is a trifle compared with the contributions which the Conservative party gets from big business and other such interests.

In conclusion, I believe that we should be careful about how we set the threshold and the deposit, bearing in mind that we should not do anything that undermines our parliamentary and democratic system.

Mr. Parris: One would think from listening to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) that the way to decide these matters was to survey the range of political parties likely to stand, decide which ones were the most offensive to oneself and set the level of the threshold at such a point that those parties would be most severely penalised financially. The hon. Gentleman has fallen into the trap of using the very argument that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary studiously avoided last night. That argument will be seized upon by parties such as the National Front against what the Government are now proposing.

Parties such as the National Front will say that this is a measure to obstruct democracy and prevent parties like it from even standing. As they cannot afford to stand they will feel that they have a moral right to take to the streets or indulge in extra-parliamentary action instead. If I had listened to the hon. Gentleman in the frame of mind in which such parties will listen to him, I might have felt some moral authority for such a response. That response would be wrong and dangerous, and we should do nothing to encourage it. My concern is that the measure might encourage it.

I should like to speak to my new clause 11 and the associated amendment No. 65, which is a new schedule. I do not ask hon. Members to weary themselves going through my wording in any detail. It is sure to be technically defective. It may even be the wrong way of going about what I seek to achieve. I should like to outline my aims and ask my hon. Friend the Minister to reply.

I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary for the concession that he announced last night reducing the deposit from £1,000 to £500. I do not wish to be churlish about that; it is a major improvement. My concern is for the devastating effect that the loss of all those deposits would have on a small party that wishes to field a respectable number of candidates at a general election and wishes to say that it is at least fielding enough candidates to have a chance, should it receive sufficient support, of forming an important part of the Parliament that follows the election. There would be a devastating effect if that party failed to get the 5 per cent. of votes that it needs to retain its deposit. For instance, I reckon that if the Ecology party decided to field a candidate in every constituency at a general election to show that it was a major national party, it would probably lose the deposits for all 650 candidates, which would come to about £325,000. I doubt whether a small party such as that could afford to risk such a loss at a general election.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): My hon. Friend is a fair man. He will appreciate that in many elections, particularly by-elections, candidates are not nominated candidates of a registered political party but stand as individuals promoting an individual philosophy. Is not my hon. Friend's proposal likely to give to the nominated candidate a more favourable status than that accorded to the non-nominated candidate?

4.30 pm

Mr. Parris: Yes, it is. For that reason my proposals are not perfect. They come to the assistance of a certain class of candidate without necessarily coming to the assistance of every candidate whom I would wish to help. I cannot imagine any system of parliamentary deposits which would assist every worthy candidate or which may not in some circumstances punish a worthy candidate.

Mr. Winnick: I may be doing the hon. Gentleman an injustice, but I am not aware that he campaigned against deposits before the Bill became an issue. After all, deposits for standing at an election have been around for many years. If I am wrong, obviously the hon. Gentleman will tell me. If it is such a great issue with him, why did not he campaign before?

The hon. Gentleman said that I was giving assistance, so to speak, to racialist organisations. Will he bear in mind that legislation passed by both Labour and Conservative Governments in the past 15 or 20 years has been directed at race hate organisations. There has been legislation

against incitement to race hatred and there is no doubt about who it was directed at. Action was taken before the war to prevent people from wearing paramilitary uniform. Again there can be no question who were to be the victims of such a law. The hon. Gentleman should bear those points in mind.

Mr. Parris: I do bear them in mind. As long as such laws exist, and they do and should, and so long as political parties are prepared to keep within the law, and they do and they must on pain of prosecution, they should be allowed to field candidates at elections.

Mr. Winnick: I am not saying that they should not.

Mr. Parris: Good. The hon. Gentleman is not saying that they should not; he is just saying that he would like to set the threshold and the deposit at such a level that it is difficult or impossible for them to do so.

The deposit was, I think, introduced in 1918. I was unable to campaign against it at that time and so was the hon. Gentleman. I have never thought that the deposit was a fair test of a candidate's seriousness. The larger the deposit is, the less fair the test. Therefore, the proposal to increase it to £1,000 makes the injustice a more pressing one and I said so on Second Reading.

I seek to set up a scheme whereby a political party can limit its liability to loss of deposit at a general election. I propose a voluntary scheme whereby a political party may register as a political party. The registration would serve no purpose and give it no privileges, immunities or benefits of any kind, other than the benefit which will flow in relation to the parliamentary deposit. There will be no test of whether a party may or may not register other than its preparedness to pay the registration fee. The registration fee should be set at a level which discourages any but the serious parties from wishing to register—£5,000, £10,000, £15,000 or perhaps £20,000.

The registration would, in essence, be a tendered group parliamentary deposit. Having paid that registration fee, the party would then be able to field as many candidates as it liked without paying any further deposit for those candidates and without risking the loss of further deposits. For example, if the Ecology party or the National Front could collect the money necessary to register, it could field candidates in every constituency at a general election.

The payment of that fee would be a serious test of a party's interest in a general election. No frivolous party or candidate would be able to stand. At the same time there would be a limit to the amount that a party could lose by standing at a general election and it would not be open to a party to say that, although it had support in the country, it had been prevented from fielding candidates by the system of parliamentary deposits.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend has had a most ingenious idea, but will he consider one drawback? He is talking about a registration fee which he suggests is a sort of collective deposit. However, I think that he will agree that the registration fee would probably not be fixed by statute, whether primary or secondary legislation. If that is right, who will set the registration fee? Assuming that it is done under the diktat of Government, what is to stop the Government, by some form of authority of their own, increasing the registration fee to such a level as to serve as a deterrent?

Mr. Parris: I envisage that the fee would be set by order. Even if one were to assume that orders passed through the House without receiving the parliamentary attention they deserve, it would, as my hon. Friend says, be within the power of any Government to make it impossible for a small political party to register as a political party. That would not make it impossible to field candidates by payment of the ordinary deposit. I am not suggesting that we abolish the £500 deposit. That will stay within the power of any candidate. That will be an additional benefit to a registered political party. So long as the matter is treated in good faith by the Government of the day, it will be a helpful benefit.

There has been argument about whether the threshold should be 5 per cent., 7·5 per cent., 10 per cent., 12·5 per cent. or whatever. Five per cent. is better than 10 per cent. Nevertheless, any party must start from zero. A party is likely to start with a level of public support which would not give it even 5 per cent. of the votes cast in a general election across the constituencies in which it fields candidates. Therefore, it does not particularly matter whether the party is blighted at 2, 5, 7 or 10 per cent. Any threshold which makes it impossible for a small party which is just starting up to field a credible number of candidates in a general election is a serious disincentive to small parties. Our first-past-the-post system is already a serious disincentive to small parties and we need not add to it through our system of deposits.

Mr. Winnick: What about the Labour party?

Mr. Parris: It is said that the parliamentary deposit was introduced in 1918 as a result of a deal cobbled up between the Whigs and the Tories to prevent the emerging Labour party from emerging any further. I believe that the amount was a working man's wage in a year. If that was so, the deal failed. It failed because the Labour party had the organised trade union movement to draw on, not only for parliamentary deposits but for the 10 or 12·5 per cent. of votes that it needed in every constituency.

A small party can start up despite a crippling parliamentary deposit if it starts up on the back of an existing national institution or organisation such as the trade union movement, or, perhaps, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is much more difficult for a party such as the Ecology party, or, indeed, for the Liberal party at one time. I imagine that that party would have been crippled by the proposals had they been in force between the 1950s and the early 1970s.

My scheme may not be perfect—I am sure that it is not—but I want to see a system that does not stifle small political parties at birth. We are strong enough to tolerate the existence of such parties and to stand against them in general elections. We should not rule them out at the first post.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Let me take the opportunity to welcome the Government's movement away from the original proposal and thank them for having responded to recommendations and represenations that were made to them earlier. I represent a party that has a vested interest. We have far too many lost deposits, and a deposit of £1,000 would have been a real deterrent to standing at elections.

It is in the interests of democracy in Wales—whether or not people in Wales agree with our policies—and indeed in other parts of the United Kingdom that those who

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

have a coherent view to put forward in a democratic way, or any view for that matter, should have an opportunity to stand at elections. That should be part of the system.

I appreciate the dangers in some areas, where there has been racial tension arising from the activities of the National Front, but I prefer to have a system in which any party has to stand up and be counted and be shown to be as small as it is, rather than to masquerade under the pretence that it has a greater following by virtue of the fact that it is not standing for election and has an excuse for not so standing.

I want a system that allows the maximum participation, and the £500 and 5 per cent. is not unreasonable compared with the position in the past. Obviously, anyone who has to fork out a deposit for an election and is in danger of losing it would rather have no deposit at all.

I incline towards having a number of names attached to the nomination rather than a means test of any sort. I can see the danger that some people would nominate just to allow somebody to stand, without any intention of giving him support. It may be that the vote of the person who nominates should, by virtue of the fact that he has nominated, be deemed to be cast in that process. Alternatively, it may be that a smaller number than the 100 which has been mentioned should be required to be present at the registration office, so that it takes a bit of effort and is not just a matter of signing a piece of paper so that whoever is on the doorstep goes away as quickly as possible. That is one possibility if we are to consider having names instead of a financial disincentive.

There is the real problem, which has been mentioned by Liberal Members, of having large sums of money tied up. That problem will still arise from this formula. With 38 seats in Wales, at £500 a time, £19,000 would be tied up in deposits. That is a lot of money, and it is money that is needed to fight the election. Over the whole of the United Kingdom it would be that much more.

The position of the Ecology party should, I think, command a certain degree of sympathy and support within the Committee. That party has a valid viewpoint to put forward, and it should be facilitated in the democratic process. If the Ecology party were to put up candidates for 600-odd seats, that would cost £300,000, which would be totally unrealistic.

Having agreed so far with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris), I wish to turn for a moment to the new clause and the amendment. I recoil from the idea of registration of political parties, because that has a flavour of going towards a corporate approach to our politics. I do not like the idea put forward in amendment No. 65 of a registration fee prescribed by the Secretary of State, because there would be a real danger of that being increased as time goes on. The idea appears to be a sort of discount system for those who intend to fight on a wide scale. A deposit of £20,000, for a party such as Plaid Cymru, which wishes to fight only 38 seats out of 600, is unrealistic. I do not see any merit in that, although I recognise the problem.

It would appear that, for some months, we have been moving towards a compromise. The proposals are not ideal as far as we are concerned. We would rather not see finance coming into it, but, to the extent that finance is going to come into it, we thank the Government for having put forward a compromise that goes some way towards meeting the problem.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I wish to speak briefly to amendment No. 70, which stands in my name. Essentially, it has two points. It suggests that the deposit be fixed at £500 and that Parliament should have the power to raise that sum by affirmative resolution.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary meeting the views of the Committee by decreasing the proposed £1,000 to £500. That is a very useful concession. I feel sure that most hon. Members will applaud his decision on that matter. The reason is clear. This is a constitutional issue of considerable importance, and I think it desirable that it should receive as widespread support as possible. At £1,000, it did not seem to me that general support was likely to be forthcoming. Therefore, I think that my right hon. and learned Friend deserves the thanks of the Committee.

My second point relates to the proposal that it should be possible to raise the deposit by affirmative resolution. The chance of primary legislation on these matters coming before the House of Commons in the near future is remote. I hope to be in this place for many years—20 or 30 years is the minimum that we should consider for my presence here—but I should be rather surprised——

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): That remark can only be aimed at hon. Members behind the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) and others.

4.45 pm

Mr. Hogg: The Conservative party does not stab its members in the back. The hon. Gentleman is confusing the two sides of the Committee.

I am making a serious point. It is unlikely that we shall see primary legislation dealing with this issue in, say, the next 10 or 20 years. Yet, however good the Government's economic policy may be, I shall be surprised if we see no inflation in that period. In the course of time the value of the deposit will decrease substantially in real terms and we shall be facing the same kind of problem as we are facing now, with a deposit of no value. That being so, I should like Parliament to have the power to increase the deposit without recourse to primary legislation.

I am as aware as any hon. Member of the defects of orders. I recognise that they are unamendable and that, with the Government's majority today, it is difficult to defeat them. Therefore, there are criticisms to be made of making important changes by way of orders. But I hope that the Committee has sufficient confidence in the affirmative resolution procedure to give the Government the power that I have in mind. If we do not do something along those lines, we shall again have meaningless deposits in, say, 15 years' time.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): The deposit is a [illegible] important way of demonstrating that one wishes to [illegible] a general election or a by-election. I particularly welcomed the concession made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary late last night when he announced the reduction from £1,000 to £500.

In amendment No. 99, standing in my name, I had called for it to be further reduced to £250, and I very much wish that it could have been that way, because no one

should be deterred from standing. It is a great honour, it costs something to stand, it is not free, and £250, a much higher threshold and a larger number of assenters would make much sense.

The most important point and the reason why the question of deposits is suddenly very much on the agenda is that in the general election of 1983 2,578 candidates were validly nominated, working out at 3·9 candidates per seat, of whom 679 were from other minor parties or independents. Excluding those who belonged to the Ecology party and other such parties, there were 474 true independents devoid of any known political party. In comparison, in 1979 there were 2,576 candidates standing, working out at 4·1 candidates per seat, with 754 independents or candidates with other non-party definitions. The votes cast for those independents and others amounted in 1983 to over 1·6 million—slightly down on 1979, when the figure was 1,677,417.

The real problem, however, is in by-elections, when one sees the deposit issue, the problems and the abuse by so many people standing for the most strange reasons. The opportunity might be used to promote the cause of a person in prison or as a public relations exercise to promote the sale of vodka. In Chesterfield, 17 candidates stood—some of them mad, including the one who was elected. *[Interruption.]* There was even a Monster Raving Loony candidate, so that makes at least two.

In 1979, 156 candidates in by-elections lost their deposits. Candidates stood for ridiculous and frivolous causes—Reclassify the Sun, Fourwheel Drive, Yoga, Elvis Presley, Soon to be Unemployed and an Official Loony. There is clearly a need to deter such frivolous candidates. Reluctantly, I concede that a £500 deposit is acceptable, but we must consider how many candidates have lost their deposits in the past. In the 1983 general election, 739 candidates lost their deposits — five Conservatives, 119 Labour, five Liberal, six SDP, 54 British National Party, 35 Communist, 108 Ecology party, 60 National Front, 32 Plaid Cymru, 53 Scottish National party, 21 Workers Revolutionary party and 241 others. In other words, a large number of strange candidates lost their deposits and were not elected.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Some strange candidates certainly were elected.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am pleased to see that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is now present. He said yesterday that it would be easy to get 500 people to sign an assentors list. I disagree, although I know that some people will sign anything that is put before them. My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and I have put down new clause 23, which provides:

"A nomination shall not be valid unless it is signed by 500 electors of the Division for which that nomination is made; the nomination shall remain valid notwithstanding a margin of error in the number of five per cent."

That seems a sensible way to show that the candidate is not frivolous. Some candidates of that type have obtained more than 500 votes in recent by-elections, so the nominators clearly meant what they said. In Enfield, the Turkish Troops out of Cyprus candidate polled 687 votes. In Cynon Valley the Communist candidate polled 642 votes and an Independent in Chesterfield gained 1,355 votes. Clearly, those who nominated the candidates genuinely wished them to stand.

Mr. Wigley: The difficulty is that the candidate does not know where the 687 supporters are in Enfield, so 500 signatures still seems too many. Rather than just signing a paper, nominators should have to show that their support is solid, perhaps by going to the registration office. In those circumstances, 100 would seem a more reasonable number.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am not convinced that 100 is sufficient, although I take the point that one does not always know who one's supporters are. I believe that a requirement for 500 signatures will discourage recklessness and frivolity. One hopes that the 500 voters will then put their money and their vote where their mouth is.

I wish genuine candidates to be able to stand and not to be deterred by a high deposit. If new clause 23 is accepted nominations will be properly handled, but we do not want difficulties caused by complicated procedures for signing. I hope that, whatever the Committee decision, clear guidance will be given as to the way in which the nomination form should be signed. Even in my own case, one of the 30 assentors did not sign properly. Time is often of the essence, so clear guidance is important.

Amendment No. 52 deals with the number of votes needed to save the deposit. I believe that the 10 per cent. threshold suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and myself is reasonable. In the light of the number of candidates who did not lose their deposits, if we are tightening up the rules and preventing some candidates from standing, the rest should still be able to stand. In 1983 there were 2,578 candidates. I want the democratic process to survive and to grow. I want real candidates to be able to stand for real constituencies. Therefore, although I am disappointed that my amendment No. 99 did not find favour, I support the Government's proposal for a £500 deposit.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I wish to speak to new clause 23 and to develop the theme so eloquently introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). The new clause proposes that a nomination form should be signed by 500 electors, and I wish to deal with the practical aspects of that.

First, I should make it clear that the proposal is based not on some quirk of my own but on considerable study of other legislatures. Our proposal is in sympathy with practice in other democracies, whereas the current procedure is not.

For instance, nominations to the Belgian Chamber of Representatives must be supported by 200 to 500 electors, depending on the size of the constituency. For the Belgian Senate, directly elected Senators must be supported by 100 electors. There are no deposit requirements for either House.

In Denmark, between 25 and 50 signatures are required for nomination. Again, no deposit is required.

In West Germany, nominations for candidates for the Bundestag must be signed by 200 electors entitled to vote in the constituency concerned. In the Land party lists, parties not previously represented by at least five members but recognised as political parties—this has been a major theme in speeches from all parts of the Committee in this debate—must have nominations signed by one elector per thousand entitled to vote in the previous general election up to a maximum of 2,000. Again, no deposit is required.

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

In Italy, between 351 and 700 signatures are required for nomination to either House, depending on the size of the constituency. Again, no deposit is required.

In Canada, at least 25 supporting signatures of electors in each constituency are required for nomination to the House of Commons. A deposit of 200 Canadian dollars is required.

Finally, although I could spend a long time citing other legislatures that support my argument, in the Netherlands candidates in each electoral district for both Chambers must be supported by a minimum of 25 electors.

5 pm

One can see, therefore, that requirement for support on a far wider basis than the United Kingdom nomination paper, with its simple procedure of proposer, seconder and eight subscribing electors, is in use. A cash sum is not a bar to publicists who are not genuine. I believe that it is a real disincentive to truly democratic candidates who should have the right to stand. I therefore favour removing the outdated £150 deposit and replacing it with a nomination roll of 500 electors. Such rolls could, as now unofficially, be submitted in advance to the acting returning officer to be checked for any errors.

I deal now with the practical problems that right hon. and hon. Members may raise. There is no problem of verification elsewhere, and I do not believe that our local government staff are any less efficient than others. I therefore allow the period in the proposed new clause of six months for any political agent to offer a list for verification with the provision of a further six months. To overcome the difficulty that would arise if anybody should move away from a constituency or to a higher place—in which case, I understand, such a person does not participate in our elections — I have introduced a provision for a margin of error of up to 5 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East rightly referred to some of the absurdities who tried to stand for Parliament in the Chesterfield by-election. One accepts that aspect of British eccentricity, but it hardly endears itself to serious candidature for the House of Commons.

In my view, we should consider five principles. The first is the argument that might have been suggested—although I am sure that in his wisdom the Minister will not do so—that the electoral system is being damaged by an increasing number of candidates standing at parliamentary elections. In that connection, I refer to the evidence submitted by the Home Office to the Select Committee on Home Affairs inquiry into electoral law and procedure in 1983, that there was

"little evidence of serious abuse of electoral privileges by candidates who do not come from the main political parties."

Secondly, there is the argument that an increase in the parliamentary deposit would deter frivolous candidates. The Committee should be mindful that at the general election a number of companies and trade bodies considered putting up 650 parliamentary candidates purely for the purposes of publicity and free literature. A bar of £150, or £500, would be no disincentive. Furthermore, such candidates bodies might be looking to the possibility of obtaining television time, and so on. Such abuse will not be dealt with under the present system. Under the proposed new clause, the requirement of 500 assentors or electors will overcome this difficulty. The genuine Conservative in south Wales or the Left-wing candidate who would like to put up on the sunny south coast where prosperity under the Conservatives prevails will thus be entitled to that democratic right, as will the various ethnic and Celtic interests which may wish to be represented in a wider way in the House of Commons.

Thirdly, it has been suggested that there is no reasonable alternative to raising the deposit. The advantage of my proposed alternative is that it demands political commitment from the prospective candidate. If we go down the road of increased deposits, we will be putting a bar on genuine parliamentary candidates who are not able to afford, out of their own pockets, to stand for Parliament.

Fourthly, it has been argued on occasion that 100 signatures, or, as I have suggested, 500 signatures, would create problems for the electoral returning officer. I have overcome that difficulty by suggesting that political agents can submit these for verification up to six months before a general election. To counter the argument about the uncertainty of the date of a general election, when somebody is of the view that a general election is likely, he could submit a list and continue to do so on a six-monthly cycle, with an allowance for a margin of error of 5 per cent.

Finally, the argument has been advanced that £500 is not much to raise for a parliamentary deposit. I believe that all political parties will be faced with the problem of having to put up front significant sums of money to contest elections. If the deposit is increased, the smaller parties, or those which wish to demonstrate a serious intention, will be in difficulties. The answer to all the problems that have been raised are in the proposed new clause.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Having listened to my hon. Friends the Members for York (Mr. Gregory) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), I think that one major disadvantage arises. If there is a requirement for that number of signatures to support a candidate, this will be prejudicial to a candidate who is adopted at short notice. Will not such a candidate be kept out of the competition altogether?

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I do not regard that as a problem. If a candidate has the foresight to consider the matter beforehand, he has the relevant period of time in which to obtain the signatures. The vast majority of political parties select their candidates, many months—indeed, years—beforehand. Even the fringe parties have that in mind. The suggestion seems to be that some of the loony candidates, deciding that they have a spare £150—or, as it will be, £500—rather than put that money on a horse race will invest it in a forthcoming general election or by-election. How otherwise could Mr. Piccaro have put up as the Official Acne Candidate, or, indeed, the candidates who stood for "Reclassify Sun Newspaper" or "Chesterfield in Thame"? The serious contender to the mother of Parliaments will have considered this before the calling of a general election or by-election and will have prepared the ground beforehand. I believe that the local government objections will be overcome.

On those grounds, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to accept the clause and not to prevaricate. This is not something new that I have thrust upon him, because I have been in correspondence with his Department for approximately a year and a quarter. During that time he

will have had an opportunity to compare our system with that of other legislatures, he will wish to bring Britain into line with them, he will appreciate the flexibility that I propose in the suggested 5 per cent. and six months, and, in his wisdom, he will want to accept the clause.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I have taken time out from the Committee that is considering the Local Government Bill. I apologise to this Committee for the fact that I may have to leave the Chamber after I have spoken to make a further contribution to the consideration of the Local Government Bill by my physical presence, if nothing else.

I wish to raise a matter that arises on new schedule 65. In my view, there is a growing problem with regard to the masquerading of political parties. Such a masquerade occurred recently in Birmingham. A council faced a problem in the council elections in the Erdington district when a disappointed Conservative candidate stood as a Conservative candidate against the official Conservative candidate. The impersonation of the political party extended to the distribution of almost identical literature. This resulted in confusion among the electorate, who mistakenly voted for the wrong candidate. Had the 350-odd votes mistakenly cast gone to the official Conservative candidate, he would have won the seat. It was not a problem of losing the seat. The problem was that confusion was sewn in the minds of the electorate. Following the election, we questioned many people in that community and found that they genuinely did not know who was the real Conservative candidate because they had been confused by the literature that has been disseminated among the electorate. That is wrong as an electoral practice.

It is a growing problem, not only with our party, but with the Labour and Liberal parties. People stand as Independent Labour candidates, Official Labour candidates, Independent Conservative candidates and so on. We need to control the image—the brand name—of the respected political parties. Electoral policy has been not to accept any organised political party. Each candidate stands as an individual, although as often as not he may have a party label attached to him. However, a problem arises in the situation which I have described. The addition of the new schedule—although I understand that it is not meant in quite the way that I interpret it, but nevertheless it fits my proposal admirably—together with my small amendment would adequately cover the problem of literature being disseminated among the electorate purporting to be from a political party, when in fact it is not that party's official literature.

I see no reason why political parties should not register as genuine, bona fide political parties, provided that it does not stop others from organising a political party and putting up candidates at an election should they so wish. At least my proposal would control the labels that we use and would avoid confusing the electorate.

I hope that earnest consideration will be given to the proposal. The problem has occured in Birmingham and will happen elsewhere, as I know from the many representations made to Birmingham from other parts of the country. The simple addition of this schedule, with my amendment, would adequately overcome what I believe to be a growing problem.

Mr. Forth: I apologise to the Committee for my brief absence a moment ago. I was necessarily speaking to a group of my constituents who have honoured us with their presence today. I hope the Committee will accept that as a legitimate reason for my brief absence.

We are discussing two principal matters. One is whether we believe that it is desirable to seek to reduce the number of candidates who stand at elections, and the other, what, if we did so decide, would be the best method to do so. Several colleagues have already mentioned specific examples of elections where a large number of candidates have stood. I want to tell the Committee of my favourite, because it illustrates the point extremely well.

At one by-election, one candidate was called Mr. Tarquin-Fintim-Linbinwhin-Binlim-Bus Ole Biscuit Barrel F. Tang. He described himself as the candidate for the Cambridge University Raving Loony Society, and obtained 223 votes. We can draw two different conclusions from that. One is that such candidates bring elections into disrepute and that we should seek to discourage them; the other is that is such a candidate can attract 223 votes, the electorate get the candidate and the politician that they deserve. That is a specific example of a candidate standing in a frivolous manner, offering himself for election with no serious intent. He was obviously well able to afford the £150 deposit.

We must consider whether we should seek to reduce the number of candidates. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) set the matter in a different context when he referred to parties of the extreme Right offering themselves to the electorate on some sort of racist platform. He failed to condemn, or to draw attention to, the parties of the extreme Left which offer themselves to the electorate on platforms of class hatred and divisiveness, and which on many occasions preach revolution or even violence.

5.15 pm

We must consider whether it is our job or duty to seek to deny the opportunity to such small and fringe parties —to say nothing of self-described loony parties—to offer themselves to the electorate. That first question leads on to our second consideration. If we wish to make a reduction in the number of candidates, what would be the best method of doing so? Two possibilities are being considered by the Committee, one of which is financial. The Government's original proposal to introduce a £1,000 deposit was hardly extreme or outrageous. I calculate that £1,000 represents about six weeks average manual wages, or about the cost of a package holiday in the Mediterranean for a family of four. That is hardly likely seriously to discourage people from offering themselves in something as important as a parliamentary election. Therefore, I am at a loss to understand why there has been such concern about the figure of £1,000 and why a compromise figure of £500 has been suggested.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary kindly wrote to me saying:

"we have accepted all along that there is no figure which is clearly and absolutely right. The figure of £1,000 is the one that was unanimously recommended by the Select Committee on Home Affairs."

The burden of persuasion is, therefore, on those who argue for a different figure. I believe that £1,000 is a reasonable amount to ask of those who wish to offer themselves in something as important as a parliamentary election. Unless I am otherwise persuaded—and I shall

[Mr. Forth]

listen carefully to what my hon. Friend has to say when he replies to the debate—on balance I would prefer the £1,000 figure to remain.

I am not convinced about the requirement for signatures. Those of us who receive petitions from the public know that it is all too easy, unfortunately, to gather a large number of signatures for almost anything one cares to dream up. I have often been tempted to go on to the streets, offer a blank piece of paper to people and ask them to sign it. I am convinced that I could gather a large number of signatures and then use that paper for whatever purpose I chose. I do not believe that an apparently impressive, numerically large number of signatures is necessarily the right and proper way to authenticate parliamentary candidature. I prefer the simple, but effective financial method of discouraging frivolous candidates, which would still allow those who seriously wish to offer themselves to do so. However, I shall listen to what my hon. Friend has to say before finally determining my position.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I assure the hon. Member for Mid-Worcester (Mr. Forth) that he need never apologise for his absence.

I very much welcome the Government's response to our representations, and to the discussions that we had with them. I shall deal later with the principle involved on clause stand part, but now I deal with the reduction to £500. The figure could, with advantage, have been less, but in our discussions with them the Government began by proposing a higher figure and so we arrived at £500 as a compromise that involved as high a figure as we were ready to accept and as low a figure as the Government were ready to accept. Indeed, that is the way in which compromises are reached. Thus, we reluctantly accept that figure. However, it is very much coupled with the question of the threshold. The present threshold of 12·5 per cent. would have been unacceptable in relation to a deposit that was more than three times as high as the present one. The Government took the view that that threshold could be reduced, but did not wish to reduce it as far as we thought appropriate.

Once we had decided with the Government on the level of the deposit, we had to decide between us about the level of the threshold. Although the Government originally thought that the threshold should be higher than 5 per cent., I am very glad that, in the spirit of compromise that the Home Secretary referred to last night, they ultimately agreed to our proposition that the £500 deposit should be accompanied by a 5 per cent. threshold.

The compromise was typical, in that no one is really satisfied with it. But at any rate it is tolerable, and many small parties will find contesting elections a little less onerous than they would have done if the Government's original proposal had remained or if the Government's proposal of a revised threshold had been maintained. I should make it clear once again that the Government's original proposal would not have been in any way politically disadvantageous to the Labour party. A 5 per cent. threshold would have meant that we would have retained almost all our deposits, even in an adverse electoral year. The issue involved not what was convenient to the Labour or Conservative parties, but the right of access to the ballot paper of those advocating minority, eccentric or unpopular views. Indeed, that is what an election is all about. It is because we believed that that principle should be maintained that we proposed the amendment. That being so, we are very pleased that the Government have accepted it, and look forward to its incorporation in the Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for what he has said. He has not been the only hon. Member to welcome what the Government have decided to commend to the House, which is, of course, an acceptance of the amendment proposed so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). None of those who have accepted the compromise have thrown their hats in the air any more than I have done. The outcome is not so unsatisfactory as to be unacceptable to all, and is not so satisfactory as to bring great pleasure to all. But, as the right hon. Gentleman has said, that is the mark of a sensible compromise.

It is interesting that the debate has revealed that, however wide the circle of agreement, there are still some who are determined to remain outside it. We heard a few such contributions this afternoon, not least from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). He managed to find himself thinking that we had been ungenerous and had fixed the level of the deposit too high, even at £500, and that we had correspondingly been too generous and liberal in fixing the threshold at 5 per cent. If the hon. Gentleman had not been so patently sincere, I might have found his arguments a little contrived, because of his very determination to take issue with what otherwise seem essentially modest proposals. He was the first hon. Member to mention the Chesterfield by-election. It proved to be an interesting diversion for several hon. Members to speculate on the names of the candidates, their numbers and the sanity of any or all of them. However, I should not like to venture into that debate.

I do not think that it shows an excess of pomposity at the Dispatch Box if I say that I think that the House should address itself a little more seriously to the question of electing Members of Parliament who then go on to form or influence the formation of a Government. After all, we are a democracy. There are barely a few dozen true democracies out of a United Nations' membership of more than 150 countries. There are plenty of people who would like the opportunity to stand in serious elections. I wonder whether it is a sign of maturity or of decadence that we should smile indulgently on those who try to turn elections into farces.

The Government have always tried to make clear that the issue really involves recognision of the fact that being a candidate at a parliamentary election gives that person considerable advantages in terms of the free distribution of literature, restrictions on the proper coverage of the election, and so on, and that it is appropriate that the community should expect him to be a serious candidate. That does not mean "serious" in the sense that he is addressing the problems of the world seriously, or in a manner that seems to him to be serious, but that he has a serious prospect of obtaining a reasonable degree of support. Therefore, the argument must be about what a reasonable degree of support is.

We have taken a reasonable view of that in saying that one vote in 20 is not an unreasonable ambition for anyone

who is remotely serious as a candidate. Indeed, £1,000 would certainly not have been an unreasonable figure to reflect the financial benefits of candidature. I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said. I am as attracted to the figure of £1,000 as I was the day that I first advocated it with considerable passion and vehemence, when the House first debated the issue in the summer. However, I have been driven to £500 and I console myself with the thought that at least that is an appropriate recognition of the privileges of being a candidate, even though it is in no way as sufficient as I would have liked the House to accept.

Of course, I appreciate that there are some who do not agree with that. For example, the hon. Member for Walsall, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) do not agree. My hon. Friend spoke of the devastating effect on small parties. Sometimes our language is abused by using dramatic words to describe relatively undramatic situations. We are used to that in newspaper headlines, but I was not hitherto accustomed to it in my hon. Friend's speeches. His use of the word "devastating" was somewhat hyperbolic in the context of the situation that he outlined to us. He seemed to say that a small party would have aspirations to have a substantial wedge of Members of Parliament and would therefore put up a lot of candidates. He argued that it would be driven into bankruptcy by having to pay lost deposits in respect of each of them. In so far as I followed his argument, I would say that if a party was so unreal in its ambitions that it thought that it would get Members of Parliament by putting up a lot of candidates, and subsequently failed to cross the threshold, it must be concluded that its subjective view of the world was not one that it could expect the rest of us to share.

We all get sentimental about the Ecology party, but it barely polls more than a few hundred votes in any constituency. If hon. Members accept my definition of seriousness, which is that a candidate has a serious prospect of obtaining a reasonable proportion of the vote and that that is why he is given the privileges that attach to being a parliamentary candidate, we cannot take parties at their own subjective estimates. It becomes even more difficult when, as we know in the case of the National Front, a party obtains party broadcasts on the strength of putting up a certain number of candidates. If we make it easy for people to have the opportunity to address millions of our fellow citizens at prime time in a party political broadcast, we must ensure that only those who have realistic level of support in the community are entitled to that privilege.

5.30 pm

It is with some regret—though not for the reasons advanced by my hon. Friend—that I have concluded that his suggestion of using the register would not be an appropriate way forward. It would not be a proper use of the register for anyone who could be bothered to register, even the official Raving Loony party, which, after my remarks yesterday, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has assured me is not yet part of the alliance, nor does he intend that it should be. That registration should give the right to stand, without hindrance or impediment, in any constituency would not begin to be credible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) raised the important issue of people standing claiming to be representatives of a party of which they are not representatives. That problem concerns not only the Conservative party; it should also concern the Labour party following a recent council election in Glasgow at which two candidates claimed to be the official candidates, as a result of which the Labour party won the seat with a reduced majority.

The problem could have been resolved by having a register of parties. However, that would have led to consequences which led a number of those involved in the political parties to conclude that it would not be an acceptable price to pay. It is with some reluctance, therefore, that I have concluded that the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield cannot be dealt with in this measure in the manner proposed, for different reasons, by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that the Government would have been more than content to have taken powers in the Bill to enable a future Government to increase, by affirmative resolution, the level of the deposit. However, that proposition would not have been acceptable to others and, in the spirit of compromise that has emerged in discussing this important measure, which sets the framework under which we all contest elections, we decided not to pursue that line, although it was with some reluctance that we reached that conclusion.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) made an interesting speech about signatories, and we know that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed supports the idea of signatories. The fact that somebody has signed a nomination paper does not indicate support; it indicates assent to his nomination. They are very different propositions, as I discovered when, to my surprise, a Welsh National candidate decided to contest my constituency of Putney. I had not hitherto thought that Putney was on the list of promising seats for the Welsh National party.

Mr. Kaufman: On the same basis, I was surprised to find a Conservative nominated against me.

Mr. Mellor: In my case, the gentleman concerned, who bore an impressively Welsh name, got nominated in the Welsh National party's interest — thought not, I believe, formally so—and when his list of signatories was put in a number of them were found to be well known for their support for another party, some of them were members of that other party and others denied hotly that they had ever intended to cast their vote for the gentleman in question, but simply thought that it was a neighbourly thing to do to sign his nomination paper.

We must face the fact, from the wholly unnecessary court case brought by an eccentric candidate — who might not have stood had we had the higher level of deposit—that eccentric candidates are not always fun; that one drew my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) through the court.

It was suggested that Screaming Lord Sutch had managed to obtain the signatories for his nomination by spending a few minutes in a pub across the road from where he had to hand in his nomination paper.

Simply multiplying 10 by 50 does not remedy the fact that some people will sign anything. Indeed, a noted psephologist told me always to bear in mind the American

[Mr. Mellor]

experience of the researcher who sent a document through the post to a number of households saying, "Please sign this and return it to me at your earliest convenience." People did so and were astonished to find that they had signed their own death warrants.

Mr. Wigley: I shall not pursue the Minister's point about the election in Putney because that was a pure freelance operation. Will he consider—perhaps not in relation to this Bill but for future reference — the suggestion that if, say, 10 people were required, as they are now—the proposer and seconder and eight assenters —to attend in person to nominate formally in the town hall and to be identified as those 10 persons, that might give a formality to the procedure which would dissuade people from acting too glibly?

Mr. Mellor: There are endless permutations, and I accept the sincerity with which the hon. Gentleman makes that one. We must bear in mind that already, as a result of this measure, electoral registration offices are having a great deal of pressure put on them. They must find the staff to perform the various tasks that we are placing on them, for example, in relation to increased absent voting and so on. The thought of 500 people — or however many might be decided upon—queuing up outside the town hall waiting to enter to prove their identity in the limited time available to get one's tackle in order for an election makes such a proposal inappropriate.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): Is my hon. Friend aware that some electoral returning officers have themselves put forward the idea of nominators being present to attest at the time of nomination? As those officers see some merit in that suggestion, my hon. Friend should not belittle the idea. Does he agree that it deserves more serious consideration?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend has recently joined us in the debate and I am sorry if my words have not met with favour from him, though others in the Committee would disagree with him. It is the nature of this whole area, perhaps uniquely so, that almost everybody has a different view. We have at least succeeded in arriving at a solution, as proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, which I hope leaves most people relatively satisfied that justice had been done, and on that basis I commend the amendment to the Committee.

Sir John Farr: I have been delighted to hear the remarks of the Minister, of the Home Secretary yesterday and of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) today. Rarely does one get united support for any amendment to any measure

The size of the election deposit is a key factor—it could be called the linchpin of the Bill — and by selecting £500 rather than £1,000 we are not placing democracy beyond the reach of aspirant candidates. I am grateful to hon. Members for their support and to the Government for accepting the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Question proposed, That the clause, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Kaufman: As the Committee is anxious to reach a conclusion on this matter, I shall explain why my hon. Friends and I propose to divide on the motion.

We have just agreed to incorporate into the clause an amendment which will halve the deposit originally proposed by the Government. In our view, it is still £500 too much. We believe that a deposit should not be required at a parliamentary election and that there are other, more valid, ways of dealing with the validity of a candidature.

The response yesterday of the Home Secretary to an intervention by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) gained in firmness what it lacked in logic. As the Home Secretary put it, if a candidate places the money down and is prepared to forfeit it, that indicates that he has some reasonable expectation of obtaining the number of votes required for him not to forfeit his deposit. That view would not have met with approval from Socrates. The logic is not easily discernible. Somewhere between the first and second part of that sentence there is a large undistributed middle.

The Home Secretary has not offered any satisfactory justification. The Under-Secretary of State, in what was, in a sense, a speech on the clause stand part motion, repeated one of the errors of the Home Secretary when he talked about the financial gains that accrued to someone who used a small deposit to become a candidate—for example, free postage.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the argument of the Under-Secretary of State—that because they are small parties they should not be in a position to fight—is fallacious because many of our modern national parties grew from small parties? Therefore, small parties have the right to stand.

Mr. Kaufman: I agree totally with my hon. Friend. If we make it possible for only large established parties with access to large amounts of money to contest elections, we shall suppress the growth of new ideas and trends. It is a fact that the National Front will have access to the amounts of money that will enable its members to stand for election. National Front candidates would, therefore, be able to afford to trade £1,000 for the £8,000 to which the Home Secretary drew attention as the benefits in terms of free postage. The small parties, including the Ecology party — there are many other small parties, some of which I like and some of which I dislike—simply do not have the necessary money. *[Interruption.]* I do not refer to the party of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). I never dare take a view on his party. I am referring to small groupings with wide interests. They simply do not have the resources, money or workers to use the free facilities. Therefore, it is an error to believe that this is a worthwhile bargain. The commercial people or those who want the publicity are ready to pay £500 or £1,000 for the greater publicity they will gain.

I do not agree with the Home Secretary who said:

"The deposit is founded in principle because the essence of election to Parliament is the contest between people who have serious aspirations to represent a constituency." — [*Official Report,* 13 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 423.]

The deposit was invented as a way of imposing upon all candidates in an election a share of the cost of the election. Previously candidates had been required directly to bear a share of the cost of election.

If we are to have an open democracy in which opinions which are unpopular or which have not yet found their time are allowed to be voiced before the electorate and in which people are allowed to seek votes from the electorate—

however few votes they may receive—the deposit is not a proper means of validating a candidature. I hope that hon. Members who share that view will join us in the Division Lobby.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The alliance also feels that it is necessary to vote against the motion. I have never believed that money is a test of a candidate's political seriousness. I differ from the Government on that fundamental issue of how one tests a candidate's political seriousness.

In a way, I am not surprised that the Government should place money higher on their list of tests than I do. My party believes that it is the breadth of support that a candidate can demonstrate which, if a test be needed, is the best test. That is why we have argued consistently for signatures.

I welcome the fact that the Government have sought to compromise and have considerably reduced the proposed increase in the deposit. I welcome also the conversion of the Labour Front Bench to the view that there should not be a deposit at all. That conversion has occurred under the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who has exercised a beneficent influence on his party's thinking.

Above all, I welcome openness, democracy and the opportunity to demonstrate when people are wrong and are not going to win support. I welcome the fact that the Ecology party is able to stand in elections and that we can demonstrate that the Liberal party is a far more convincing proponent of concern for the environment than that party. I welcome the fact that, when the National Front stands in elections, it is shown that it commands only minimal support. I wish those who have views to advance to stand in elections. I do not wish them to suffer under a financial penalty in their attempt to do so.

5.45 pm

Mr. Parris: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said that only a realistic level of support entitles a party to consider itself a serious contender in a general election. I do not agree. I believe that there are such things in politics as ideas as well as support at the polls. I believe that ideas as well as voting figures can be serious. Ideas may have to spend a long time in the wilderness before attracting electoral support. These changes make that wilderness a little less hospitable to ideas. To the extent that the Government have considerably compromised, I welcome the changes and I shall support the clause in the Lobby. I am still sorry that the test of a candidate's seriousness is the amount of money that he is able to put up.

Sir John Farr: I was a little surprised to hear the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) suggest that the Labour party was opposed to any deposit at all. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) rightly said that, when evidence was given to the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the Liberal pary did not say that financial considerations and deposits should not be taken into account. The Labour party is on record, however, in the White Paper, as officially advocating a deposit of £600. It is no good the right hon. Member for Gorton now saying that a deposit should not be required and that that is the official view of his party. It may be the official view of one part of his party, but it is not the unanimous view.

Question put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 209, Noes 104.

Division No. 105] **[5.46 pm**

AYES

Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beggs, Roy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey

Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 12, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 13 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 14 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 15

POSTPONEMENT OF POLL AT PARISH OR COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 73, in page 18, line 11, at end insert—

'(1A) Any nomination received for an election at which the poll is postponed under the preceding subsection shall, if otherwise valid and if not withdrawn, be valid as if received for an election for which the poll is to be held on the day prescribed by paragraph *(a)* of subsection (1) of this section.'.

I have at heart the interests of the National Association of Local Councils, of which I am a vice-president. This provision was in the special legislation — the Representation of the People Act 1979 — which postponed parish council elections when they coincided with the general election of that year. The national association believes that it is necessary to make express provision to preserve the validity of nomination papers that have already been delivered, to avoid confusion locally in the general rush and excitement of a general election and to postpone the parish elections. If that is not done, there will be conflicting advice. Because of the short time limits involved, some nominations could fail if, for example, people mistakenly withdrew them or if they were sent back and had to be resubmitted.

I understand that the Home Office takes the view that the amendment is not necessary. Even if it is not strictly legally necessary, it would be of considerable advantage to all if the matter were clear. I have in mind the difficulties that arose when parish elections were postponed in 1983. It is undoubted that people in several parts of the country thought that they were validly nominated, but matters were sufficiently confusing for their nominations to be lost.

Mr. Forth: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if somebody is a serious candidate for public office and expects to get support at the polls he should be sufficiently aware and intelligent to appraise himself of the rules governing the elections and not be confused in the way that the hon. Gentleman has just described?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman is being pompous. A great many people who stand for parish council elections have no experience of political life and do not regard themselves as being engaged in politics. They are usually ordinary local people who have been encouraged, perhaps by a few friends, to stand in the parish council election, the smallest scale of democratic operation. Such people might have dutifully completed the nomination paper, satisfied all the restrictions and delivered it to the returning officer, only to find that they should have resubmitted it because the election had been postponed.

Genuine difficulties have arisen. The national association's view, which I am sure is supported by the vice-presidents sitting on the other side of the House, is that it would be better for the matter to be set out clearly in law in case similar circumstances arise again.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is an expert on electoral law and I am grateful to him for raising this issue; it is worthy of consideration. We originally asked for a provision equivalent to section 2(3) of the Representation of the People Act 1979 to be included in the Bill, but parliamentary counsel's view was that it was unnecessary as he saw no reason why a nomination should become invalid simply because the day of the poll was postponed.

I adhere to the view, on advice, that the common-sense provision advocated by the hon. Member is not prejudiced by the absence of any provision equivalent to section 2(3) of the 1979 Act. In deference to the view that the hon. Gentleman has advanced, I shall make further inquiries, but I hope that he will not be discomfited if the answer remains the same and is cogently argued. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will find what I have said helpful enough to make him want to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful for the Minister's comments. If indeed a nomination may remain valid, as he has been advised, and that advice is confirmed, I hope that the Minister will make as sure as he can that that is known to returning officers and is among the information that is made available to candidates. If that is done, the problem is solved. On that understanding, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clauses 15 to 17 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 18

TIMING OF ELECTIONS

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to move amendment No. 81, in page 19, line 18, leave out 'for' and insert 'after'.

The Second Deputy Chairman (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 82, in page 19, line 20, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 21 and insert

'shall be inserted the words "where these are not Saturdays".'.

Mr. Corbett: The most important person in elections to this place is not the candidate but the election agent. Almost all of the legal responsibilities involved fall on the election agent's shoulders. If the brickbats are flying, the election agent collects them. It is rare for them to gather many bouquets, even if the candidate on whose behalf they have worked wins.

As the Minister will have divined, the amendments extend slightly the timetable for the bits of the election machine to be cranked into place. The House has made it easier for people to get postal votes and for absent voters to make arrangements to vote. That will put extra work on election agents. It is my experience that all of the pieces of paper that float around in the early days of an election campaign end up on the desk of and under the scrutiny of the election agent, as he must ensure that the applications are completed properly and run no risk of being rejected by the returning officer. The Minister may need time to think about what we are trying to achieve, but I anticipate that he will take the point seriously. I hope that he will be able to respond as we should like.

Mr. Mellor: I welcome the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) to the Front Bench, making his debut on this day of Committee. The timetable concerns everyone involved with elections. It is also a matter of concern to the public. I do not know whether the public's reaction to the contest in which I was involved at the last general election was unusual, but if I was told once I was told a hundred times each day, "Doesn't the election go on a long time?" That starts on the second day of the campaign.

We must think carefully before including provisions that provide a proper amount of time for a campaign so as not to have arbitrary rules that lengthen a campaign gratuitously. We and, I believe, the public want a fairly tight period between the dissolution of Parliament and the general election. That is why I am a little troubled by the amendments. Although we fully accept that there should be disregard of bank and public holidays, Saturdays and Sundays, we see no merit in adding some other days which are immediately before or after other holidays. The amendments would reinstate the days either side of public holiday breaks. I am not sure that that would be appropriate.

If there is some worry about Christmas and Easter, during which times special considerations apply, we could add Christmas eve and Maundy Thursday to the disregarded days, but I ask the hon. Gentleman not to press for other days. I am aware that his intention is to ensure that everyone is able to do what he wants to do in the proper time.

We have thought deeply about this and consulted widely with party professionals and electoral registration officers. We believe that we have provided a timetable that enables such people to do what they want and satisfies the public's desire for election campaigns to be no longer than is necessary. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw the amendment. I shall consider whether we should add Christmas eve and Maundy Thursday in recognition of the hon. Gentleman's case.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the Minister for his response. I am smiling because I know of at least one candidate at the general election who also thought that the campaign was too long from about the second day. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for agreeing to consider Christmas eve and Maundy Thursday. On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 18 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 19 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 20

ORDINARY ELECTIONS OF PARISH AND COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS: INSUFFICIENT NOMINATIONS

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 74, in page 22, line 6, after 'may', insert

'after a period of 60 days (computed according to rules concerning the conduct of elections of parish or community councillors made or having effect as if made under section 36 of the principal Act) has elapsed from the day on which the returning officer published the names of the newly elected councillors.'.

[Mr. Beith]

Amendment No. 74 relates to clause 20, which was inserted in the Bill at the request of the National Association of Local Councils to save the costs of holding a further full-scale election to fill vacancies caused by insufficient nominations. The clause enables the validly nominated councillors, who are elected unopposed, to fill the remaining seats by co-option if the number of new councillors constitutes a quorum. To deal with the possibility that they may fail for some reason to co-opt, a residual power is given to the district council to fill the vacancies. The amendment seeks to ensure that the newly elected councillors are given a specified time in which to act before the district council can act in their place.

If no time is specified, councillors may accuse a district council of jumping the gun. The amendment provides for a period of 60 days, computed according to the time limits in the election rules. It would be unreasonable if parish councillors intended to co-opt and were making reasonable local inquiries, only to find that in the meantime the district council had jumped in and exercised its powers instead. I hope that the Minister will consider this suggestion, as it comes directly from the association.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). As he rightly said, clause 20 derives from consultations with the National Association of Local Councils, and the position is precisely as he described it. The wording of clause 20 is intended to imply that a district council should not step in until it receives notification from the parish or community council to the effect that the parish or community council has tried to co-opt and failed.

The hon. Gentleman seeks to provide a period of 60 days. I have thought about that and sought advice on it. It seems that 12 weeks, which would be the effect of his proposal allowing for dies non, may be rather long. However, as the hon. Gentleman has drawn my attention to this point, I shall certainly be more than prepared to require, by means of an amendment that the Government will introduce later, that the power of co-option be exercised with... the seven-week period, during which a fresh election must at present be held under section 39(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983. I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that undertaking.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful to the Minister for that helpful undertaking. On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 20 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 21 and 22 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Clause 23 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 3

Miscellaneous Amendments of the Principal Act

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 54, in page 30, line 20, leave out sub-paragraph (3).

Sub-paragraph 3 states:

"An alteration made in a register of electors after the last day on which nomination papers nominating candidates at an election may be delivered to the returning officer shall not have effect for the purposes of that election."

I raise this matter because my experience during the general election—and I am sure it was the experience of many hon. Members—was that some people found that they could get corrections made to the electoral register but could not cast a vote. The last general election would have been the first one at which the new rules for the correction of the electoral register were in operation. Prior to that, it was impossible to get any change made in the register until the following year. That was most unsatisfactory. The clause was a welcome improvement. However, the general election brought with it a series of disappointed expectations when people discovered that they were not registered, had the mistake corrected, only to find that they could not vote on polling day.

It may be argued that people should always check the draft lists when they appear in post offices before Christmas to ensure that their names are on the register, and that, during the year, if they failed to check the draft list, they should check that the register is up to date, so that a mistake can be corrected. We all know that people do not do that. Political parties do it to help their supporters, and indeed others, as much as they can. However, an ordinary member of the public tends to discover a mistake in registration only when an election is about to take place, and he wishes to take part in it. It is therefore extremely common that at the time of an election people discover that they are not properly registered.

6.15 pm

At present when a mistake is discovered, a correction can be made; but if it is discovered beyond nomination day, the person concerned cannot cast a vote at the election. That sense of disappointed expectation vitiates the otherwise welcome features of the changes in electoral law, from which we have benefited.

The move towards a continuous register, to which names can be added, is a welcome improvement. However, if corrections to the register cannot be made to ensure that people, who discover that their names are missing at the time when most people are likely to discover that omission can vote, the provision is disappointing in practice. Will the Minister consider that problem? It is a genuine difficulty, and many people came across it at the general election.

Mr. William Powell: I strongly support the argument of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). One of the blemishes of our system of voting is the fact that it has been impossible for someone to correct the register and cast a vote. Most of those errors are discovered only when a person presents himself at a polling station to cast a vote. It is regrettable to have to turn such a person away in those circumstances. Obviously, the detail must be considered carefully. I urge my hon. Friend to consider carefully the arguments that have been advanced and to try to assist in this matter.

Mr. Mellor: I take those points, and consider them to be helpful interventions. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) made clear and my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) confirmed, a person who wakes up to the fact that he has been omitted from the electoral register only when an election is in the offing is usually too late to do anything about it.

Impelled by precisely the same feelings that have motivated the two interventions, we consulted on the basis that there was no genuine reason why the registration

officer, aided by modern technology, should not be able to alter the register right up to polling day. It was upon that basis that we went out to consultation.

The proposals met strong opposition, not just from the political parties but from the local authority associations. The local authority associations said that in practice copies of the electoral register for use in polling stations were made ready several days before polling day and that a power to alter the register up to the last moment would wreck the whole procedure.

Some, if not all, of the political parties said that they wanted a definitive register for canvassing purposes at the start of the campaign. In other words, there was no support for the proposition that we put forward.

The Government thought that they could not leave the present position as it is; but, equally, it was difficult, in the spirit of accommodation that has informed our consideration of these matters—rightly so—to insist upon going ahead with the requirement that alterations should be accepted up to polling day. Therefore, we decided—and it is given effect to by the Bill—that corrections should be allowed up to the close of nominations, which would be a fortnight before the poll. That would be a marked improvement on the present position.

We are reviewing the procedures for the making of late claims, and before we make the regulations we shall want to consult the political parties again on this and other matters contained in the regulations.

I hope that, on the basis that the door is not slammed shut in his face, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will withdraw the amendment. There are real difficulties, not raised by the Government but by those whom we properly consulted, in doing entirely what the hon. Gentleman seeks. We have made some improvements, which I hope are welcome, and I trust that he understands why we can go no further at this stage.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I am in agreement with the hon. Members for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Corby (Mr. Powell) in welcoming the enormous improvement in relations with the electorate which rolling registration has brought about. I believe that the Under-Secretary is right to be cautious in any undertaking to continue the rolling of the registration up to polling day. There is, after all, another important person or group of persons whose interests must be taken into account, and they are the candidates.

For the sake of the candidates and their duty and desire to be available to all members of the electorate—that is to say, all who are entitled to vote—it is important that there should be finality at some stage during the campaign. It seems to me that the close of nominations, which is final for other purposes, is an appropriate point of finality for this purpose and one which gives a reasonable opportunity to all candidates to do what most of them desire to do, and that is to make their own direct approach to all who will be able to vote on polling day. Caution may be indicated in respect of the last fortnight before polling day.

Mr. Beith: The remarks of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) touch the scale of balance that we have had to address at several points during the Bill—which is more important, the right of the voter to cast his vote, or the right of the candidate to address the voter? They are both important.

The other context in which we have had to consider that matter is postal voting. In extending postal voting to those overseas we have to some extent reduced the ability of a candidate to address the totality of those listed on the electoral register, because it will necessarily be difficult to communicate within the time available with some of those registered overseas to vote.

My judgment on that matter is that the interests of the elector to be able to cast his vote outweigh the interest of the candidate to be able to address each voter. So far as we possibly can, we must give priority to ensuring that the voter can cast his vote, but having done that, we should do all in our power to enable the candidate to address him.

In making that point the right hon. Gentleman reminded me of what was the most ironic experience at the last election. Some of the people to whom I referred as having been deprived of their vote despite being added to the register, saw their names exhibited on public notice boards in their wards and villages in the course of statutory procedures during the election because the electoral registration officer exhibited the draft additions to the register which had come to him during the election so that objection could be made in the normal way.

The poor individual who found that he was not on the register and had made his complaint duly walked down to the village the next morning and there saw his name and address listed on the notice board for him, his neighbours and the candidate to see. There was no difficulty in addressing that voter at that stage of the campaign, yet he was unable to cast his vote on polling day. Having gone through the whole process of exhibiting the vote, he was precluded from casting his vote on polling day.

I feel that we should strike the balance more in favour of the voter and use every possible means to ensure that he can cast his vote. I do not believe that the objections raised on behalf of returning officers or the parties are overwhelming, even that relating to preparing the register beforehand. It is possible to have a supplementary list of names which have been added to the register and to ensure that a copy is delivered to each relevant polling station.

The objections of the parties are mainly covered by the argument about candidates addressing the voters, with which I have sought to deal. There comes a stage when we must consider ourselves as public representatives representing the voter, and not merely as people who here seek to represent the views of the parties on how the matter has been handled. We have all done a bit of both during the course of these proceedings, but this is a matter where the interests of the individual elector are paramount.

My one worry is that the Minister, in his genuine attempt to be helpful—clearly he set out from the beginning to widen what was available—may not have left himself a door which is sufficiently open, because what he can do in regulations is severely circumscribed by what the Act says. If the Act says that no name which has been added to the register after nomination day can acquire a valid vote at that election, he can do nothing in regulations to make any difference.

For that reason, I am not content to leave the matter there. I do not wish to press the matter to a Division, but I should like to record that although I know that the Minister will be as helpful as he can, the Bill will be left in such a way that some people will be disappointed. Their names will appear to be added to the register. They will

[Mr. Beith]

words. I gain the impression that in echoing the view of the right hon. Member for South Down, I find acceptance in other parts of the Committee.

Mr. Mellor: Although I did not intend deeply to wound the hon. Gentleman, I think that he may have stated his case more emphatically than the merits deserved. That is not to say that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is not capable of persuading me that there is a real point involved here. Having considered what has been said, if the injunction were merely, "Vote for only one candidate", or "Vote for one candidate only", and if an amendment were tabled to that effect on Report, the hon. Gentleman might think that it was worth being wounded in the interests of triumphing in the end.

Mr. Beith: Such is the lot of politicians through the ages that, on the basis that we can make such sensible amendments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 75, in page 45, line 2, at end insert—

'*(aa)* in paragraph 3 after the first "candidate" there shall be inserted the words "other than any candidate at an election where the number of candidates remaining validly nominated at the date of election was equal to or less than the number of vacancies to be filled at that election."'.

The amendment is supported and encouraged by the National Association of Local Councils. Its purpose is to absolve candidates in an uncontested election for parish or community councils from having to make a return of their expenses to the returning officer. That is a burdensome requirement on those who stand at local elections in their first-ever election, and who seldom incur expenses. They do not dream that they are committing an election offence by failing to certify that they spent nothing at all. The piece of paper is, in most circumstances, of no significance to anyone. It is a simplification of procedures designed to help the ordinary councillor who is not a professional politician.

No change in the law is suggested for contested elections, where it is right that a requirement is placed on every candidate to show what expenses he incurs in contesting the election. That is when the matter becomes significant. However, if the candidate is unopposed in an election to a local council, the association believes that the requirement to file a return of election expenses should not be placed upon the candidate.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has a great interest in these matters. I welcomed his interest in and the comments that he made during our earlier discussions on parish council elections. A number of hon. Members want parish elections to be put on the same basis as other elections, to ensure that their importance is not underestimated. That is why the Government have taken the very proper step of extending postal voting facilities to those elections.

If we are invited to move towards bringing parish and community council elections into line with other elections, we should be cautious about any suggestion that we should in other ways open a divide between those elections and others. I do not want to make too much of the point, but fundamental to our election rules is the rule that candidates must comply with the regulations and give a full account of what they have done during the election period.

While it may be my turn to be pedantic—although I hope not—even if an election is uncontested, as a number of parish council elections are, I believe that candidates should still enter that election with appropriate solemnity and fill in the appropriate forms. We move away from that requirement at the peril of appearing to underestimate the fundamental significance of the rules for the proper conduct of each and every election in this country.

I do not want to overstate the case, because if I were to do so I would fall into the trap which I have, in a very lighthearted way, accused others of falling into. I do not know whether the amendment has the support of the National Association——

Mr. Beith: Yes, it does.

Mr. Mellor: I was unaware of that. Of course, one always continues to think about these matters and one does not close one's mind, but I am still not attracted by the amendment, and I hope that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will not press it.

Mr. Beith: I recognise the consistency in what the Minister says. The amendment was suggested by the National Association of Local Councils to deal with the problem as it saw it. But as I was one of those who strongly pressed the Minister to put parish council elections on all fours with other elections, particularly in respect of postal votes, I would be the last person to want to give the impression that we should make them less than full elections in every sense of that phrase.

I suppose that it inevitably becomes one of those slight bureaucratic absurdities that people have to make a nil return. It might have been attractive to simplify that arrangement, but it is certainly my view that parish councils should be treated on all fours with other local authorities, together with their elections. The National Association of Local Councils has done a great deal of work in ensuring that that is the case. Indeed, I pay tribute to that work.

On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 3, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 26 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 27

CITATION, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 83, in page 24, line 1, after 'Act', insert

'(except section *[Amendment of other enactments]* (1) and the entry in Schedule 4 relating to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984)'.

The Temporary Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government new clause 27 — *Amendment of other enactments* — and Government amendment No. 84.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has scurried into the Chamber—oh, he has left again. I thought that he was going to look with considerable delight upon my discomfiture, because

I am obliged to propose an amendment to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. The right hon. Gentleman teased us several times about the efforts that we had to make to get one or two technical matters right.

The point is that in removing rule 36 of the parliamentary election rules in schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983, we went a little too far. I shall briefly explain why. Personation is rightly an indictable offence punishable with a maximum of two years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, a person who in England and Wales is suspected of having committed an offence punishable with less than five years' imprisonment may usually be arrested only if what the Act calls the general arrest conditions are satisfied. I think that most members of the Committee thought that that was a step in the right direction. I see the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) nodding his head, although he may not have agreed with all the details. That was why the Act repealed rule 36.

7.45 pm

A voter who was suspected of personation at the polling station would usually be arrestable under the general arrest conditions. That is fine, but in repealing the special power under rule 36 the Act also repealed, for England and Wales, the polling agent's power to challenge the voter and the presiding officer's power to order the arrest. Those were useful safeguards, because the polling agent could challenge a voter whom he suspected of personation, and he had to undertake to substantiate the charge in a court of law. The effect of the challenge was that the presiding officer could order the voter to be arrested, although he could not be prevented from voting. We want to keep that provision. I very much regret that it was inadvertently swept away in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. I invite the Committee to put that provision back into the legislation. I apologise for the fact that it was taken out in the first place. I hope that the Committee, without too much trouble or difficulty, will agree to the amendment.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): It would be ungracious not to accept the Minister's apologies. I hope that this is the last time that the Government have to apologise for matters connected with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. In this instance, we should accept the Minister's apology. He has eaten humble pie, and no more needs to be said.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I beg to move amendment No. 63, in page 24, line 3, leave out 'and for different purposes'.

My hon. Friends and I come before the House as earnest seekers after information, for we fail to understand how the words proposed to be left out make any difference to the sense of the subsection. I take it that the word "provision" in page 24, line 3, means a provision of a measure that is separately designated in some way, whether as a clause, a subsection or a paragraph of a subsection. If that is the correct interpretation, it is not clear how there can be "different purposes" within the same provision or how—supposing that there could be "different purposes" within the same provision—it could possibly be right to bring the provision into force for one purpose or set of purposes and not for another.

It may be that somewhere in the Bill, hidden from the eyes of the laity, there are provisions under which different purposes can be pursued. But, even if that is so, it would be highly inconvenient for the Act to come into force, not even section by section or provision by provision, but purpose by purpose, where several purposes were contained within one provision. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will explain the intention behind the words, and will also find it possible to advise the Committee that they are not really necessary and might in practice prove an inconvenience.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) for giving us the benefit of his formidable experience of legislation and for making that point. I shall look at what he has said and, if I find that my immediate response has missed some of his points, I shall make that clear at a later stage.

It is intended that there should be the maximum flexibility, because certain points will arise about the implementation of the Bill that we will need to contemplate. That is why clause 27(2) is framed in that way. I believe that it allows the Secretary of State to bring the provisions into force by order, to bring different provisions into force on different days, and to appoint different days for different purposes. Therefore, certain free-standing provisions of the Bill can be brought into force after the minimum period of two months or so has elapsed, but other provisions cannot be brought into force until after the regulations have been made. That will obviously be a time-consuming process, because other consultations must be proceeded with. That deals with the question of different provisions.

The reference to "different purposes" is designed to ensure that the commencement orders may, for example, include a proviso that the provision being brought into force would not affect an election of which, say, notice had been published before the appointed day. Otherwise, we might find that a candidate had already paid £150 deposit, but clause 12 having come into force before polling day, he would have to deposit a further £350. The reference to "different purposes" would enable us to decree that he would not have to pay that.

I do not know whether that explanation is coherent enough for the right hon. Gentleman. I shall reflect on what he said. If he raised other points, I shall consider them. Perhaps, for the record, I should reassure him on a point that he did not raise. There is no question of that provision giving power, say, to introduce arrangements for Northern Ireland on a different day from the rest of the United Kingdom. I assure him that all the provisions will be brought into effect at the same time throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I thank the Minister both for his final remarks and for his conciliatory preamble. I am greatly excited by the news that the Bill contains free-standing provisions—the term used by the Minister. It would be fascinating to know which parts of the Bill are free-standing. That is a term of art which, despite my years, I have not hitherto encountered in legislation, and it would be interesting to discover its meaning.

I followed carefully the Minister's substantive explanation. It still seems inherently undesirable that a date should be fixed for the coming into force of "section something, subsection something", when that provision, from that day, would be enforced for only certain purposes. I hope that in the consideration that he has

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

promised to give to this matter, the Minister will instance in the Bill where such a subdivision, for the purposes of commencement of a single provision, is necessary, and whether it will be convenient.

It seems remarkable that the Secretary of State should, by order, provide that a provision shall come into force for only certain purposes and not for others. He will then need another day for the same provision to come into force for different purposes. I hope that the Minister will have leisure to consider those issues before the next stage of the Bill.

Mr. Mellor: I shall look at the points that the right hon. Gentleman made with his usual cogency and authority. My reference to "free-standing provisions"—it may not have been the most felicitous of phrases—simply meant those provisions that did not require regulations to be made to give them the necessary effect. They could be brought into force without the need for further regulations. A great deal of the Bill relies on regulations subsequently being made to give the whole arrangement coherence.

In my final remarks, when I was giving the right hon. Gentleman reassurance about Northern Ireland, perhaps I should not have referred to "all the provisions", thereby implying that I was referring to everything in the Bill. I meant to say that any provision that was brought into force would be brought into force throughout the United Kingdom as a whole and that there would be no question of using any power in clause 27 to differentiate on any provision betweem Northern Ireland and Great Britain. I hope that that is helpful to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: This is a moment for rejoicing. We have a new technical term, "free-standing," which will be of great advantage. Many of us have an inherent and instinctive objection to provisions in a Bill which, for their operation, depend on regulations — subordinate legislation.

We now know that our desire is for more free-standing legislation—something that might almost feature in an election programme. The Conservative party is for free-standing legislation, and more of it. If this short debate has done nothing else, it has provided for a certain lifting of the heart and an enrichment of our parliamentary vocabulary.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 27, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 27

AMENDMENT OF OTHER ENACTMENTS

'(1) Section 26 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (repeal of statutory powers of arrest) shall not apply to rule 36 in Schedule 1 to the principal Act (power of presiding officer to order constable to arrest person suspected of personation) and, accordingly, in Schedule 2 to the 1984 Act (preserved powers of arrest) there shall be inserted at the appropriate place—

"1983 c.2.	Rule 36 in Schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983".

(2) In section 3(7) of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 (certain offences to be corrupt practices under the principal Act) for "168(2)*(b)*" there shall be substituted "168(1)*(a)*(ii)". *—[Mr. Mellor.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

'In Schedule 1 of the Principal act, for paragraph 18 ("Poll to be taken by ballot") there shall be substituted:

"(1) The votes at the poll shall be given by ballot, and the result shall be ascertained according to the principles of proportional representation, whereby the proportion of votes cast for each party approximates to the proportion of seats won;

(2) The rules by which sub-paragrapgh (1) above shall be implemented shall be specified by order made by statutory instrument by the Secretary of State; but no such order shall be made unless a draft has been laid before and approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament; and each such order shall expire at the commencement of the parliament next after the one in which it was made.".'. *—[Mr. Beith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Bill is titled "Representation of the People Bill" and it seeks in a variety of ways to improve the representation of the people. However, it fails to improve their representation in the most fundamental way of all. It does not ensure that the votes cast are reflected in the seats allotted in Parliament at the end of the day.

The Bill takes a variety of actions to tidy up and improve our electoral procedures. Most of it I welcome, and some of it I disagree with. The drift of its provisions is to ensure that the voter has the full facility to vote, is able to go to a polling station and cast that vote—or, if he is abroad or on holiday, to cast his vote by post—has the facility to vote in secret, is assured that when the vote is placed in the ballot box it will not be interfered with but will be taken under careful guard, and that the votes will be counted under the strict supervision of impartial returning officers who have a reputation for the fair way in which they conduct the procedures.

In every possible way the Bill seeks to ensure that the vote is cast in a way which confers no undue advantage on individuals who stand or on the parties they represent. However, it is as if, at the end of the day, everything is tipped out of the ballot box in a heap and the votes are picked out like raffle tickets at a constituency bazaar. That is the degree of relationship that we are now getting between votes cast and seats won. As the Representation of the People Bill, it fails to meet the criteria of its title.

We need only look back to recent general elections to see how what I have described is the case. For example, at the last general election—this is but one of many examples of the situation — the Conservative party received 42 per cent. of the votes and has 61 per cent. of the seats in the House. It received fewer votes than it did in the previous election, but it has 58 more seats that it had before.

Many of my constituents find this state of affairs baffling. The question is usually expressed by them in the most simple terms: "How is it that Mrs. Thatcher has such a big majority? Why did all those people vote for her?" I do not need to explain in detail why some people voted for her. It is sufficient to explain to my constituents and others that nothing like that proportion of people voted for her.

A substantial minority of the British electorate voted for the right hon. Lady and her party at the last general election. They are fully entitled to the substantial representation that 42 per cent. of the votes accords them. It is reasonable that, as the largest party represented in Parliament, it should have first access to the reins of Government. But let nobody pretend that the Conservatives have anything like the command of the electorate that they have of the numbers in this place. It is a total distortion of the way in which people voted at the last election.

Another example is the position of the Opposition parties in this place. The Labour party and the alliance each received about a quarter of the votes. The Labour party received slightly more votes than we did, yet it finished the election with 200 seats, while the alliance won only 23 seats. *[Interruption.]* There is no immediate evidence in the Chamber of the vast numbers that were accorded as an additional increment to the Labour party. There are a small number of Labour Members and few Conservative Members here now.

Dr. Marek: I do not wish to make a party political point, but I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman should get away with that. During most of the debate on this Bill there has been only one alliance Member in the Chamber. For this clause, the hon. Gentleman has somehow managed to rustle up four alliance Members. If the hon. Gentleman is proud of that, he is satisfied with the position.

8 pm

Mr. Beith: I cannot remember many debates in Committee on the Bill when one twenty-third or one twenty-fourth of the membership of the parliamentary Labour party has been present. I cannot remember many occasions when one twenty-third or one twenty-fourth of the membership of the Conservative party has been here, except during a Division. A small band of entertainers of sorts from the Conservative Benches have taken part in these proceedings. Assorted dilators and the type of people who might suitably attest a passport application have given their views. One or two of them are still here. The attendance during this Committee stage on both sides of the Chamber has not been great. I acquit of that charge the Under-Secretary of State. He and I have been present during almost the whole of the proceedings.

The outcome of the last election was that the Labour party and the alliance won similar proportions of the vote, but one group won only a tenth of the seats won by the other group. That is another respect in which the voting system distorts the effect of the votes cast and fails to represent in Parliament those whom the voters sought to elect when they went to the polling stations.

The system has other curiously unrepresentative effects. The Labour party is in such a bad way in the south of England that there is not one Labour seat south of a line from London to Bristol. The whole of southern England has no Labour Member of Parliament. That is a mark of the drastic decline of the Labour party in the south of England. I must concede, however, that the Labour party's decline has not reached the point where it is totally extinct in that spread of country. Under any proportional system, there might be a handful of Labour Members of Parliament representing that vast area in which they are now totally unrepresented.

The Conservative party has no Members of Parliament in Glasgow or Liverpool, and only one Member of Parliament in the whole of Manchester.

The Conservative party's representation has fallen, especially in Liverpool—my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is one Liverpool representative—but not to the point where it deserves to be wholly unrepresented on the basis of the votes cast during the last election. The same phenomenon is found in relation to my party in most parts of the country, where our number of parliamentary seats does not reflect the proportion of votes cast.

The authority of the Government is undermined by the way in which we place in office minorities which then behave as though they are majorities. I was interested to hear the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry re-read a comment that he made in March 1983. He said:

"What distinguishes a democracy is that there are free and fair elections and that the majority control the Government."

The majority do not control the Government. A minority has assumed the total authority of the Government and in the House of Commons has been given a degree of power that should be attracted only by a large majority of the votes. It is, therefore, no longer possible to conclude, as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry concluded:

"That is why this Government have the right to legislate in accordance with the proposals that they put before and had endorsed by the people".—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1983; Vol. 38, c. 695.]

The people do not endorse the Government's programme in this grand way. The degree of support enjoyed by the Government comes from significantly less than half the electorate.

When the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was in opposition she asked the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) what right he had to continue to govern. She answered her rhetorical question by saying:

"The right of a minority Government; the right of a supposed mandate based on 38 per cent. of the votes cast or 29 per cent. of the electorate? They govern by no right except the arrogant right of Socialism."—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1977, Vol. 928, c. 1285.]

What ringing words from the right hon. Lady, but they apply with the same force to her Government, with only a slight adjustment in the figures. By what right does the right hon. Lady continue to govern the country? She governs by the right of a supposed mandate based on 42 per cent. of the votes cast. The Conservative party governs by no right, except the arrogant right of Toryism—that is but a small change in the words which the right hon. Lady so grandly uttered from the Opposition Front Bench.

The authority of the Government is substantially undermined when we pretend that minorities are majorities. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the Conservative party being but a minority, but it is no basis upon which to found the assumption that Conservative Members, and they alone, should have the unrestricted direction of the affairs of state. Parliament exists to control Governments, and Parliament's ability to control Governments is undermined by the fact that it does not represent the votes cast by the electorate.

There are other ways in which the system makes Parliament unrepresentative. Although they are not the main thrust of my argument against the system of government which now operates, I think that they have significance and relevance. One of the features of our electoral system is that it tends to discriminate against

[Mr. Beith]

certain groups of people. The system has had the effect of making it more difficult for women and ethnic minorities to gain entry to the House of Commons. That is a consequence of a combination of the electoral system and the processes of selection.

Compared to other countries, we are well down the league when it comes to the representation of women in Parliament. The proportion of women in this Parliament is far smaller than in most other countries. One of the merits of the single transferable vote system which we advocate is that it makes it much easier for electors to ensure, so far as they can, that a person from an ethnic minority or a woman is elected. Our system makes it easier for electors to express that preference, while still having the opportunity to express their wider party preference and ensure that their preference—for example, for a woman candidate—is not turned into an unalterable preference for the party from which that candidate comes.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us the extent of his party's dedication to the cause of women by enumerating the number of women in the House who represent his party?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman has walked into it. If he would be kind enough to provide us with the system that I advocate, he would see the serried ranks of women Liberal Members of Parliament among the more than 100 Liberal Members who would be sitting here as a result of the general election. I could take the hon. Gentleman around the country and show him some of the women who would now be Liberal Members of Parliament if we had had a system that ensured that the votes cast were reflected in Parliament. That is an extraordinary argument to advance against a party which has been so grotesquely unrepresented in this House. My right hon. and hon. Friends are but a fraction of those who should be here and of the numbers who received the electorate's support at the last general election.

The weaknesses of the system are not confined to their effects on central Government. They go to local government as well. The Bill seeks to draw together considerably the electoral rules applying to Parliament and those applying to local government. It is, therefore, relevant to consider, at least in passing, that the absence of a fair electoral system for local government has an even more exaggerated quality of distortion.

During the present Parliament the Government have taken away more and more of the powers of local authorities and have restricted their freedom. They are abolishing local authorities, on the ground that they do not like the people elected to run them. It would be wrong in principle under any system for central Government to abolish local authorities, or to take away their powers, because they do not like those who have been elected. However, the Government have only themselves to blame, because the power enjoyed by some of those whom they most dislike in local government was bestowed on them by the unrepresentative nature of the electoral system in local government. If local government had a fair and representative system such as the single transferable vote, there would not be minorities in local government wielding the power of majorities. There would not be single-party local authorities, or local authorities in which the Opposition consist of a handful of Members who are unrepresentative of the much larger proportion in the community of opponents of the party in power.

Weaknesses in local government are glaringly apparent. The Government could have saved themselves a great deal of trouble, and saved our constitution a great deal of damage, if, instead of taking power away from local authorities and abolishing authorities such as the GLC on the ground of party political disapproval, they had simply ensured that the votes of the electors of those places determined the shape of the council that governed them. That would be the way to ensure responsible conduct, responsible financial control and responsible behaviour in local authorities. By their attitude to local government the Government have moved in completely the wrong direction. By centralising—by garnering more power to the centre—they have permanently harmed the system.

Unless there is a proper relationship between votes cast at elections and representation, whether at local or national level, the country will continue to suffer. At national level, we have only to look back over the years since the war to realise how damaging the system has been. By, time and time again, giving a minority the power of a majority, the system has allowed party preference and the prejudices of one minority to be imposed on the country, only to be replaced shortly afterwards by the prejudices of another minority.

Over the decades there has been nationalisation and denationalisation, nationalisation and denationalisation again, as in the case of the steel industry. Prices and incomes policies have been imposed and lifted again and again. Such have been the activities of alternating Governments not one of which have had the support of the majority. If the Government had to depend in the House of Commons upon the support of a majority that was genuinely representative of the majority in the country, government would be sounder and better, and would command the confidence of the people.

Those who argue that it is a mark of strong government to have a large majority in the House of Commons are thinking purely of what can be done in this place. It is certainly true that a large majority enables a Government to ram through large amounts of legislation. Incidentally, although when in opposition the Conservatives opposed such behaviour, they have sought to add hugely to the statute book since they came to power, encouraged by the freedom provided by a large majority.

Strength in government does not repose in the ability to put large numbers of hon. Members through the Division Lobby at 10 o'clock at night. It reposes in the ability to bring into force measures which command the confidence of the people of the country, and command it so well that they will not be overturned by the next Government, who will be equally dependent upon the support of the majority and will wish to retain legislation built on such firm foundations. That was the experience of the wartime coalition. Much of the legislation produced in that period, when historic circumstances brought the parties together, lasted far longer than any of the legislation of the post-war Governments. I suspect that it will also outlast much of the legislation brought in by the present Government.

The Government's ability to use their voting majority to push through their prejudices does not represent strength

of government. Strength of government rests in the ability to unite the country. Under the present electoral system, I see no sign that that can be done.

8.15 pm

Mr. Forth: In the context of the Bill, it was inevitable that there would be a re-run of the proportional representation argument. I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in that argument, because it is important that it should be heard and considered from time to time. I am confident that PR will be rejected tonight as it has been in the past.

I have always been puzzled by the obsession of the proponents of proportional representation with the need for the number of seats in the legislature slavishly and arithmetically to reflect the number of votes cast by the electorate. That idea has a certain neatness and symmetry. It has a certain aesthetically pleasing quality. However, I suggest that it means nothing at all in terms of political legitimacy, or of political sensibility in terms of running the country and legislating properly.

The proponents of PR must provide not only a coherent argument for the principle but a coherent system or approach. They rarely do so. There are almost as many different systems as there are proponents of the principle, each of which, incidentally, would provide a quite different result in terms of seats. It is well known that, if one hypothecates the results of the 32 or 33 known systems of PR, they all provide quite different party representations in the legislature.

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): With respect, the hon. Gentleman is talking absolute nonsense. It is absurd to say that there are 32 systems of PR. Secondly, when the hon. Gentleman talks about political legitimacy, is he not affected at all by the knowledge that we are the only country in western Europe that operates our kind of system and that all the other Governments are elected by proportional systems that despite what the hon. Gentleman has said, all produce approximately the same results?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman would say that, would he not? I do not share the hon. Gentlmen's obsession with matters European. I had the honour of serving for five years in the European Parliament, and I will shortly talk about my experience there. First, however, I draw attention to the United States of America, a great bastion of democracy that shares our Anglo-Saxon traditions and does not have a proportional system of elections. Why should we look eastwards to the continent of Europe for inspiration? We are equally entitled to look westwards to the United States for a reaffirmation of the fact that an electoral system need not be proportional to be effective and legitimate.

Recently there was a good illustration of one of the main problems that arises with a proportional system of election, and one of the great strengths of our own system. In the elections to the European Parliament last year, the National Front party emerged from France and gained strong representation in the European Parliament. It did so on the basis of a proportional system.

The proponents of proportional representation must address themselves to the problem of that system giving an opportunity for extreme parties to be represented.

Mr. Beith: Is the hon. Gentleman arguing that, in determining what electoral system we should have, we should have regard to the extent to which a system will enable us to prevent the election of parties with whose views we disagree?

Mr. Forth: I did not say that. I said that those who argue for proportional representation must accept that the legislature will include political parties which they may find unpalatable. I did not say that I prefer a system that excludes such parties.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Does the hon. Gentleman think that the number of Marxist or neo-Marxist hon. Members would increase if we had proportional representation?

Mr. Forth: It is idle to speculate, but I shall take the hon. Gentleman's question at its face value. I suspect that there would be many small parties, many of which would express views that the hon. Gentleman would find difficult and distasteful. That might or might not be a good thing, but it would be an inevitable result of proportional representation.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Gentleman said that there are many forms of proportional representation. I oppose the list system such as that which operates in Italy or Israel as, in Britain, it would be destabilising and would result in parties being elected on a tiny number of votes. With a single transferable vote in multi-Member seats, however, what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting would not happen as an hon. Member would have to get at least one sixth of the votes to be elected.

Mr. Forth: That is possible under one of the systems of proportional representation, but even then the size and geography of the area might alter the results. There might still be extreme representation from some areas.

In regard to the stability of Governments elected by proportional representation, we can look to continental Europe for examples. One of the great strengths of our system is that it provides a predictability and stability which many people have come to value. An inevitable result of proportional representation is a greater incidence of coalition Governments. That gives rise to many new possibilities—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—which I would find undesirable. If, under PR, neither major party got a working majority and one had to seek coalition with a third or more parties, policy would be dictated by back-room wheeling and dealing such as most people would find repugnant and unpredictable.

Alternatively, we might have the type of Government found in West Germany, where a tiny and unrepresentative party can dictate policy to parties with much greater electoral representation. The result is the exact reverse of what the now absent hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) argued for. He made great play of the unrepresentativeness of what he called minority Governments on the ground that they are supported by a minority of the electorate. In Germany, a party that represents as little as 7 per cent. of the electorate can dictate policy.

Mr. Alton: Can the hon. Gentleman give an example of the FDP dictating to the Government, whether to the Social Democrats for 13 years or now to the Christian Democrats? Does he agree that there have been good examples of parties working together in Britain in the interests of the country, especially in wartime?

[Mr. Beith]

see their names exhibited on the public notice board, yet when they go to the polling station there will be no ballot paper for them.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Winnick: I beg to move amendment No. 92, in page 35, line 44, at end insert—

'(iii) leave out "public meetings" and insert "meetings open to any member of the public".'.

The amendment arises from some difficulties with the words "public meetings". It was not meant, but in practice they allow organisations such as the National Front to exclude all except their own members and then to claim, in effect, that a public meeting has taken place. That is undesirable, because if we are to have election meetings — long may we continue to have such gatherings — members of the public should not be excluded. That is not the case with race hate organisations, which is why I have moved the amendment.

To the extent that meetings, in effect, are peopled only by those who are followers of the organisation, it is possible for remarks which probably break the law to be made. If not the electoral law, they probably break other laws affecting race relations. That would be less easy if people unconnected with the organisations were able to get in.

As I believe the Minister must be aware, there have been a number of difficulties over this point. The amendment substitutes the words on the Notice Paper for "public meetings". The problem would be easier to deal with if the wording were:

"meetings open to any member of the public."

There is no ambiguity there. The wording is simple and clear and it can be enforced. Although the matter is important, it will not preoccupy the Committee for long, and for the reasons I have given I hope that the amendment will be accepted.

6.30 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I applaud the sentiments behind the amendment. I suspect, however, that we will hear from the Minister that those sentiments are met by the words already in the statute. If so, we would be grateful to hear that, because it will be on the record and available to all registration officers, all parties and candidates.

The purpose of the special provisions which entitle those participating in elections to hold public meetings in buildings which are either owned by the public or funded out of public funds is to show that elections are fully public exercises, that all members of the public are entitled to participate and that for that purpose publicly owned buildings will be thrown open and will serve to achieve that end.

It may be that the amendment is a "belt and braces" operation to achieve that, but there is doubt at present. I should have thought that in every constituency there were private buildings which could be hired out for private meetings. Public buildings should not be available for that purpose, and the amendment goes some way towards making that clear.

Mr. Mellor: If I say, as I shall feel bound to do at the end, that I cannot accept the amendment, I want the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) to know from the outset that it is not because I do not have considerable sympathy with it and would be content, if some of the points that I raise could be met, to consider the matter again while the Bill is going through Parliament. I hope that I shall assist him by going through the arrangements as I understand them and setting out what I see to be the difficulty in his proposal.

What the hon. Gentleman raises is eminently proper and I share his sentiments about one or two meetings that have given rise to concern. As he knows, candidates at parliamentary, European Parliament and local government elections have in general a right to the free use of school rooms and other meeting rooms for the purpose of election meetings which are described in the statute as

"public meetings in furtherance of their candidature".

The only qualifications and limitations on that right are that meetings have to be held at reasonable times and on reasonable notice, and must not interfere with the use of a school for educational purposes or with prior lettings of the meeting room. The Bill does nothing to change the substance of the law.

We know that a number of disturbances were provoked in the 1970s by election meetings called by the National Front. A particularly appalling example was the Southall disorder in April 1979 which was the result of such a meeting. These meetings tended to be held in areas of high ethnic minority population and admission was limited to National Front supporters who for the most part were not electors in the division in which the meeting was being held but were bussed in from other areas. Having heard those facts, if someone says that this is damaging to respect for electoral law, far be it for me to dissent from that. Indeed, I do not dissent from it. The question is, what can we do about it?

The 1979 public order Green Paper included a question which was posed to obtain assistance from those who bothered to reply to us—whether it was right for the ratepayer to subsidise what were in effect private meetings from which local electors were excluded, and whether as a consequence the candidates' right to use any school or meeting room should be limited to take account of public order considerations. The Select Committee which reported on public order law in 1980 recommended that

"an appropriate legal formula should be devised"

to require a substantial proportion of the seats at an election meeting to be open to the public. The Select Committee recognised the difficulties that even at the best conducted public meetings which are genuinely intended to be open to the public some rowdyism is to be expected. Therefore, the Select Committee added a proviso to the effect that the candidates' stewards should retain the right to refuse entry at an election meeting to those intent on breaking it up and remove them if they gained entry.

The hon. Gentleman's proposal does not include any such equivocation and would make it difficult to keep order even at a proper meeting that did not fall under the umbrella. Indeed, it might be one of his own meetings to which National Front supporters or other people had come with the purpose of breaking it up. The hon. Gentleman must recognise that that would be the consequence.

The difficulty with these provisions is enforcement. The law explicitly allows candidates the free use of rooms only for public meetings, yet the question whether a meeting is a public meeting is a question of fact which can be determined only after the event. There are public order considerations which require that there should be a right

on the part of the organisers and, indeed, on the part of the police to refuse entry to such meetings and to act to eject people so as to maintain order. But those legitimate responses to normal meetings or to meetings which only a small minority wanted to make abnormal would be precluded by the amendment.

I have tried to set out the position as squarely as I can. If someone who is provoked by what I have said can come up with a formula that would enable us to exclude those meetings that, as it were, creep in as public meetings but in reality and substance were never intended to be public, without threatening the proper carrying on of legitimate public meetings which a small minority have to be prevented from trying to break up, I shall be glad to hear it. The amendment does not achieve that. It is on that basis that it is not acceptable. I invite the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the amendment, but we could come back to it later.

Mr. Winnick: If the Minister is telling the Committee that because of all the difficulties he has outlined he cannot come back on Report with a different wording, I will not withdraw the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to move amendment No. 95, in page 37, line 20, leave out '£10,000' and insert '£5,000'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 96, in page 37, line 23, leave out '£5,000' and insert '£2,500'.

No. 97, in page 37, line 27, leave out '£10,000' and insert '£5,000'.

No. 98, in page 37, line 30, leave out '£5,000' and insert '£2,500'.

Mr. Barron: Amendment No. 95 seeks to change the amount for security of costs for any action taken in court in relation to elections to bring it within the reach of the ordinary common man. The amount of £10,000 proposed for parliamentary elections is too high. The amendment seeks to bring it down to £5,000.

My hon. Friends and I also wish to reduce from £5,000 to £2,500 the security needed for local government elections. I understand the Government's wish to ensure that people do not initiate litigation for frivolous reasons at elections. In many instances elections are frivolous in themselves—as we can see when we look at some hon. Members who are in Committee. We should make sure that the amounts required as security are in the reach of ordinary people. The amounts proposed by the Government are far too high for the ordinary man or woman.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I fear that it is my view that both the Government and the Labour party have got it all wrong in relation to the amendments. A more far-reaching change in the law is required. By section 136 of the principal Act and by the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), both the Government and the Labour party appear to accept that it should remain possible for an election petition based on a corrupt or illegal practice to be brought as a civil proceeding; and for alternative proceedings to be taken by the Director of Public Prosecutions by way of a prosecution.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is sometimes extremely difficult to persuade the Director of Public Prosecutions to take action in these matters?

Mr. Carlile: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's point in due course, if he will bear with me.

The only issue between the Government and the Labour party in relation to this group of amendments is one of quantum. How much should be deposited by way of security for costs? The Government say £10,000 for a general election and £5,000 for a local election, and the Labour party says half of those figures. Of course, if inflation had been applied since the last time the figures were adjusted, they would be £14,200 for a general election and £7,100 for a local election. Therefore, in that sense both the Government and the Labour party have got their sums wrong anyway.

The Liberal party and the Social Democratic party oppose the principle of the provision and the amendment, because we consider that it has three fundamentally offensive features. The first is that something as potentially serious as a corrupt practice, corruption, or even as serious as an illegal practice, should be open to a merely civil action. The very word "corruption" speaks of its essence eloquently without needing elaboration. If corruption occurs at an election, proceedings should be taken through the criminal courts only, as the appropriate sanctions for the conduct surely fall within the criminal law.

The second fundamentally offensive feature is that alternative jurisdictions should be available; and that it should be a lottery as to whether a person is proceeded against by way of election petition, or by prosecution with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. If one looks at the Richmond GLC election case and at another case from the north-east which involved an hon. Member, one sees that, although the allegations that were made in the two cases were of the same general type, one proceeded by way of election petition and resulted in a massive bill of costs being faced by a candidate who was cleared of every corrupt practice alleged; whereas the other led to proceedings in the Crown court by way of a prosecution authorised by the Director of Public Prosecutions, resulting in a proper acquittal and an order for costs which did not leave the candidate involved in anything like as disadvantageous a position.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman is straying a little wide. The amendments deal with amounts. The hon. and learned Gentleman is now going wider into the principles involved.

Mr. Carlile: I was seeking to keep in order by making the point that I regard the amounts in the amendment as being quite wrong because the concept of setting a quantum for such proceedings is in itself wrong.

The third fundamentally offensive feature about the concept behind the amounts stated in the amendment is that it is wrong—I am surprised that the Labour party should accept it as a concept—that money should be the measure of whether an allegedly corrupt or illegal practice is to be considered by the court. Even if the amendment is accepted, if the Labour party is able to lay its hands on £5,000 of union money to present by way of security for costs so that it can bring an election petition, it can bring

[Mr. Carlile]

it; but if, as is the case in most areas, the Labour party cannot raise the £5,000, then however serious the corrupt practice of which it wishes to complain, it cannot bring it. That is an odd and unacceptable state of affairs.

6.45 pm

In accordance with the broad views of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils, I suggest that we should not be faced with choosing between the amounts set out alternatively by the Labour party, and the Government. Rather, we should have a single procedure whereby allegations of corrupt and illegal practice are brought to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions. As the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said, it is sometimes difficult to persuade the Director of Public Prosecutions to bring prosecutions, but that restraint is only right and proper. He rightly exercises his discretion carefully and authorises proceedings only in cases when he regards it as more than 50 per cent. likely that a conviction will result. That kind of restraint is needed in relation to election disputes.

Therefore, although I do not intend to force a Division on the amendment, I ask the Under-Secretary to reconsider the principle behind the provisions and realise that we should be talking not about amounts but about the whole cumbersome procedure of election petitions and whether it is right for that cumbersome procedure to continue.

I can speak of one episode from my own experience. I was once instructed to appear in a local election petition on behalf of, as it happens, the Labour councillor who was elected against whom a petition had been presented by another candidate. I saw it as a fantastically expensive, extremely elaborate, grossly wasteful and long-delayed procedure. My view is that the whole procedure of election petitions, often unmerited, which can take so much longer than the relatively simpler course of a criminal prosecution in appropriate circumstances, leads the post-electoral process into disrepute.

Mr. Bermingham: I listened with care to what the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said. He surprised me considerably because one would have thought that such an honourable and learned Member would know that there is a world of difference between an illegal practice leading to the presentation of an election petition and corruption. The two arms are needed. I agree that the corruption procedure is much speedier and less expensive to the party——

Mr. Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that corrupt practices should, in principle, be dealt with only by way of prosecution, and not by an election petition? That seems to be the import of what he said.

Mr. Bermingham: I agree that any corrupt practice in any election should be dealt with by way of criminal prosecution. I do not believe that any hon. Member would think otherwise. However, I know from experience that it is often the presentation of a petition and matters that arise from the examination of the petition that lead to the subsequent corruption trial or the subsequent trial for perjury.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be led astray. We are dealing with amounts.

Mr. Bermingham: I would hate you to think, Sir Paul, that my turning my back on you was in any way discourteous, but it allowed me to make my point to the hon. and learned Member. I shall now return immediately to the sums of money involved.

It is right that people should be able to present a petition against election practices. It is equally right for those who have stood for election, whether they were successful or not, to be protected from the utterly frivolous petition. The idea of security of costs is aimed at protecting against spurious and ill-founded allegations or petitions.

I concede that in this modern day and age £500 or £1,000 is no deterrent to the frivolous petition, but we need not go as far as the Government have gone in raising the limits to £5,000 and £10,000. That will eliminate a number of well-founded petitions brought by individuals, perhaps independent candidates, without any particular means. To tailor the limitation to take into account the discouragement of the frivolous and still leave it within the means of the honest and honourable petitioner would be a sensible compromise. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) in his amendment to reduce the sums to £5,000 and £2,500.

Dr. Marek *rose——*

Mr. Mellor: Let me save the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) from feeling the need to push at an open door. I understood him to realise that it is wide open and that I am accepting the amendments. I want to put hon. Members out of their misery before the hon. Gentleman makes a speech that might persuade me that I am wrong to do so.

Dr. Marek: The amendments are about right. This is a Government Bill. If the sum is too low, frivolous applications will be encouraged. One wants to keep it above that level.

Mr. Mellor: That ringing endorsement of the amendment will be welcome to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and it has not persuaded me that it is wrong. Therefore, I shall accept the amendments.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) knows, as was pointed out, that the arguments that he adduced go to the basic principle and are the result of his frustration that new clause 17, which would have given him the opportunity to dilate on those matters without objection, was not selected. I shall honour the fact that it was not selected and not be led into the path of disorder.

It is eminently appropriate that someone who does something as grave as bringing an election petition should have to show that he is capable of withstanding the consequences of failing in order to recompense the candidate who is brought before the court for his costs. To put up security for costs is eminently right, particularly given the recent example of the application in respect of the Penrith by-election, which showed us just how the procedures can be abused. There is nothing wrong with the principle, but the sum of £1,000 was fixed as long ago as 1868. I am surprised that the result of inflation since 1868 is only £14,000. The hon. and learned Gentleman's mathematics may not be as good as his law. I suspect that I may be right about that.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I could have got the figures wrong. It could be £142,000.

Mr. Mellor: It was a mere guess and speculation, as one should have anticipated from that Bench. In any event, the sum has not been increased since 1868. We are now doing so and I am sure that we are pleased about that. Perhaps in our zeal to increase the amount we might have gone too high. The eloquence of the hon. Member for Rother Valley has carried the day.

Will you grant me a moment's indulgence, Sir Paul? When I replied to amendment No. 79 late last night, in an anxiety to deal with the issue quickly I said something which may not have been completely accurate. I am writing to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) about it, but it might be appropriate to mention it now. I telescoped the argument and I should like to put the right position on the record.

The point related to the penalties for making a false declaration to become an overseas voter. I suggested that that was an offence under section 61 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 which was punishable as an illegal practice and the penalties would therefore include disqualification from voting. What I should have said was that the making of a false declaration would not be punishable under section 61, but it would need to be only if the result of the declaration was that the person got his vote and excercised it. That is the mischief. If he got his vote as a result of a false declaration and exercised it, that would be an illegal practice under section 61 and would be visited with the penalties which the hon. Gentleman wanted.

I hope that that explanation does not make the hon. Gentleman regret his withdrawal of the amendment. I am glad to have had the opportunity to put the record straight and I am grateful to you, Sir Paul, for your indulgence.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 96, in schedule 3, page 37, line 23, leave out '£5,000' and insert '£2,500'.

No. 97, in schedule 3, page 37, line 27, leave out '£10,000' and insert '£5,000'.

No. 98, in schedule 3, page 37, line 30, leave out '£5,000' and insert '£2,500'.—*[Mr. Barron.]*

Mr. Bermingham: I beg to move amendment No. 100, in schedule 3, page 38, line 40, after 'relief)', insert—

'*(a)* in subsection (1) the words "else if in respect of a payment made in contravention of section 78(1) or (2) above paragraph 1 of Schedule 4 to this Act" shall be omitted and

(b)'.

The amendment may seem complicated, but it effectively alters section 167 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 by deleting in the second line of section 167(1) the words "High Court" and substituting the words "County Court". The object of the exercise is to allow the applications for relief to be brought in the county court.

Before I go further, I thank the Minister for reading into the record the matters that he did. My view has not been altered. I accept the undertaking. I realise that the casting of the vote is the matter that causes the problem, and I am satisfied on that point.

A considerable number of agents are often amateurs and things can often happen in the heat of the preparation of the papers. It is certainly the case in all major parties that people who are not professional agents can make innocent mistakes when calculating election expenses, whether for a parliamentary or a local government election.

Applications for relief under section 167 have to be made in the High Court, which is an expensive procedure. In some cases, it is incredibly expensive. The amendment seeks to allow applications in respect of errors made in good faith — it is a prerequisite to show that the omission is not a criminal act — to be made in the county court where, in my experience, the quality of the judiciary is equally as great. The county court is well capable of dealing with such applications. It has always seemed strange that such applications have to be made in the High Court. The amendment merely seeks to allow those applications in future to be made in the county court.

Mr. Mellor: The position, as the hon. Gentleman has made clear, is that for the most part the jurisdiction is exclusively that of the High Court, and only some trivial applications for relief may be made to the county court. I understand that a number of applications under section 167 of the 1983 Act are made by candidates whose election publications have failed to include the name of the printer and publisher, and so on. Therefore, I understand why some of those should not involve going to the High Court, which is an expensive procedure.

My difficulty is that it is not easy to say from the outset what will be trivial. Even in the instance that I have given of omitting a mark, that may be a legitimate mistake for which relief could be granted immediately for literature that was otherwise perfectly well within the limits. But there are circumstances where one could envisage that a candidate, desperate to secure election or re-election, might ride a coach and horses through the restrictions on the amount of money that he could spend on publicity. He could publish a great deal of expensive literature without the proper mark and then not be entitled to relief, even though he would be applying on precisely the same basis as the individual who had left a mark off one piece of literature only.

We must recognise that illegal practices are potentially serious. Indeed, an election can be declared void if a candidate is found to have committed them. The danger of giving the county court jurisdiction over applications for relief is that it might well be asked to entertain, and perhaps grant, an application for relief while at the same time an election court, which has only a limited number of High Court judges, was considering the same issue on the trial of an election petition. That might well arise if the abuse were as wholesale as I have suggested.

7 pm

I am not anxious to involve people in any more difficulty than is absolutely necessary when dealing with inadvertence, but it is not easy, until one has heard the facts of the particular case, to separate out in rules what is inadvertence and what is perhaps more sinister. I believe that in order to preserve the gravity and seriousness of an illegal practice—since a bad case undermines the whole principle of free and democratic elections and is therefore treated very seriously by the courts—it is right for the High Court to retain this jurisdiction.

I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but we are strongly attached to the present arrangement.

Mr. Bermingham: I appreciate the point that the Minister is making. However, does he agree that there ought at least to be written into the rules—this could be done with no great difficulty — that the county court judge, who is a circuit judge since the new rearrangement, shall also have power to refuse to consider the matter further? These are men of great integrity. He then could

[Mr. Bermingham]

refer the matter to a judge of the High Court, and the normal procedures would have to apply. In other words, the relief he could give would be yes, no, or referral, in which case it would then pass on. In a case where what appeared to be a minor infringement gave rise to a much more serious matter, as I am sure the Minister is well aware, the judge would have the power to refer it either to a full election court or to the Director of Public Prosecutions, which of course is what happens.

Mr. Mellor: But the result would still be that a judge on a lower level of the judiciary than has customarily dealt with these matters would be being invited to exercise discretion that would be conclusive of the matter and might oust the jurisdiction of the High Court in a case which a High Court judge might have wished to consider had the matter been put before him.

Because we are dealing with technical matters and because we want good and common sense to govern these rules, I am always open, as the hon. Gentleman knows, for further application to be made. If the hon. Gentleman wants to set out in writing any more detailed points, there is time in the further progress of the Bill to consider them. But at the moment, for the reasons I have given, the Government are attached to the continuation of the rule whereby, save in only a very small number of trivial instances, jurisdiction to deal with illegal practices remains firmly vested in the High Court. I am sorry that I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any more satisfaction than that.

Mr. Bermingham: I propose to ask leave to withdraw the amendment at this stage, because, if I do not, I realise that subsequently I may not be able to bring it back. I shall take the opportunity offered by the Minister and write to him in the intervening period.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 55, in schedule 3, page 40, line 45, leave out 'desirable for publicising it' and insert

'best calculated to afford information to the voter'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No 56, in page 41, line 5, leave out 'desirable for publicising it' and insert

'best calculated to afford information to the voter.'

No. 94, in page 41, line 6, at end insert

'In the case of an election to fill a casual vacancy the returning officer shall also deliver a notice to those persons entitled to receive free copies of the electoral register under regulations issued by virtue of this Act.'.

Mr. Beith: Amendment No. 55 relates to the public notices which are displayed during an election by returning officers. The wording which I have proposed simply reinstates a bit of wording which was in the parent Act which the Government are amending. The reason for suggesting that we go back in part to the original wording is that I believe it is stronger than the Government's proposed wording. I believe it to be tighter as it places a more systematic demand upon the returning officer.

The words "desirable for publicising it" are extremely loose and subjective and allow for considerable difference of interpretation by returning officers. One might say that it was desirable to place a notice outside every church, chapel and public building, as is the traditional arrangement, while another might say it was no longer desirable to go to such lengths and that only a limited number of notices were required.

My proposal,

"best calculated to afford information to the voter,"

is more capable of objective test than the wording that the Government now propose. It is for that reason that I ask the Minister to consider changing the wording.

Mr. Mellor: I welcome you, Mr. Lamond, to the Chair of this Committee.

I take the point made by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). He wants to put back what appears in section 200(1) of the 1983 Act—wording that goes back to the 19th century. We thought that it was more appropriate to recognise the changes in circumstances that have occurred since it was first thought that the form of words to which the hon. Gentleman is attached should go into legislation. We believe that the electoral registration officer, as an experienced person, will have a view on the manner in which proper publication should be made and that, therefore, we should give him the discretion to do so. In effect, it is clear that in most cases he will use local newspapers for the additional publicity and that the scope for making a different decision is limited.

I am not persuaded that the hon. Gentleman has a point of substance in preferring the antique phraseology he wants to bring back to the simpler and, I think, better formulation that we have adopted of "desirable for publicising it". I do not think that there is a major difference between us, and I hope that it will not break the bonds of amicability that have characterised our relationship over the past two days.

Mr. Beith: This is the narrowest difference that has arisen between the Minister and myself in the course of these proceedings so far. However, I am not convinced by the general proposition that his current civil servants are better in their use of English than those who served his Department in the 19th century. Generally, the reverse appears to be the case. When I see the words on the amendment paper I am even more convinced. However, I have not convinced him or, I suspect, the armies that he could bring into the Lobbies were I to press the matter to a Division, so I will not do so. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. James Lamond): Owing to a misunderstanding, amendment No. 57 has been altered so that, as well as leaving out words, it now proposes to insert the word "tenth". Members will see that that would not make sense. I shall therefore allow the amendment to be moved in its original form—that is, to leave out the words

"10 at night on the".

The same applies to amendment No. 58.

Mr. Kaufman: I beg to move amendment No. 57, in page 41, line 38, leave out the words

'10 at night on the'.

The Temporary Chairman: It will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following amendments: No. 58, in page 41, line 39, leave out the words

'9 at night on the'.

No. 59, in page 41, line 42, leave out '10 at night'.

No. 60, in page 41, line 43, leave out '9 at night'.

Mr. Kaufman: I wish, first, to thank the Clerks for the assistance that they have given my hon. Friends and myself in ensuring that these amendments are in order and suitable for outright inclusion in the Bill, which is our objective, to which I hope the Government will be able to respond in a receptive manner, thus strengthening the bonds of unity and amicability which were slightly slackened before, but which can now be tautened to the maximum.

As the Government will know, this is one of the aspects of the Bill which, in its original form, most offended us in the Labour party and on which we were most determined to secure amelioration. It seems to us that at a general election, which may be held only once every five years, it is an absurdity that, for the convenience of polling staff and returning officers, an hour should be removed from the hours of polling. After all, one hour in five years does not seem to be a very great price to pay for democracy in return for perhaps a little additional fatigue on the part of returning officers and their staff.

There is no doubt that the provision to close the poll at 10 o'clock rather than 9 o'clock is of great importance to people who would not necessarily qualify for an absentee vote or who might not know until much nearer polling day that their working hours would interfere with their opportunity to vote. Shift workers and long-distance lorry drivers wishing to vote in person might be inconvenienced by such a limitation of polling hours.

Mr. Forth: The polling stations will still be open between 7 am and 9 pm. Is the right hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that some people cannot vote between those hours, but are able to do so between 9 pm and 10 pm?

Mr. Kaufman: Yes.

Mr. Forth: As polling stations will be open from 7 am, the right hon. Gentleman's argument loses much of its validity.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand the social habits of certain parts of the country, as anyone who represents or lives in a north of England constituency does.

Mr. Forth: I was born in Scotland.

Mr. Kaufman: Scotland cannot be blamed for that. I am referring to the social habits of the north of England, where I was born and part of which I represent. When we go round knocking on doors on polling day, many women say that they will not vote yet. They wait for their husbands to come home, have a bath, change their clothes and have their meal before going out to vote. Voting is a family occasion and many people in the north of England treat the act of exercising the franchise with the concern and respect that it deserves. The husband is the operative person in these family arrangements. If he comes home late, the wife may not be able to vote either. They may be unable to find a baby sitter. All kinds of problems may arise.

An election should not be about limiting people's opportunity to vote. It should expand the opportunities to vote within sensible limits. The additional hour until 10 pm has been available for a number of years and it is widely used. As I said at earlier stages of the Bill and in the debate on the White Paper, Dr. David Butler's survey showed that in the 1979 election 4 per cent. of the electorate voted between 9 pm and 10 pm. That one-hour period represents only 6·66 per cent. of the polling time available, so a 4 per cent. vote is not a bad proportion. Secondly, 4 per cent. is 1,250,000 people. It may be argued that if polling stations close at 9 pm some of those people may find a way to vote earlier. Nevertheless, all those people found the hour between 9 pm and 10 pm the most convenient for them. That being so, it seems gratuitious folly to take that hour away for the sake of tidiness or the convenience of polling officials. The opportunity to exercise the parliamentary franchise comes to each person on so few occasions in his or her lifetime as an adult citizen that to curtail it for no sensible reason is, in its way, an attack on democracy.

I very much hope that the Government will accept the amendment, to which the Labour party attaches great importance. We believe that the Bill will be vastly improved by the inclusion of this amendment and the consequential amendments which will complete it.

7.15 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I endorse all that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has said. When I supported the Bill as a whole on Second Reading, I found this aspect of it rather difficult to understand. When I first sought election in 1979, I stood in a constituency with a large proportion of shift workers. Shifts in the steel industry ended in the early or mid-evening, so a large number of votes were cast between 9 pm and 10 pm. People anxious to vote, come what may, might be prepared to suffer inconvenience to vote earlier, but the electoral system should not impose that necessity upon them. We should make it as convenient as possible for people to cast their votes. Some of my political opponents even suggested that the decision in the late 1960s to extend polling hours from 9 pm to 10 pm led to my winning my seat in 1979 because so many votes were cast in that last hour of polling. That is no reason to limit or to extend polling hours, but I believe that on this one day in every four or five years we should make things as convenient as possible for the electors rather than for the returning officers and their staff.

As a Member representing a constituency with the peculiar voting habits that prevail in the north of England, I endorse the view expressed by the right hon. Member for Gorton. He will no doubt agree that in his constituency, as in mine, only a small proportion of votes are cast before 6 pm or 7 pm and that the vast bulk of the votes in Manchester, and in the north-west and north-east generally, are cast from 6.30 pm onwards. It would be most helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister would accept the amendment.

Mr. Beith: I believe that we should retain the 10 pm finish, for many of the reasons given by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). Many people in my area are in precisely the position that he described. Women waiting for their husbands to come home from work cannot be certain at what time they will arrive. Drivers and building workers working away from home may leave home before 7 am and may be considerably delayed in the evening. The disadvantages to returning officers and candidates are simply not worth the discouragement and difficulty that would be placed in the way of those who wish to cast their votes later in the day. I believe that we should stick to the 10 pm finish.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: For a change, I support the Labour amendment. I see no reason to reduce polling hours. In Leicester people vote right up to 10 pm and it is important that they should continue to have that right. People working in the mines some distance away may leave home before 7 am. There are also many shift workers in the knitwear industry. I hope that the motive for the proposed change was not the wish of certain Members to get their results on television the same evening. I know that traditionally there is some competition and results from places like Torquay and Guildford are rushed to the screen as quickly as possible. That is not my aim. I entirely support the Opposition amendment which would allow everyone the right to vote at any time up to 10 pm on polling day.

Mr. Mellor: Historically speaking, the 9 o'clock end of polling time has much more tradition behind it. That was the position until 1969. The Speaker's Conference of 1965 to 1968 was very much in favour of retaining the hours then laid down, but the Government of the day insisted on an amendment to extend the hours to 10 o'clock. That has remained the situation. The Select Committee, no doubt persuaded by the evidence of Dr. Butler among others with regard to the 4 per cent. who voted in that last hour, considered that there was no party advantage either way. The Select Committee recommended that polling hours should be brought into line for parliamentary and local elections and should run from 7 am to 9 pm. Acting in good faith on the Select Committee's recommendations as representing an objective cross-party view, we decided to include this in the Bill. We were fortified in so doing by the fact that many of the people who voted in that last hour could vote between 7 am and 9 pm without great inconvenience. However, if they were to vote only in the last hour, the arrangements that we have made for absent voting could be applied to them without any difficulty.

As the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has said, he is much attached to this. In the spirit of amicability and partnership that has governed proceedings in consideration of the Bill, it would be churlish of me to refuse him this. I am therefore content to recommend that the Committee accepts the amendment.

Mr. Corbett: I apologise for the temporary absence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who has duties elsewhere in the House. I thank the Minister for what he has said. We attach great importance to this matter, and I am delighted that he has acknowledged that.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 58, in page 41, line 39, leave out the words '9 at night on the'.

No. 59, in page 41, line 42, leave out '10 at night'.

No. 60, in page 41, line 43, leave out '9 at night'.— *[Mr. Corbett.]*

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 61, in page 43, line 34, leave out

'YOU MAY VOTE FOR ONLY ONE CANDIDATE'

and insert

'VOTE FOR ONLY ONE CANDIDATE AND PUT NO OTHER MARK ON THE BALLOT PAPER, OTHERWISE YOUR VOTE MAY NOT BE COUNTED'.

The Temporary Chairman: With this we can discuss amendment No. 62, in page 43, line 39, leave out

'YOU MAY VOTE FOR ONLY ONE CANDIDATE'

and insert

'VOTE FOR ONLY ONE CANDIDATE, AND PUT NO OTHER MARK ON THE BALLOT PAPER, OTHERWISE YOUR VOTE MAY NOT BE COUNTED'.

Mr. Beith: The last time that the Minister and I disagreed on a form of words a couple of amendments back, it was a fine matter of judgment. However, in this instance, I think that the Government have got the wording seriously wrong to the extent that it would be misleading to leave the words on the ballot paper in the form that they now propose. As I understand it, the intention of the Government must be the quite reasonable one of explaining to voters that they have only one vote to cast and, as it says in the fuller words appearing in the guidance to voters, if they try to cast more than one vote their vote may well not be valid.

It must be the Minister's experience, as it is mine, that quite a lot of electors have the impression that they have more than one vote. Perhaps they have taken part in a local election in which there are two candidates or more and they have put two crosses on the ballot papers. Maybe they are pioneers of the single transferable vote and, as I have seen one or two people do in most elections, they have put numbers down on the ballot paper. Perhaps they have used the system in trade union elections or somewhere else. Certainly there are always some people who are confused on the point.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman presumably precludes any possibility of proportional representation in allowing people to cast only one vote for one candidate.

Mr. Beith: If the hon. Gentleman will wait until we consider a later amendment, he will find his curiosity satisfied.

It ought to be common ground in the Committee that, in whatever form the Bill finally emerges, the ballot paper must be intelligible to voters. As the Minister has said several times, the exercise of a franchise is a serious matter. People must have the opportunity to cast their votes in conditions that enable them to do so.

It is my well-founded suspicion that the Government have not the slightest intention of changing the voting system in the Bill but intend to continue with the present one. Should that be so, we should ensure that the instructions to the elector explain the matter properly to him. I ask the Minister not to treat the matter lightly because it can cause genuine confusion.

I wondered for a moment in my appraisal of the words

"You may vote for only one candidate"

whether I was taking a view based on my own experience of the English language, having been brought up in the dialect of Cheshire and living now in the rich dialect of Northumberland. I looked at the Oxford dictionary. I did not bother going to the fuller Oxford English dictionary, or even the shorter. Had I done so, I think that I would have had even greater variety. The Oxford paperback dictionary defines the word "may" in several ways: expressing possibility, "it may be true", or permission, "you may go", or wish, "long may she reign", or uncertainty, "whoever it may be". There is an enormous range of possibilities surrounding the word "may". In simpler more everyday terms, it is frequently used in a permissive sense rather than one directing that somebody should act in a particular way.

I am convinced that if the words

"You may vote for only one candidate"

appear on the ballot paper as now proposed, there will be more and not fewer electors who think that they have some choice in the matter and can vary what they put down. It must be for that reason, I think, that the guidance for voters is a great deal clearer and more explicit. That will contain the wording that I have sought to include in the amendment.

It is not part of my case to say that the amendment is the only way of resolving the problem. I hope that the Minister will concede that there is a real difficulty. I do not know how he uses the word "may" when he addresses his children at home, but I shall be very surprised if it is not at times used in a permissive sense rather than in a mandatory sense as he seeks to use it here. I plead with him to look again seriously at these words because, if he does not, he will cause more confusion than he started with.

Mr. Mellor: What the hon. Gentleman said about the word "may" I cannot help feeling was an unwelcome return to the chalk face of his previous incarnation because there was a bit of pedantry about it. With the greatest respect to him, if one says to somebody

"You may vote for only one candidate",

I do not think that that can be seen as an invitation to vote for two, three or four, or that more of them will do so. This is not to say that there is not a case for issuing further guidance in appropriate places.

I was wondering what the hon. Gentleman would say as he made his opening bid for attention by suggesting that the wording was seriously defective. When it all turned on the little word "may", I thought that his argument lost some credibility. However, it may be that I am getting churlish as the hours go on. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) is indicating agreement, which makes me even more resolved in my view that an outrageous proposition has been put before us.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) would have the ballot paper say

"You may vote for only one candidate and put no other mark on the ballot paper, otherwise your vote may not be counted".

There is limited space on the ballot paper. I think that those words, although correct in their proper place, are too many to put on the ballot paper. Having taken issue with the hon. Gentleman over his assault on the use of the word "may", I should say that on more general points the cloak of pedantry slips off and he is on better ground.

7.30 pm

We have become aware of the fact that the notice of guidance to voters displayed at every polling booth has the same appearance as it did 100 years ago. I do not know whether that makes it attractive to the hon. Gentleman, especially bearing in mind what he said in an earlier debate about antique language—however, I suspect not. No doubt he will support the new form, using simpler language, that will be displayed at future elections pursuant to some of the work that we have carried out. The words that he has suggested will be included. I hope that the newer and more attractive format will mean that the words are more heeded and noticed by people than had they been buried in the old form.

The hon. Gentleman knows that in each polling compartment appears the words

"The voter may vote for only one candidate"

in addition to a similar invitation on the ballot paper. If, to meet the hon. Gentleman's point, the words that he wants on the ballot paper should be the words in each polling compartment, and if he tabled an amendment to that effect on Report, I should be happy to accept it.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The Under-Secretary has gone part of the way towards meeting the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). It could be argued that if the words are good for the polling booth, they are good for the ballot paper.

I agree with the Minister that the suggested wording contains far too many words to print on the ballot paper and that they would not be read by the elector in that flurry of anxiety that accompanies the groping for the pencil on the end of the string. The Minister is right to insist that the additional part of the words proposed by the hon. Gentleman should be confined to the notice in the polling booth.

I do not know why the Minister is so insistent in his use of the word "may". In some voting circumstances that word is capable of a different meaning. It can mean that plumping is permitted. If we were electing a different kind of body from this, there might be a question whether or not the elector could plump. I do not know why there should be any objection to putting the words "Vote for one candidate only"—which is simple and unambiguous—at the bottom of the ballot paper. I thought that I detected a sign pass between the Minister and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. I hope that those words will appear before the House on Report and be accepted.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful for the intervention of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). I also welcome the Minister's comments. As we are in Committee, we can have a useful exchange of views and make useful progress. I am ready to concede that the number of words in the amendment is too many. I had the precise intention of relating what appears in the Bill as likely to be on the ballot paper to what I understood to be the Government's intention—and in no way was the Government's intention expressed more clearly than in the guidance to voters. I wished to draw the attention of hon. Members to what I believed to be a potential difference between what the Government were doing and what they intended.

The Minister must not throw around charges of pedantry. We are trying to design a form of words that people will understand, so we must ensure that the words are in a form that will be understood. If it is pedantic to ensure that Government forms and documents are intelligible to the people, I should be very happy to be a pedant. The Government have failed in their duty to do that on many occasions. I know that the Government are seeking to improve matters, and I am unhappy to see them making matters worse. The Minister made a useful suggestion about the wording that should appear in each booth at polling stations. I want to meet him on that by tabling an amendment on Report, which I hope will be accepted.

The right hon. Member for South Down has hit on the ideal solution to the problem of what should appear on the ballot paper. After all, most people read only the ballot paper. If we get rid of the ambiguous word "may" and give the instruction, "Vote for only one candidate", we will greatly improve the ballot paper while satisfying the Minister's criterion that there should not be too many

Mr. Forth: I should be pleased to give an example which affected politics in Germany and the rest of Europe. It is well known that the West German Government's obsession with the common agricultural policy and their unwillingness to reform it arose directly from the fact that a tiny minority party—the Liberals—held the agriculture portfolio for many years. Because they believed that their representation depended largely on the rural and agricultural vote, the Liberals refused to countenance any reform of the CAP. That is a classic example of the disproportionate effect of a proportional system.

Mr. Hogg: If my hon. Friend wants another example, he need look no further than Israel where the extreme religious parties influence the policy of the Likud to a wholly unacceptable extent.

Mr. Forth: If hon. Members bent their minds to it, they could come up with many examples of proportional systems producing difficulties such as instability, unrepresentativeness and not being understood by the electorate.

Mr. Johnston: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that our system, under which the Conservatives obtained 750,000 fewer votes and 58 more seats, is fair?

Mr. Forth: Yes. I am saying that we must look at all of the factors and weigh them up. Proponents of proportional systems are obsessed with the arithmetical reflection of votes in seats. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is fair."] It is not necessarily fair. It is an arithmetic point and there is no point in arguing about it. Our system scores highly on the comprehensibility of government. Proportional systems are poor on that and for stability and predictability.

However, the most damning feature of proportional systems is their tendency to produce coalition Governments. The Liberal party has lived through the Lib-Lab pact and suffered from it. I should have thought that Liberal Members would understand better the difficulties of coalition as, even now, Liberal Members have to look shamefacedly at what happened during that coalition. If they are offering an electoral system that would give nothing better than what we had under the Lib-Lab pact, they are deceiving themselves, the Committee and everyone else if they believe that it will receive serious support. For that reason, I am confident in suggesting that, although the Committee will reconsider that possibility this evening, it will inevitably come to the conclusion that a proportional system has no support in the country, and will not benefit the country, and for those reasons the Committee will reject it.

Mr. Winnick: This subject is one of the Liberals' hobby horses. Indeed, it may be the main one. There are others, such as site value rating, but certainly new clause 1 has brought Liberal Members into the Chamber. We have not seen them in such large numbers in Committee. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where were you this evening?"] I certainly know where I was. I was speaking and listening to debates on many clauses. The Liberal Chief Whip knows the position well.

8.30 pm

The present electoral system has its faults. I shall not argue that it is accurate and faultless. However, it is tried and tested, and far superior to the system with which the Liberals seek to replace it. One of its strengths is the way in which a Member of Parliament is linked to his constituency. No matter what system of proportional representation were adopted, that linkage would not remain the same. The link between an hon. Member and his constituents is important for both the Member of Parliament and those he represents here. Hon. Members hold constituency surgeries, and constituents know who their Member of Parliament is. If the hon. Member holding the surgery is not a person's Member of Parliament, he will pass the case on to the appropriate colleague.

Mr. Alton: Like the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), the hon. Gentleman is advancing arguments and then tilting at them and telling the Committee that those arguments are the reason why proportional representation will not work. The system of proportional representation that we advocate is based on multi-Member seats and single tranferable votes — we have made that case again and again to the electorate and during the debate this evening — and the linkage between the elector and the member of Parliament that the hon. Gentleman rightly said should be retained would be retained.

Mr. Winnick: The Committee is not likely to come to the conclusion that the present linkage between an hon. Member and his constituency will be maintained in quite the fashion that the hon. Gentleman suggested under a multi-Member constituency system. At present we have one hon. Member per constituency, about which the hon. Gentleman knows, although he does not believe in its retention.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): May I illustrate the breakage of that vital link between an electorate and its hon. Member by illustrating what happens in my old constituency of Antrim, South, which I and nine others represent in the Northern Ireland Assembly? When I hold my surgery and a constituent is departing, if he is truthful—many are not—he will say, "By the way, I have been to nine other surgeries." The Minister responsible will then reply to nine Members who have fed different aspects of the information to him. It is a complete muddle.

Mr. Winnick: I much appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's comments, which I certainly believe to be valid. There is no doubt that if the same system operated on the mainland, we would have a similar experience.

Mr. Beith: Does the hon. Gentleman think that the system should be abandoned in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Winnick: Northern Ireland is undoubtedly a unique case—*[Interruption.]* It would have been quite simple for me to bolster my argument by saying that I did not agree. Then Liberal Members would not have been able to ooh and aah. The nature and unique position of Northern Ireland, which fortunately does not apply to the mainland—and, I hope, never will—demands something different. I do not know why Liberal Members ooh and aah as though they are pleased at the position in Northern Ireland — [SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] Whatever line we take on Northern Ireland, that position causes all hon. Members anxiety, as it must do, including Liberal Members, I assume.

As the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire said, proportional representation would make it virtually impossible for any one party to form an Administration,

and coalition government would be permanent. When he said that, Liberal Members seemed extremely enthusiastic. Let there be no doubt that, in effect, they are saying that there should be permanent coalition government. Whatever the system of proportional representation, the Committee can reasonably conclude that after an election it would be virtually impossible, except in the most unique circumstances, for any one party to form a Government, and we all know what would then happen.

Mr. Johnston: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. The only country that operates proportional representation and where a majority Government have operated since the war is Sweden. Coalition Governments have operated in every other country in Western Europe that has a proportional representation system. In the hon. Gentleman's opinion, has that resulted in poor economic performance or bad administration?

Mr. Winnick: I am not in favour of coalition Governments, and I shall explain why. After an election in which no party has a majority, all the back-room intrigues would have to take place behind the electorate, and some sort of agreement would have to be reached to cobble together a Government. Sometimes it takes weeks before sufficient agreement can be reached to form a coalition Government. That happens in virtually every country that operates proportional representation, and it is the almost inevitable result of it.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. Does he agree that we have glaring examples of that in the so-called alliance party? The differences between Liberal Members and Social Democratic Members on many major issues of British policy are all too glaringly obvious. When the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) read a list of hon. Members who supported his ten-minute rule Bill, it included only Liberal Members, and not one Social Democrat.

Mr. Winnick: I do not know one Social Democratic Member who defected from the Labour party who urged on the Floor of the House a change to proportional representation. As in other matters, such as industrial relations, their present line is very different publicly from that which they took when they were Labour Members. After they defected they became, like Liberal Members, the most enthusiastic supporters of this proposed change in the electoral system.

I am not in favour of what I can only describe as the shabby and cynical deals and arrangements that inevitably occur when no party can form a Government after an election under the PR system. I was asked whether I approved of coalition Governments in Europe. It is interesting to recall the recent uproar, and rightly so, in Austria about the Defence Minister. All the details are not relevant at this moment, so I shall not go into them. However, after he did what he did in such a shameful manner—it is most unfortunate that he can retain his office—it was made clear, when calls were made for his resignation, that if he resigned, his party, which is included in the coalition, would walk out. Therefore, PR introduces that element of blackmail.

It is not just Austria. Let us take Israel. Apart from all the other matters, recently we have had the shameful experience of a person who is clearly a Nazi—I cannot see any distinction between other kinds of Nazis and the one who has been elected to the Israeli Parliament—winning a seat. Of course, Liberal Members say that that is a different form of proportional representation from the one that they want. However, it is a form of proportional representation. It is a system that allows a hate merchant to put across his point of view in the Israeli Parliament. The same is true in other countries, but fortunately to a more limited extent these days.

Israel's proportional representation system also permits blackmail by religious parties. Other parties have had to give way time and again to such behaviour, because it is impossible for any party in that country to form a majority Government on its own.

France has been given as an example. Fascists have been elected to the European Assembly. When the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire gave what happened in France as an illustration of the defects of proportional representation, Liberal Members said, "What is wrong with that? They were elected." No one denies that they were elected, but unfortunately France has an electoral system which allows hate merchants to be elected in such numbers.

Why change a well-tested electoral system for one which, apart from the other reasons that I have given, gives greater opportunities to the hate merchants who have been elected in France, Israel and in other countries? If Liberal Members are genuine, as I hope they are, whatever disagreements we may have, in our common detestation of Fascism, it is not a serious argument to say, "So what if the system is changed and some Fascists are elected? If they are elected, so be it." Is that all that we have learnt from our experience of the 20th century in Europe?

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman is putting up arguments which are self-defeating. The Liberals have already made it clear that they do not favour such a system. Does he accept that people can be elected under the first-past-the-post system whom he might describe as hate merchants? What about people like Mosley and some of the Members of the present House of Commons?

Mr. Winnick: I do not believe I am defeating my argument, but the hon. Gentleman has clearly defeated his. His interesting intervention is self-defeating. He said, "What about Mosley?" We should appreciate the common sense of the British people. Once Mosley left the party to which he unfortunately happened to belong at the time——

Mr. Forth: He belonged to the hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. Winnick: Yes, unfortunately he did belong to my party. I cannot deny the obvious. Before he belonged to my party he was however, in the Tory party — *[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen on the Liberal Benches should listen.

Mr. Alton: I am listening.

Mr. Winnick: Mosley was never in the House except as a Conservative or Labour Member. When he tried to form his own kind of Nazi movement——

Mr. Alton: Mosley was here.

Mr. Winnick: Mosley was not here after 1931. The strength of our electoral system is the very point about which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is misleading the Committee. Whatever the faults

[Mr. Winnick]

of our electoral system, it did not permit Mosley to come here after 1931. Is it not far more likely that if we had had the PR system in the 1930s Mosley would have stood a greater chance of being here? Presumably Liberal Members would have said, "If he were elected, so be it."

Mr. Alton: Under the system that my right hon. and hon. Friends are advocating, it is highly unlikely that Mosley would have been here if he had run under the type of colours ascribed to him by the hon. Member later in his political life. Under the present system people like him can be elected to the House. Is he saying that he does not regard any of the present hon. Members as being from the extremes of politics?

8.45 pm

Mr. Winnick: I was saying—the hon. Gentleman has not contradicted me—that Mosley was never elected to the House after he ceased to belong to one of the two main parties. Neither he nor his cohorts ever succeeded in having any of the blackshirts elected to Parliament. The National Front has not been able to secure Members, unlike the examples that I have given of France in the Euro-elections, Israel or one or two other countries.

Of course, it is possible under our present system for extreme racist organisations to win seats, but that is part of the argument that I was advancing in earlier debates about thresholds and other matters, to try and ensure that that does not happen.

I do not believe that any case has been made out for a change to a different type of electoral system. I can assure Liberal Members—if they are in any doubt—that no party is more keen than mine to relieve the country of the curse of this Government. We want to get the Government out, but we do not want to be bad losers and change the electoral rules because we happened to have lost two elections. We have sufficient confidence in ourselves and the country to be sure that we will have a different Government. When we can secure a majority we will be able to form an Administration on our own. The Conservative party succeeded in the last two elections and formed the Government. The answer is to ensure that we do not have a Tory Government elected next time.

This proposal would mean a change to a system that has all the defects that I have outlined. It would make it easier for the parties promoting race hatred to be elected and it would undoubtedly weaken the link between a Member of Parliament and his constituency. For all those reasons, I hope that the new clause will be voted down by a large majority.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Thank you for calling me, Mr. Lamond, in this cheap party political debate on new clause 1. It is clear that the new clause is a phoney way to try to promote the Liberals. I have listened, as I am sure you have, Mr. Lamond, to what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has said. I had been expecting massive Liberal party propaganda, but I have not heard it. All I have heard is, "We was robbed." That is the point that comes through clearly.

I must pick up the point made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). Unlike him, I am fully confident that the Conservatives will be returned with an even greater majority at the next election.

The arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed were phoney. I have agreed in the past with some of the points that he has made. I am disappointed that the consensus in the Committee this evening has been thrown suddenly into a panic by Liberal Members appearing in their droves. They have not been in the Chamber for much of the debate. There are many more present now compared with earlier.

After considering the new clause carefully, as we all have, I see no description of the rules that the Liberal party wants to see played. It has not recommended an electoral system. If it is to be the single transferable vote, everyone's second choice will be the result. Such a system brings about an indecisive Government. What kind of an electoral system is that? Conservatives will vote first for a Conservative, second for a Liberal and third for Labour. A Labour supporter will vote Labour first, Liberal second and Conservative third. A Liberal would obviously vote Liberal first. The Liberals would come out as everyone's second choice because the other two parties are not too bad. That does not seem the right way to control or help a Government. It does not bring about a clear result.

Who would be the real Member of Parliament after such an election? Will there be a regional list with no direct connection between the newly elected Member and his constituents in the region?

In Israel they do not have constituencies. When the Likud Government was in power the Members did not feel that it was necessary to vote when there were divisions in the Knesset because they were not answerable to anyone. The National Front and the British National party together in the 1983 election got about 41,500 votes. Under PR that would have given them a number of seats in the House. I do not want extremists here under any circumstances. The Liberal party is trying to create a dangerous precident, but it is not on.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that under the single transferable vote system, which was advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), the National Front and the British National party would not have won even one seat? I think that the hon. Gentleman was present when my hon. Friend was speaking. Did he not hear my hon. Friend say that he was advocating an STV system? Does he not understand the difference between STV and a regional list?

Mr. Bruinvels: I have been in the Chamber throughout the debate, which is more than the Liberal Members have been; most of them have not been here at all. I understand the system. This new clause does not explain the procedure that the Liberal party wants. It is a disgraceful clause.

In regard to the danger of coalition Governments, which could be the result, I can quote Israel, Italy, West Germany and France. All those four countries have suffered greatly the abuse of the little parties trying to tell the big parties what to do; to a great extent, they control the big parties. We do not want to see any party in government dictated to by other parties.

Mr. William Powell: Particularly small ones.

Mr. Bruinvels: Particularly small ones, as my hon. Friend says.

The Committee should look to the European Assembly and take warning that proportional representation could be

not too far off. That worries me greatly; I am sure that it worries many hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. One of the daft ideas of the European Assembly is that there should be a common system of voting. As most of the other member states of Europe have a PR system, there is a risk that it could come into force here. I will oppose it with all the force I can, as I am sure most hon. Members will. In this country we have our own system and our own ways of working and we will not be told by Europe what to do.

We have the example of the proportional representation system in Northern Ireland in the recent Euro election. The Members with a dual mandate are not even here. The system has not worked and it is not a good one, as the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) confirmed earlier.

When the Liberals and the SDP get together they can be effective, even with their number of 23 which they very occasionally muster in full. When they have had those 23, plus the hon. Member who got in at the Portsmouth, South by-election, they have delayed the proceedings of the House, as they are trying to do now. They have spoken from the Dispatch Box, they have submitted many amendments to Bills and they have a large say in the running of the House. I have never heard them complaining about that. I have seen them taking the greatest possible advantage of our system.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to the lack of women Members in the Liberal representation in the House. I made a quick check to see how many women were put up as candidates by the Liberal party at the last election. It put up 32, the Conservative party put up 40 and the Labour party put up 78. The Liberals have one or two safe seats, particularly Truro. If they want to hand it over to the wife of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), that might be a solution.

Let us consider how the votes were cast at the last election. The Conservatives got 13,012,316; the Labour party got 8,456,934; and the Liberal-SDP alliance got 7,780,949. The Liberals were prepared to fight that election. They have contested elections for many years and have never complained about the system. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]. I should have thought that they would have preferred to say that they would not fight elections because they did not think the system was fair.

Let us consider the policies that the parties put forward. The Conservative party looks for a property-owning society, proper defence and law and order. The Labour party looks for more nationalisation, more public expenditure and no nuclear deterrent. We do not know what policy the Liberals and the SDP have because they do not always agree. That is why they are not getting more seats and more votes. That is where they have gone wrong.

It is interesting to note that the new clause has been tabled first in the name of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and that the second name is that of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). Now we know who is running the alliance.

At the turn of the century the Liberals did extremely well at all elections. They kept winning and had mammoth majorities. They did not complain about the system then. I am told that Lloyd George was a good Prime Minister. At that time they did not want women to stand for Parliament.

If we move forward to February 1974 when the Conservative party lost the general election, we had 297 seats, the Labour party had 301 and the Liberals had 14. They could have controlled the Government of the day. They were offered the chance of power. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and Jeremy Thorpe met to discuss the matter and Jeremy Thorpe ducked out of the deal. The Liberals shied away from taking the power that they are now calling for. Then they had the opportunity of gaining experience of ministerial responsibility. If they had taken the opportunity then, they might have had more seats today because they could have said that they had had control and knew how to run the Government.

The then Liberal party joined with the Labour party and propped up the Government of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) for years on policies of extreme Socialism, with no disrespect to some Labour Members. The Liberal voters had not voted for those policies. Presumably those out in the sticks had voted for a Liberal Government, but the policies on which Liberal Members supported the Labour party were nothing like what Liberal voters had wanted. They let their voters down.

Where are the chances for the Liberal party? It had its opportunity and did not take it. When it has real policies, it will deserve the power for which it is calling today. Real power will come only with real policies. As it stands, the new clause would mean that power would be given to people with no real policies. That would defeat the electoral system. The new clause is a farce and should not be accepted.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I should like to speak in support of the powerful case made by my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), for two reasons. First, despite what the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) has just said, and despite what others have said in the debate, a fundamental principle is involved. It is simply that the number of representatives in the House and in any other elected chamber should broadly reflect the proportion of votes cast for their parties at the election. Under the present voting system that fundamental principle is not being upheld.

When the broad majority of the electorate supported the Conservative party and the Labour party in the 1950s and early 1960s, the House was broadly representative of the proportion of votes cast for those parties. That is no longer the case. It is wrong that not only in the elections to this Chamber but in elections to other chambers around the country that fundamental principle is being breached.

9 pm

That leads to the other important argument in favour of a system of proportional representation, which is that if we have that system, we then have minority Governments and minority councils in proportion to the votes cast by the electorate. This is a minority Government. It is not supported by well over 50 per cent, of the electorate. The previous Government before 1979 were not supported by an even more substantial proportion of the electorate. That inevitably leads to bad government by parties which do not reflect the views of the majority of the electorate. Those who have spoken against coalitions might dwell for a moment on that point.

[Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth]

Surely it is fairer and better for the country that we have Governments who represent the views of a majority of the people. The compromises that are necessary in a coalition Government lead to the Government pursuing policies which represent the views of the majority of the electorate. Although we would not advocate the system that is now in operation in Israel, one could clearly claim that the present Government in Israel, who represent a substantial majority of the people of Israel, are working effectively for that country and pulling it out of the difficulties in which it found itself before that Government took office.

There are other practical points that hon. Members should consider. Some conservative, dyed-in-the-wool remarks are being made by both Labour and Conservative Members, which demonstrate that they have not thought through the system proposed in the new clause. For example, there is the matter of the ties between the Member and his constituency. Of course, the links between a Member and the constituency are a bit of a farce anyway. For instance, I represent half of Stockton-on-Tees. The boundary of the constituency runs right through the middle of the high street, so that one side of the street is represented by one Member of Parliament, and the other by the second Member of Parliament. The boundary runs through the middle of the runway of Teesside airport. Half the airport is represented by one Member of Parliament and half by myself.

What is the community of interest if I can say that half a street is in my constituency? When there is a closure of a factory in the Teesside area, my constituents are affected, as well as others in Stockton, North and Middlesbrough, which is in part of my constituency. No community of interest is represented by the artificial boundaries that happen to be drawn up. I have experienced three sets of boundaries over 12 years in my area, which I have sought to represent. It makes no sense to say that a constituency has a mythological link with the Member of Parliament.

My constituents work in Imperial Chemical Industries and British Steel, miles away from my constituency. Their interests are determined by what is happening to those industries in other people's constituencies. When there is a closure of a plant in which thousands of my electorate work in another constituency, of course I take it up with the firm, even though the plant is not situated in my constituency. It would make much more sense if we had one constituency—as, indeed, our proposals suggest—for the community in each area and a number of Members of Parliament representing that constituency, so that the true interests of that constituency could be represented by those Members.

In addition, that would provide constituents with the possibility of voting for Members of Parliament from different parties, or, indeed, from different shades of different parties. There is a tremendous difference between the views of the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on the far Left of the Labour party, and the views of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) who is on the so-called Right wing of the Labour party. There is as much difference between those two views as there is between the views of Conservative and Labour Members.

It would be much better if the electorate in the Teesside area were able to vote for the different shades of opinion of Members in the Labour, Liberal, Social Democratic and Conservative parties and exercise their preference in that way. They could go to whichever Member they preferred if they had a problem or issue to raise, as they do in the wards which are represented by more than one member on councils in multi-member wards all over the country.

Mr. Bermingham: I have listened most carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said. How would the communities in new clause 1 be drawn and by what method would the new clause be put into effect, particularly bearing in mind the considerable power that seems to be put into the hands of the Secretary of State? By tradition, boundary commissions, whether we like them or not—the hon. Gentleman and I may well have the same views about how boundary commissions work—have at least had some semblance of independence.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: We made clear and specific proposals in the joint commission report which the Social Democratic and Liberal parties published before the election and in the election manifesto. If hon. Members are interested, we shall be only too pleased to sell them copies of both so that they can read the proposals in detail.

Let me briefly tell the hon. Gentleman that we proposed communities which are multi-Member constituencies which represent real communities, without artificial boundaries. Considerable detail was given. Obviously those boundaries would have to be drawn up in the same way as the present boundaries are drawn up by an independent body. Clearly, such a system would not be introduced without consultation, a Speaker's Conference and the normal procedure that is gone through.

That system of STV, with multi-Member constituencies around communities, would provide the accurate representation of the parties in this place which we think necessary. It would also retain the links between the community and hon. Members and provide a compromise, with a total national list system which would give an accurate representation of the number of votes cast for each party. There are other ways of achieving that, as in Germany——

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East) *rose*——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: No, I must not give way because many other hon. Members want to speak. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to explain his case in a moment.

I simply want to add my voice in support of the clause. It would give a fairer system of representation in the House and better government in Britain. A tremendous number of myths are paraded around—we have heard quite a number of them in this debate—about the operation of systems in other countries. If we had had the same success as most of our partners in the EC——

Mr. Barron: And in Italy.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Yes, and in Italy. If our economy had been as successful as Italy's in the past few years, the hon. Gentleman would have something to crow about.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech in his own time.

We must ignore the myths about the operation of proportional representation in other countries, and we must also ignore the myths which are then erected for the

variety of systems which other people suggest, which are not the systems which we have suggested for this country. We hear all those cockshies about extremists being elected, when in fact extremists in both the Labour and Conservative parties are sitting in this place at present, masquerading under the labels of those parties, whose views are as extreme, if not more so in some cases than those of organisations which most civilised people in Britain would have nothing to do with.

Let us have nothing to do with these myths that are erected. Let us look at the facts and support the amendment, which would give us much better government in this country and also much fairer representation for the electorate in the House of Commons.

Mr. William Powell: The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) has tried to make the best of what, alas, is a very bad case indeed. I understand that his occupation before he came to the House was that of research officer. It is perfectly apparent that he has not researched history. If he had done so, he would have a deeper understanding of what the function of the House and of Parliament is and realise that the proposal which has been put forward is designed to undermine the entire history and development of our Parliament.

An argument can be made, but let us be perfectly plain that this is what is intended, and before we go down that path we must be very careful and think long and hard about its implications. If the hon. Gentleman had his way it would be necessary for this Chamber to be stripped and redesigned so that it looked like a European Assembly chamber, in a horseshoe shape, because it would simply not be possible to accommodate within the design and structure of this House the representatives of the different parties which would emerge.

We are the trustees of our past which we must hand on for the future. The hon. Gentleman says that it is a fundamental principle that membership of the House should reflect the proportion of votes cast for individual parties at the preceding election. I could not agree with him less. He is wrong about that. He asserts that as a principle but it is utterly unhistorical. I hope that in 500 years, when our successors look back upon these days, they will still recognise it to be unhistorical. Certainly to try to make the change which is proposed on that basis, which really has nothing to do with the constitutional history of our country, is a travesty, and I hope that the House will quite unhesitatingly reject it.

The hon. Gentleman and members of his joint parties try to ascribe the difficulties this country has had to face in the last generation to the absence of proportional representation in the conduct of our elections. That is the most preposterous argument I have heard in a long time. If it is to be asserted that, if we change the electoral system, with a wave of the wand all our troubles will disappear, he must not expect anybody to take him seriously or believe for a moment that we think that even he is convinced by that kind of argument. It could not be more false. The fact is that we have to grapple with our problems in the context in which we are operating. If we try to change the context, we shall still be left with the problems and no progress will be made.

What is proposed in this new clause is a new method of fudging our problems. It is fundamental to the hon. Gentleman's party's policy in most areas that a fudge is the best solution. Its members can argue that course. Let them go openly to the electors and say, "We want a fudge. Vote for us and we will fudge." The electorate can then decide on that proposition.

If that is the way that the hon. Gentleman wishes matters to be conducted in the future, I must say that it is not a sensible way to proceed. Our elections in this country are and always have been designed—certainly since the abolition of dual-Member constituencies, but allowing for that exception going right back into our history—for the election of an individual Member to represent all his constituents. I assert as loud and long as I can that I represent all the electors in my constituency and I hope that I shall continue to do so without fear or favour. I could not care less whether they support the Conservative party, the Labour party, the Liberal party or the Ecology party. They are entitled to individual treatment and representation. That is the historical principle on which the House is elected and, I hope, always will be elected.

9.15 pm

Mr. James Nicholson (Newry and Armagh): Does the hon. Gentleman extend that principle to all elections in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Powell: I do indeed. When delegated legislation was introduced to apply proportional representation to European Assembly elections in Northern Ireland, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and I had the rare privilege of joining Northern Ireland Members to vote against that proposal. I see no reason why Northern Ireland Members should not be elected on the same indivisible basis as Members from the rest of the country. I am confident that every Northern Ireland Member has the same uncompromising attitude to all his constituents as have Members from the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Johnston: The hon. Gentleman is confusing two important matters. He is quite right in saying that a Member seeks to represent and deal with the problems of all his constituents irrespective of party, but his constituents also have an interest in the policy pursued by the Government and if a large proportion of them are denied any influence on that it reflects badly on democracy.

Mr. Powell: I cannot accept that contention. Constituents of mine who do not agree with proposals that I support may lobby me and write to me and I make representations to Government Departments on their behalf. I am happy to represent their views in every way that I can. At the end of the day, I have to answer to my constituents. If they do not like the way in which I have done my job, they are entitled to vote against me at the next election. They can judge me on my performance. That is how it has always been.

I see no reason to change a fundamental principle on which our parliamentary system is based because the Liberals and Social Democrats did rather better in the last election than they did on previous occasions. There is no reason why we should change our electoral system just to suit them. I may be wrong, but I believe that our political system is going through a period of transition. There have been other periods of transition in the past. The conjunction of the Liberals and Social Democrats—the alliance, as it has hitherto been called — may well become the second or even the first party in the state. If

[Mr. Powell]

that is what the electorate wishes, I do not see why we should compromise that possibility by bringing in a new electoral system which would create a permanent veto on prospective changes in policy for a party rapidly being reduced to third place in the nation — the official Opposition, as it is now described. If such a system of change is taking place, it does not justify the change in our electoral system. Our system has worked well down the centuries.

Once upon a time the official Opposition were the third party. In those days they favoured proportional representation. When they became the second party and then the first party, they realised that there was good sense and firm historical basis for the system which was then in operation, the system which we still have. I know that Members who represent the Liberals and the SDP up and down the country extol the virtues of a proportional system of representation. But, in my judgment—and people can make of this what they will—if in due course they become the first party and then the second party in the state, they will not still be proposing proportional representation.

The argument for proportional representation is historical nonsense and a sham, and it deserves to be exposed for the nonsense that it is.

Mr. William Ross: I have not been present in all the debates, but I attended a considerable number yesterday and some today. One of the points that pleased me and hon. Members on this Bench in those debates was the evident willingness of the Government and Opposition Benches to extend parity throughout the United Kingdom. That of course includes Northern Ireland. One is grateful that both Front Benches and, indeed, both major parties in Parliament, should come to the conclusion that the electoral system should be the same throughout the United Kingdom.

Listening to the debate and hearing the exposure of the absurdity embodied in the proposed new clause, one discerns the slow learning process in regard to proportional representation coming to full flower, except on the Benches of those hon. Members who support the proposed new clause.

If there is a party in Parliament that understands proportional representation and its shortcomings, it is the party of hon. Members who sit on this Bench. We are the only Members present in the Committee who have fought elections under proportional representation, who have won elections under proportional representation and who have represented people under that system. Therefore, the only real experts present in the Committee, made so by experience, are the hon. Members who sit on this Bench.

The Liberal spokesmen have talked about the STV system, but the new clause mentions that not at all. It has merely emerged in debate that that is the system that they desire. However, they have made it clear in discussing proportional representation that it is the single transferrable vote system that they wish to come into operation. It is also clear from the proposed new clause that they would seek the periodic expiry of the order bringing that system into operation. The truth is that, unless there was a party with an overall majority in Parliament that was against proportional representation, we would be going through a one-way choke point: once one has it, one will never get rid of it, and one will be stuck with it for ever. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Gentlemen say, "Hear, hear." However, if they are as willing to learn as many other hon. Members, by the time that I have finished and exposed to them the weakness and foolishness of their case, they may not be so ready to say, "Hear, hear," but will hang their heads in shame for having been so grossly misled for such a long time.

I listened with care to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who was so unwilling to give way. If he had given way, I would have asked him to tell us how many seats—[HON. MEMBERS: "He has gone."] I know that the hon. Gentleman has departed, having made his speech, but his hon. Friends are present and no doubt if they catch your eye, Mr. Armstrong, they will be able to answer the question that I put to the hon. Gentleman and to the party of which he is a member. The question that the Liberal party must answer tonight is, how many seats does it see in each multi-Member constituency. It has not revealed that critical point. Having thought about this matter for so many years, it must now be able to answer that point. It will then show how small a minority it wants to make a fulcrum of power in the Chamber.

I have been elected to a local council under the PR system. It is a system that I detest; I have never seen any good in it. It is a divisive and dangerous system. It is foolish to believe that it has anything to offer to good government in this country.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will my hon. Friend deal with the line adopted by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who spoke about mythological boundaries and how the larger constituency provided under PR would make a community of interests? I represent a constituency in another place under the PR system, and I believe that it is a false division that would be parlous for the nation.

Mr. Ross: I shall come later to my hon. Friend's point. When I began to compose this speech, I tried to make it as simple and as short as possible. As the debate has proceeded and as many foolish views have been put forward, I have added to it. I cannot allow the foolishness to pass simply because others do not have the experience to deal with it.

Mr. Johnston: I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman can stand there and say openly and brashly that all of western Europe is mad and foolish for having PR and that only Britain is wise.

Mr. Ross: I will not deal with western Europe as a whole, but only with the one country with which we should all be familiar and which has PR, the single transferable vote system. I refer to the Irish Republic, which time and again has tried to get rid of that system and failed. The people who have lived with that system have recognised its shortcomings.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is dangerous to look at precedents in western Europe because the major nation on the Continent prohibits parties with less than 5 per cent. of the poll from having any members elected? That is certainly a threat to the Liberal party.

Mr. Ross: That is an interesting point, and I have no doubt that the Liberal party will reflect on it. Perhaps it should also reflect on the fact that, when talking about

minorities and extremists being elected, it forgets a very simple matter—once we have the PR system, we are not in the same political world. We will have passed into a wholly different set of circumstances and rules. The number of electors giving their votes for different parties will not be the same. The extremists will increase in number. That is the inevitable result of PR. Every country that we study closely knows that fact, unless it is so minded in its own attitude and so isolated from the mainstream of politics that the normal pressures of international politics do not impinge upon it. When there is PR, it is the extremists who always increase their vote.

9.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ross: I have already given way quite a lot, but I shall give way again.

Mr. Hughes: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that it is often better that extremists should appear under their own colours and stand for parties that properly represent their views than that they should hide under the colours of another party so that they conceal what they really stand for? That is what happens when there are fewer parties and when there is no proportional representation. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman was as much aware in Northern Ireland of that serious consideration as I am in England.

Mr. Ross: Whenever extremists stand under the colours of a major party and so conceal their true natures, we find that their opportunities for wickedness are diminished, because they are subject to party discipline. All major parties, especially those in this House, know that that discipline is much stronger than the Liberals seem to realise.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that he wanted the National Front to stand in order to show how small support for it was. Yesterday, the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) pointed out that 15 candidates lost their deposits at the Chesterfield by-election. Thus, 15 parties had only a few votes cast for them. However, I have not found out exactly how many votes were cast.

Let us consider how the system of STV works in practice. I have with me the results of the district council elections for Northern Ireland in 1981. In Coleraine, in my constituency, the chairman of the Democratic Unionist party obtained 3,203 votes, and his fellow runner obtained 69 votes. Both of them were elected. That is STV in action. It seems ridiculous, but the record is available to those right hon. and hon. Members who wish to examine it. Perhaps they should all do so in some detail.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed and his colleagues supported the introduction of proportional representation in Northern Ireland. It is used for the Assembly elections, for the European elections and for council elections. Just before Christmas the same party tripped through the Division Lobby with the Government on Northern Ireland election orders and so helped to enact a law that was designed to stop Sinn Fein from obtaining any more support. But it is clear to those of us who live in Northern Ireland that Sinn Fein would not have its launching pad, if it had not been for the introduction of proportional representation. That shoots down the speech made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who defended the use of the system in Northern Ireland. The plain truth is that Sinn Fein's success in Ulster is proof that that system helps the more extreme parties——

Mr. Simon Hughes: Gerry Adams.

Mr. Ross: Gerry Adams obtained a minority of the total vote. But he gained a launching pad because of the votes that he had obtained earlier in west Belfast under the PR system. He had to get a start somewhere. He would not have got anywhere against Gerry Fitt had he been starting cold. He got a launching pad, took off and succeeded.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I recall being in a television studio when, in the last election, the result for Belfast, West came through. It was clear that the much respected former Member for that constituency, who was not elected, would have won the seat under a system of proportional representation, as opposed to the present hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams) who was elected on a minority of the votes.

Mr. Ross: By his intervention, the hon. Gentleman demonstrates his lack of understanding of the system. That seat would not have existed in its present form under PR.

Rev. Martin Smyth: It might refresh my hon. Friend's memory if I recall that in a subsequent by-election for the city council in that constituency, the SDLP, then the party of the former Member for Belfast, West, was eliminated. In other words, one cannot deduce that, had it been a PR election, Gerry Fitt would have won. As my hon. Friend pointed out, under PR a launching pad is given to extremists.

Mr. Ross: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for making that point, and I shall return to that aspect of the problem.

Reference has been made to the system in France. I may be wrong, but I believe that the system there is not proportional representation in any true sense of the term. It is a system of exhaustive voting under which the candidate who gets 51 per cent. of the votes is elected. That is not a good system because it creates the worst factors of the STV system. It allows everyone to stand, to bring their divisiveness and extremism before the electorate and to build on it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Gentleman explain how, under the French system, extremism is allowed to surface if, as is the case, after the first ballot those candidates are dropped from the ballot paper?

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman is forgetting human nature. It is the desire of every minority grouping to get a place in the chamber or assembly to which it is seeking election so as to be in a position to express its view to a wider public.

At election time, all the small groups have an opportunity to seek election. They can put forward their views by dividing their general grouping in society. They can thereby test the water, discover where their strength lies and build on that at a future time, perhaps in slightly different places. Under PR, a minority which gets a quota, gets a representative elected. Groups of which the Liberal party do not approve—such as the National Front—are elected.

In an eight-seat constituency one need receive only one ninth of the vote. In a seven-seat constituency, one need

[Mr. Ross]

receive only one eighth of the votes in theory, but in fact one needs considerably fewer votes. In such a case there would be an enormous number of splinter parties. It would be Chesterfield all over again, but much worse. The votes for all those small groups would be taken into account whenever the quota was decided. Even if the votes for those groups disappeared, the quota for the seats would be much less. It is possible in a seven-seat constituency for a person who receives an eighth or ninth of the votes to get himself elected. This has happened repeatedly in Northern Ireland elections. It will always happen under a proportional representation sysem.

In certain circumstances the PR system gives a person with a small minority the power to make or break a Government. That could happen even in as large an establishment as the House of Commons. The system gives power to a minority to dictate Government policy.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said that he would like the system to operate in local government because it would prevent the majority party from putting its policies into action. That is the only construction I can put on what he said. I believe that he said that no party could form a majority.

Mr. Beith: I have been misunderstood. On several occasions I have said that, under a reformed system, a party would not have indefinitely almost all the seats on a local authority council when it did not enjoy a commensurate level of support from the voters.

Mr. Ross: That would not mean any change in the political control of that particular council, because, if any party is so strong that it can win nearly all the seats under the first-past-the-post system, it will almost certainly form a majority under the proportional representation system. Therefore, that party will be able to put its policies into action. The use of proportional representational would have no real effect on it.

If there is no overall party majority, there will be demands for deals. Hidden deals will be done. Because no party has a majority, deals must be done. That means that there will always be a coalition. I suspect that a coalition in the House of Commons would always have to include one of the larger of the small parties. One party would always have a toe in the Government door and the two large parties would alternate in government, depending on the type of deal they were prepared to offer to the minority.

Mr. Wigley: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one of the great needs of local government is to have an effective opposition as well as a switch between governing parties? The danger in those areas that have one-party control is that there is no effective opposition. There needs to be a change of system to get such opposition.

Mr. Ross: In my experience, when there is overwhelming one-party control, the majority party contains a large number of different strands of thought and opposition tends to rise within the party. The party's policy then changes. If it does not change, it is up to the electorate to change it. After all, the electorate are our masters. If they decided to go on with one-party rule, that is their affair, and I see no reason for complaint.

The question of the number of representatives has been raised a number of times today. If there are about seven or eight — usually about seven is the maximum — representatives for a constituency, the electorate will travel around from one person to another, as my right hon. Friend the Member from Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) has illustrated. The electorate is extremely large and because at least seven-eighths of the members of the electorate can turn to a member of the party that they personally support, the cohesion that should exist in any constituency is destroyed.

9.45 pm

The situation is divisive. Whenever a small group of people find that they have managed to get a candidate elected, they immediately start yelling their heads off at everyone else in order to get a few more people elected. That is the reason why people go into politics. They want to get control of the body in which they have representatives. It is simply a matter of using the position and the personality of the various members elected to try to gain control.

Proportional representation is a fudge. It has been disastrous in Northern Ireland. It would do the House no good. We should never accept it here, and I hope to see it ended in Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

Mr. Barron: I want briefly to take up one or two comments that have been repeated in successive speeches.

New clause 1 ducks the issue. It tries to cloud the important principle that was put by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who has now left the Chamber again. The alliance parties seem to be saying that, because they received a lot of votes at the general election, they should have more seats. That seems to be the only principle that they are prepared to debate. New clause 1 does not attempt to present proportional representation in any practical manner or to approach the problem of how it would affect hon. Members or, more importantly, the electorate of Great Britain. The alliance Members have done both themselves, and the proponents of proportional representation in the country, a great disservice by ducking the issue of debating specific points.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) seem to suggest that what they really wanted to debate was the findings of the joint commission. I assume that the joint commission was a commission of the Social Democratic and the Liberal parties. We would have been pleased to be told in detail about that joint commission. As many hon. Members know, joint commissions do not always see eye to eye as far as the policies of the respective parties are concerned. It may be that there is agreement in this case, but it is a great pity that the alliance lacked the political sense to present the findings in a form in which they could be debated, so that we could have considered the effect upon our electoral system. As they did not, I shall not support new clause 1.

In many ways, my heart goes out to the hon. Member for Stockton, South. He said that his constituency is divided from a neighbouring one by the Teesside airport runway, half of which is in his constituency. I should not have thought that that would pose any problems, but if it does he should have a chat to a few other hon. Members. The river Rother — a beautiful river — divides my constituency from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy). Half is in my constituency and half is in his, but until half of the river Rother turns up at my Saturday morning surgery to see me

about the problem, I do not think that it will bother me too much. I have always thought that parliamentary representation was about representation of people, not water or tarmac.

I cannot imagine multi-Member seats going down too well. As the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said, people in such constituencies wander around various surgeries in the hope of finding the person who represents them. Even if they do not, they have nine bites at the cherry. We are discussing no more than a theory. The theory is that everything about PR is good and that we should no longer have minority Governments. Presumably people who live in countries that have PR think that minority Governments are bad. Italy has already been mentioned. The hon. Member for Stockton, South declined to give way to me, but all I intended to ask him was whether, leaving aside Italy's economics, he thought that the electors wanted more than 19 changes of Government since the war. I suspect that they do not think that that has been beneficial.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does my hon. Friend agree that Italy is no longer run by government and has not been for the past 20 years? It is run by civil servants. Politicians are almost incidental to the system.

Mr. Barron: I can believe that. Perhaps the hon. Member for Stockton, South is suggesting that the Civil Service should run the country.

It is a pity that new clause 1 does not set out what the joint commission said so that we could have a serious discussion about PR. Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends will disagree with me, but I should be prepared to discuss PR in single-Member seats to see whether it would benefit the electorate. Unfortunately, it seems that new clause 1 is intended solely to provide a system that will enable the alliance to gain the seats that it feels that it should have won on the 1983 poll.

Mr. Alton: We have heard much about coalition today. There has been an extraordinary coalition between the Labour and Conservative parties, both of which want to maintain the present system. That is not surprising, and I do not suppose that any of my right hon. and hon. Friends expected otherwise. The Labour and Conservative parties have a vested interest in keeping things as they are.

I was pleased when the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said that his mind was not totally closed on the matter. I would be happy to make available to him a copy of the commission's report so that he can read the details about the single transferable vote system. I am sure that it will give him many happy nights of reading.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) almost answered his own argument when he said that he would like to turn the clock back and have the first-past-the-post system at all elections — Assembly and European elections, as well as Westminster elections. In his constituency there are 59,000 electors. About 49,000 people did not vote for him at the general election. That demonstrates the point that many hon. Members would wish to make, especially in relation to Northern Ireland, which is that inevitably if we return to the first-past-the-post system at Assembly elections, the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland would be grossly under-represented. The implications of that are obvious to all hon. Members.

The hon. Gentleman was fundamentally wrong when he said that the emergence of Sinn Fein was due to proportional representation. The reason for its emergence was intransigence and a failure to accommodate the democrats in the Social Democratic and Labour party, and the democrats in the Fine Gael and Irish Republican parties. The failure to accommodate those people led to the emergence of Sinn Fein.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am at a loss to see how representatives of a foreign nation could be incorporated within a political party, even under proportional representation, in the United Kingdom. That is one of my difficulties. The hon. Gentleman referred to Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, and they are part of a foreign nation. Does he recognise that the Alliance candidate at the local government election in Coleraine who had 500 votes did not get elected, whereas the second Democratic Unionist party candidate with 69 votes did? Does he recognise that, contrary to his statement, the Roman Catholic people in Northern Ireland under the other percentage voting system in Stormont elections were better represented than they are now under proportional representation?

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman will accept that that was a speech rather than an intervention. However, I shall try to deal with the points that he raised. He talked about the influence within Northern Ireland of Irish parties in the Republic of Ireland. As I said, the failure of Northern Ireland politicians to respond to the democratically elected Government in Dublin was a reason for the lack of moderation in Ireland today and for the emergence of extreme groups.

The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) said that we would have to redesign the Chamber if the electoral system was reformed. I am in favour of seeing the parties in the House coming closer together. If we have to bring in the carpenters to achieve that, I shall not be opposed to it. However, historically he is wrong. After the first world war Liberals and Conservatives sat together in the Government. There are many examples throughout our history of parties sitting and working together.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) and others tried to attribute to us forms of proportionality for which we have not argued. Hon. Members have said that we would have a regional system, the Italian system or, even worse, the Israeli system, and that they would lead to dire consequences. We have not proposed those arguments. None of us has advocated that the party should be given greater power. We have argued for community-based proportional representation based on the single transferable vote and multi-Member seats. That would both link an hon. Member with a community and provide proportionality.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), on an interrelated point, talked about the valued link between an hon. Member and his constituency. I also value that link, and regard myself as a community politician.

I have spent 13 years representing people at one level or another. The system that the Liberals advocate would mean that in a city such as mine, which has six Westminster seats at the moment, there would be six seats but each Member would represent one city. That could have many desirable consequences for the electors.

At present there is no Conservative Member in the cities of Liverpool or Glasgow. All those electors are disfranchised in terms of their own party. Many of them

[Mr. Alton]

do not like the idea of having to go to members of the Militant Tendancy, or even the Liberals for that matter, to have their cases or complaints taken up. They are deprived of good constituency representation.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman raised the point that I sought to put to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). He offered to sell me copies of a report that I have already read. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) might tell the Committee—I speak with some experience of boundary commissions, their hearings and machinations, as he is well aware—how big will the communities be? The city of Leicester has three parliamentary seats——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Representation of the People Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour— *[Mr. Durant.]*

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Bermingham *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I hope that this is an intervention and not a speech.

Mr. Bermingham: I always rely upon your ability, Mr. Armstrong, to see the difference between the two. How will the hon. Member for Mossley Hill define a community in rural and semi-rural areas? How many seats does he allot in such cases?

Mr. Alton: I should have thought that that point was obvious, given the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of boundaries and the many hours that he must have spent trying unsuccessfully to fight the last boundary proposals. Social communities in counties and geographical areas often have far more in common than Westminster seats. My constituency stretches from the inner city of Liverpool to the suburbs, through nine different postal districts. Anyone who pretends that there is anything in common, apart from the fact that they live in the same city, between people living in tenemant blocks in inner city Liverpool and those living in the leafy suburbs of the city is mistaken.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in counties such as Cumbria what he is proposing would be an impossibility? Does he realise that to drive from one end of the constituency that the Liberals wish to set up in Cumbria to the other would take nearly two and a half hours? Whilst that may be acceptable in parts of Scotland where the population is small, in the county of Cumbria, where we have historically relied upon intense representation, it would be impossible to represent 500,000 people in that way. What he suggests is nonsensical.

Mr. Alton: My hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Mr. Johnston) will tell the hon. Gentleman that my hon. Friend would enjoy the opportunity of being able to drive from one end of his constituency to the other in two and a half hours. That also applies to a number of my other hon. Friends.

The subject of a coalition has been mentioned. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) talked derisively about the idea of parties working with one another. In the House in 1977 there was an alliance between the Liberal and Labour parties. Everyone derides that.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Look what happened.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady says, "Look what happened." Inflation fell from 19 to 8 per cent. and interest rates fell to 7·5 per cent. They are 14 per cent. today. Mortgage rates fell to 8 per cent. They stand at 12 per cent. today. Unemployment was half of what it is today. If that is weak government, let us have more of it.

It has been said today that we could not possibly move to the single transferable vote system and that the system we have is strong. Not only is the system weak; it is unfair. We do not get value for votes. It cannot be right that it takes 350,000 votes on average to elect a Liberal or Social Democrat compared with 30,000 or 40,000 to elect a Conservative or Socialist. It cannot be right if we believe in the adage that there should be no taxation without representation. In the tax cuts on 19 March the proper place to start might be to do something for the Liberal and Social Democratic voters who are grossly under-represented.

It cannot be right that the Labour party, with just 26 per cent. of the votes at the last election, got 209 seats whereas the alliance parties, with 25 per cent., only 1 per cent. less, got 23 seats. It is even worse that the Conservative party should get 397 seats with only 44 per cent. of the votes, having seen a decrease in its vote of some 700,000.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I want to give a brief illustration of the point. My hon. Friend knows that in Greater London, with 7 million people, the 500,000 people who voted Liberal have got but me to represent them. I am sure that they would like more Members.

Mr. Alton: I am sure that they get very good value in my hon. Friend, but it cannot be right that they should be so grossly under-represented.

The opinion poll published today in the *Daily Telegraph* shows that the Conservative party would now get 35 per cent. of the vote, yet it is here in vast numbers commanding a majority of over 140. The Labour party would get 32 per cent. and the alliance 31·5 per cent. That is a reflection of what happened at the last general election. Given the trends even under this crazy, Russian roulette system, the amazing thing is that we could end up being the beneficiaries. If we are the beneficiaries next time on the system of first past the post, we will stand by our word and make sure that there is a fair electoral system.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman has told us what the Liberals will do if they win under the first-past-the-post system. Even if I live a long life, I doubt that I will ever see that. If the present system has all these terrible defects, why is it, no matter how many years ago it was, that the Liberal party did not change the system when it had a majority in the House of Commons?

Mr. Alton: When we had an opportunity we set up a conference in 1916——

Mr. Mellor: I am sorry to have to teach the hon. Gentleman history. What happened was that a Speaker's Conference was set up in 1917 to recommend the introduction of single transferable votes in parliamentary elections in borough constituencies. But on a free vote on the Representation of the People Bill in 1918, with many Liberals voting against it, the proposal was thrown out. It was only in 1922, with the Liberal party's unerring instinct for jumping on the bandwagon when it has left the station and is on its way well out into the countryside, that it became official Liberal party policy to have proportional representation long after it had become a practical proposition for it to do anything about it.

Mr. Alton: Just as a matter of accuracy, the conference was set up in August 1916, not 1917.

The present system is not only unfair but very divisive. My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that if a line is drawn between Bristol and London there are no Labour Members of Parliament below that line. In Liverpool and Glasgow there are no Conservative Members. That means that ugly divisions are opening up. Because of our electoral system, there is a divide between urban and rural areas and a massive divide between north and south.

I shall give the figures for Liverpool. The Conservatives hold 30 per cent. of the vote, only one in three, and did not get a single seat. The Liberals polled 23 per cent., and we got one seat. Labour polled 47·3 per cent., and got five seats. In Glasgow, the Conservatives polled 18 per cent., but got no seats. The Labour party polled 51 per cent. and got 10 of the 11 seats. The Alliance polled 21 per cent. and got the other seat in that city. That demonstrates what can happen under this crazy, flukey electoral system of ours. Another example is Coventry, where there are four Members of Parliament. Labour polled 41 per cent. and got three seats. The Conservatives polled 46 per cent. and got one Member of Parliament. The Alliance polled 20 per cent. and got no Members of Parliament.

The system is divisive, and sets urban areas against rural areas. Let us look at how it reflects itself in the unemployment figures alone. The 100 constituencies with the highest unemployment are mainly in the north of England and industrial areas, and almost all are represented by Opposition Members. Inevitably, the 100 areas with the lowest unemployment are almost all in the prosperous south of England and represented by Conservative Members.

The new clause should commend itself to the Committee for another reason, which is that our present system is hopelessly unrepresentative. In Liverpool in the last municipal elections, 100,000 people voted against the present administration, and 90,000 voted for it. The council, made up of 99 people, comprises 58 Labour, 28 Liberal and 13 Conservative members. Those Labour councillors are not in the same part of the party represented by Labour Members in the Chamber. Most of them are members of the Militant Tendency, the very people that Labour is trying to expel. Indeed, some have already been expelled. Therefore, because of the election system, it is possible to get the extremism to which the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred. Militant Tendency members are on the council in the city of Liverpool today, with all the ugly consequences.

Nationally, the situation mirrors itself in a Government elected by one in three of the British electorate, 700,000 fewer than in 1979. An effect of the system is that we get the dogma that my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed talked about. Nationalisation is followed by denationalisation, with the Conservative party polling only 34 per cent. and the Labour party polling 29 per cent. when it came to office. What do we get? British industry is debilitated to the point of exhaustion. The new buzz words are: They will privatise, and the others will deprivatise. They will sell off the council houses, and the others will buy them back again. They will pump the money into assisted places at public schools, and the others will close them down. They will stop overseas aid, and the others will restart it. All that dogma is based on just one in three of the people voting for those things. It is the arrogance of the tyranny of an unelected minority. The first-past-the-post system is also archaic, anachronistic and full of many weaknesses.

Another effect is that in the House there is not a single black face. Increasingly large numbers of people in our community go without any representation. That is because the first-past-the-post system works against black people being chosen as candidates by the selection committees. How many Labour candidates were black or brown? How many Liberal, Social Democratic or Conservative candidates were black? The system works against blacks.

The system also works against women. At 51 per cent., they are the majority in the country, yet there are fewer women in the House than at any time since the second world war. That is because of the first-past-the-post voting system and our failure to have a fair electoral system through STV.

Another argument that we have heard in the debate is that we must maintain single-member constituencies under the present system because it leads to a unique bond between the Member of Parliament and the electorate. In fact it leads to a relationship that is not dissimilar to that of the British Raj with the people of India. It leads to people regarding their domains as safe seats. That is true in many cases. One person with a red rosette could be put up and one with a blue rosette and a donkey could be elected. Some might say that they often are. But the truth is that people do not care about their constituency if they believe that they are in a safe seat. The become arrogant.

We believe in proportional representation not only because it will give the people in the multi-member seats more choice but because it will also lead to more co-operation between parties in this House. One's opponents can sometimes be right. Even a broken clock is right twice a day. If we had a more co-operative system, where parties could learn to work with one another, it would be in the interests of the British people.

The system that we advocate is not only fair and representative but will unite people as well. The system that we have at the moment is like a loaded dice. It is a corrupt, fraudulent and phoney electoral system. Although we know that new clause 1 will not be accepted by the politicians in this Chamber tonight, I can assure hon. Members that there will come a time when we will win by the first-past-the-post system and we shall change it and introduce a fair electoral system. The Conservative party will be sorry that it did not do it when it had the chance.

[Mr. Mellor]

and often its poll is nearer 5 per cent. That is the party which most West Germans do not want to vote for, but it is the one which is in government for most of the time. If a party is to form a Government in West Germany, it is necessary for it to do a little deal with the equivalent of the Liberal party. Liberal Members are thinking that it would be a lovely thing if that could happen over here. After all, it is so dull having to be an Opposition party.

The Liberal party wishes to cobble together an agreement with whichever party takes its fancy at the time so that it can remain in power. That is the final lie to the Liberal party's case of proportional representation. The Liberal party's argument is advanced as an enhancement of democracy, but in truth it is a negation of democracy. That is because the system which the Liberal party advocates takes the power to elect a Government out of the hands of the people and into the hands of politicians. It would be the decision of the politicians as to the way in which they would be prepared to coalesce within a multi-party House of Commons which would determine the Government, not the straightforward vote of the British people.

We have had a pretty sham debate this evening, which has not convinced anybody of the merits of the case. I urge my hon. Friends and the Opposition to reject the new clause.

Mr. Johnston: The Minister made the arresting and highly original argument that we are somehow now governed by the representatives of the people rather than the representatives or the politicians, and that this Government are genuinely representative of the people. That is not the view widely held now.

The Minister began with a cheap argument that there are seldom Liberal and SDP Members in the Chamber. My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), the Liberal Chief Whip, pointed out that when he opened this debate there were only two Conservative Members in the Chamber out of a total of 397. Considering the number of Liberal and SDP Members, we do very well indeed—especially considering what we have to try to do in representing both our constituents and the many millions of others who would wish to be represented by Liberal and SDP Members.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham) *rose*——

Mr. Johnston: I shall give way in a minute — it would be only fair to allow the hon. Gentleman to acclimatise himself to the debate.

Mr. Jessel *rose*——

Mr. Johnston: The hon. Gentleman must not be so impetuous.

I wish to make some simple points. I do not want to delay the House, but, as hon. Members know, we feel strongly about this matter. Listening to some of the speeches tonight, I felt that I was at a mad hatter's tea party. I had seldom heard a more poorly argued case than that advanced by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), until I heard the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). Heaven knows, few could have improved upon his contribution.

The essential argument of both hon. Gentlemen—and it was touched upon by the Minister, when he paid any attention to the argument—was that coalitions are quite dreadful things.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Gentleman and his friends cannot agree on joint selection.

Mr. Johnston: The hon. Gentleman has woken up.

Coalitions have clearly not been the downfall of Sweden, Finland, or—*[Laughter.]* What is so amusing about Finland? Do hon. Members find the Netherlands, Belgium or Germany amusing? Why did the new countries to emerge from dictatorship, Spain and Portugal, choose without any hesitation to have a system of PR? Surely that has some relevance and must be seen as having some importance by Conservative Members.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and the Minister argued that absolute majorities were vital. Mr. Stalin was very good at them. But clearly absolute majorities were much more important to those hon. Members than the representation of "dangerous minorities". The "dangerous minorities" that the hon. Member for Walsall, North foresaw——

Mr. Kaufman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Johnston: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman if he allows me to finish my sentence. The hon. Member for Walsall, North suggested that the great danger of PR was that Right-Wing/Fascist parties might obtain representation and that that would be very bad. The——

Mr. Kaufman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Johnston: The right hon. Gentleman must wait until I have finished my paragraph.

The Minister did not say that he was afraid of Communists becoming Members of Parliament, but there was a feeling that that was what he was implying. What is wrong with Fascists or Communists openly standing under their own colours in the House, instead of standing concealed inside larger parties?

Mr. Kaufman: I simply wanted to make the following point to the hon. Gentleman. He spoke of the dangers of Stalinism, but surely the Soviet Union is a perfect example of PR—100 per cent. of the votes get 100 per cent. of the seats.

Mr. Johnston: That intervention was very much up to the mark for a former scriptwriter of "That Was The Week That Was". It was not an intervention of any substance, but it was entertaining.

I have three final short points to make — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hurrah!"] First, no one on the other side of the argument, which of course spans the Chamber, has answered the simple point that I put in an intervention. Is it fair or reasonable that a party should obtain 750,000 fewer votes and as a result obtain 58 more seats? I cannot see any justification for that. It is not democratic and it cannot be defended. The system should be changed.

My second point touches on something that should concern those hon. Members who think about these things. We know that in recent elections the turnout has fallen steadily. That is not happening where there is a system of PR, almost irrespective of what type of PR exists. That too, must contain some lessons.

10.45 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) developed well the argument about the capricious lack of representation of Labour and Liberal in the south and Conservative in the north and the dangerous effects that such a division is having on the country as a whole.

Local government was discussed briefly. The most appalling example of which I knew was the regional election before last in Scotland when, in the Lothian region, 17 per cent. of the electorate voted in the ruling Labour party, which was elected by one seat and then proceeded to pack every committee and run it on a very ideological basis.

That is the danger of the sort of system that Conservative Members are supporting. The new clause seeks to introduce into this country a better and fairer system of election and, as such, it deserves—even if it will not get it tonight—support.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 16, Noes 184.

Division No. 106] **[10.45 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Freud, Clement
Godman, Dr Norman
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Penhaligon, David
Steel, Rt Hon David
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bermingham, Gerald
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Couchman, James
Cowans, Harry
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dixon, Donald
Dorrell, Stephen
Dubs, Alfred
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Maclean, David John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, William
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Major and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Representation of the People Bill

New Clause 2

ABOLITION OF MULTIPLE REGISTRATION OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORS

'(1) A person shall not be entitled to be registered as a parliamentary elector for more than one constituency in any one year.

(2) In the case of a person who, but for subsection (1) above, would by virtue of his having more than one qualifying address be entitled to be included in the register of parliamentary electors for more than one constituency in any one year, the register in which he shall be entitled to be included shall be the register for the constituency or part of the constituency in which is situated the place at which he has his main qualifying address on the qualifying date.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above, a person's main qualifying address is that one of the addresses referred to in that subsection where he has been personally present for the most time in aggregate during the period of twelve months immediately preceding the qualifying date.'.—*[Mr. Beith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Beith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following—new clause 20—*Multiple registration to be an offence*—

'(1) It shall be an offence to apply to register as a parliamentary elector for more than one constituency in any one year.

(2) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (as defined in section 75 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982) or to both.'.

New clause 21—*Voting by persons registered at a place of higher or further education*—

'A person registered at a place of higher or further education shall be eligible to vote only in the division which includes the qualifying address from which he qualifies for a local authority grant; and for that purpose shall be eligible to vote by post or by proxy; and section 19 of the principal Act (voting at Parliamentary elections) shall be amended by the addition at the end of subsection (1) of the following—

"(i) those registered at place of higher or further education other than in the constituency of their qualifying place of residence".'.

Mr. Beith: The issue of multiple registration arose incidentally at an earlier stage of our proceedings when the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir. J. Farr) somewhat oddly suggested that, in raising the issue at all, I was breaking some happy consensus that had developed over the Bill. The hon. Gentleman had not read the background properly. It was he, and indeed the Government, who broke the consensus which, strangely, had broken out on the subject of multiple registration. When the Select Committee on Home Affairs considered the matter, it received evidence from my party, the Labour party and the Conservative party and—wonder of wonders—all the parties agreed that, for parliamentary elections, the practice of multiple registration should not be continued. Persuaded by the overwhelming weight of evidence, the Select Committee advised that multiple registration should not be continued.

In arguing that multiple registration is wrong in respect of parliamentary elections, I base my case—as, no doubt, the Conservative and Labour parties did, too—on the view that the vote should be of equal value wherever in the country it is found. A voter who has the opportunity to choose at will between several different places in which to cast his vote has an advantage not conferred on other electors. That advantage tends to relate to circumstances, particularly in the case of people who own, or are tenants of, property in several places.

It is feasible to have a system under which multiple registration occurs so that people can register their reasonable claim—*[Interruption.]*—to take part in local government in various parts of the country. Does the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) wish to intervene?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I am trying to urge your leader to stop talking to his colleagues and listen to you.

Mr. Beith: The occupant of the Chair has no leader while occupying the Chair. The hon. Lady must remember her parliamentary procedures. It is reasonable that someone should be registered in more than one place for local government purposes, if we accept the argument that to own property confers the right to participate in local affairs and the responsibility to pay rates. The issue at stake is whether people should be able to transfer votes at will between constituencies.

The law has changed by way of drift. There was a time when residence was more clearly understood to involve nominating one place as a principal residence. The opportunity to be registered in several places has grown as the interpretation of residence has widened. The Minister has several times quoted as a definition of residence a degree of permanence. It is therefore clearly open to people to claim residence in several places. The Minister's definition seems to be somewhat slanted against students because it is much harder to suggest permanence in regard to a university hall of residence in which most students are able to stay only one or two years.

11 pm

The elector is under no obligation to choose a principal residence, and new clause 2 ensures that there is some test of the elector's principal residence. That is not the only means of solving the problem. I am not averse to the elector being given the opportunity to choose, when he registers, which he regards as his principal residence. However, for the elector to be registered in several places and then to be able to say, even during an election campaign, "I think that I shall vote in this constituency rather than that one, considering how things are going" is quite wrong.

If there are by-elections in two constituencies and an elector has residences in both, he can vote in both. That is not reasonable or sensible. At one level, the problem might seem to be one of broad principle concerning a matter that seems undesirable but does not have much practical effect. That is not the case, as multiple registration tends to be concentrated in areas where there are many second homes or halls of residence. There is often annoyance and anxiety in such communities that the number of registered electors who live there for only a small part of the year greatly outnumber the normal resident population. In my part of the world, the Lake District and north Wales, it is easy to find communities in which, because of changes that I find unattractive, as they have been rather damaging to some villages, there are more people with second homes than permanent residents.

Tensions are exacerbated when local people think that they are outnumbered on the voting register as well. It is not a proper part of our electoral system to give one class of voters a choice of where they can make their vote most effective. The parties are well aware of that effect of multiple registration, so woo the second home voters deliberately. The Bill makes it easier for non-residents to cast votes and, by widening the postal vote arrangements, we have made it a great deal easier for people with a holiday home which they use for only a couple of weeks a year to vote there, although they are normally resident hundreds of miles away. We should address ourselves to the basic problem of why we should give this right to choose to one class of voters. The present arrangements are wrong and should be changed.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful at this comparatively early hour to speak to new clauses 20 and 21, and to support the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). My two new clauses 20 and 21 go further than new clause 2 and deal specifically with the problems encountered by a student in further or higher education.

The hon. Gentleman rightly said that students may be in residence at the time of a general election, possibly once during their studies, and in many cases not at all. Students are present in college for at most 30 weeks a year—I am not talking about postgraduates but undergraduates and those in further education. It is important that they do not distort the parliamentary election process and the European elections for the regular electors. The simple solution appears to be to establish the basis on which they can legally vote, that is, in person, by proxy or by post at their main place of residence. That is the place where they may be registered for income tax purposes. I would have preferred new clause 2 to have stated that, as it seems to be the right place to track students down. Furthermore, it is the place to which they apply for their education grant. On that basis I have set out new clauses 20 and 21.

About 241 constituencies are probably affected. That is a considerable number. To start in alphabetical order they include Bath, Birmingham, Erdington, Birmingham, Hodge hill and so on. A considerable number are directly affected by students who live in them for a short time. Students at present can choose to vote in either parliamentary constituency. In 1983 a number of students broke the electoral law and double voted. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for an electoral registration officer to prove that a student has voted twice, unless he opens the ballot boxes.

It is comparatively easy for an electoral registration officer to stop that if we enact these clauses because then he will not accept on the register young men and women who are living temporarily in halls of residence or in flats provided by university authorities. It would be comparatively easy to isolate them on the register.

In the unlikely event of a student getting on the register, there is a simple solution. Questions are asked on the forms issued to householders, such as whether an elector is a merchant seaman or liable for jury service. In the same way, it should be asked whether the elector has already registered or intends to register elsewhere for a parliamentary election, and whether the elector is a bona fide registered student. If those questions were asked and a student contravened the law, we could under the new clause take appropriate proceedings against that person.

At present the system is open to abuse. A considerable number of students are unaware that they are breaking the law. This measure gives us the opportunity to take on board those proposals. For those reasons, I hope that my hon. Friend will accept the spirit in which I move the new clauses, and accept the new clauses.

Mr. Wigley: I support new clause 2 with all the passion at my command, because I think that it remedies one weakness to which the Government have failed to address themselves in a Bill in which they have made considerable concessions to achieve all-party consensus.

The Government are aware of the feelings in Wales on this matter. They are not limited to Wales. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) mentioned the problem that arises in his area. We know that it arises in the Lake District, parts of Scotland, south-west England and many other areas where there are a great many second homes.

In Gwynedd, on the latest estimates, there are some 15,000 second homes. There are four parliamentary constituencies. If there is an average of 2·2 people to each household — there is a tendency to be a higher than average figure in holiday homes — and they all registered, there could be 33,000 voters from those holiday homes. That is an average of 8,000 to each constituency.

A controversy arose in the constituency of Ynys Mon, Anglesey, during the last election. A large body of opinion believed that even in the circumstances that then obtained the election was influenced by people from second homes. The majority was some 1,600, if I remember rightly. That is a majority of 1,600 in a constituency which may have had some 8,000 second home voters. The Minister will realise the strong feelings that may arise at the idea that the outcome of an election was determined by second-home owners.

Some of those people may have voted more than once. It is next to impossible to discover whether people have voted in two constituencies. I accept that they would be breaking the law if they did so, but it is almost impossible to enforce that law. The argument has been advanced that it is difficult to restrict registration to one household only. That is no more difficult to enforce than enforcing voting in one constituency only. On balance, to ensure the well-being of the electoral system, the pressure should be to ensure that people can register in one location only.

The problem was bad enough in the last election. I and my party have deliberately not played on the point that those voters swayed the outcome of the election. It can give rise to feeling that we have seen going over the top into extremism. The House is well aware of the problem that has arisen in Wales over second homes.

If we extend postal voting and allow people to vote by post at will, strong feelings will be aroused at the next election. It will be possible to see the number of voters who have voted from addresses outside their constituencies. Those addresses will in all probability identify people as being second-home owners. In numerous constituencies, that may make a difference to the outcome of the election. That will give rise to strong feelings.

With the passage of the Bill in Committee and in another place, the time is right to take steps to avoid that problem. The problem will arise because of the change in the postal voting system that we are introducing in the Bill. Side by side with that change we should take steps to avoid

[Mr. Wigley]

the type of abuse that could arise. That is not an academic point. It is a matter of great anxiety in many areas, and to Members of all parties in the House. That can be seen by the new clauses that have been tabled, possibly for different reasons in different areas.

Accepting all that, and given the feelings that the Minister has expressed—we all welcome the way that he has responded to representations—and the feelings that have been expressed to the Select Committee, I urge the Minister to consider whether it is possible, in another place if not tonight, to table an amendment that will take on board the points that have been made and avoid a problem that will become serious if it is allowed to continue.

11.15 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The patronage secretary of the Liberal party—if I may be permitted to use that term—has moved an important new clause. I wish to comment briefly on its implications for the county of Cumbria and in particular the Lake District.

Within the Lake District there is a major problem of people buying second homes. By careful use of the tax system and mortgage relief they are able to raise money to purchase second homes simply by increasing the mortgage on their first homes, thereby claiming greater tax relief. Therefore, their second home purchases are being funded to some extent by an Exchequer subsidy.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): What the hon. Member is describing is strictly illegal under income tax law. While I bow to his knowledge as to the fact that it goes on, I hope that he will not give the Committee the impression that he is encouraging an illegal practice.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: As a participant in the Finance Bill debates when his patronage secretary gives him permission to intervene, the hon. Gentleman will know that I would not in any way wish to promote that principle. Equally, he will know that the practice goes on. People are purchasing second homes within the Lake District and the national park by playing with the tax system, through mortgage relief.

In acquiring those second homes the people equally acquire the right to multiple registration. Surely that is wrong. Under the new clause that right would be removed or people would be required to declare their second homes as their principal residence and then comply with the criterion laid down in subsection (3) of the new clause.

Within the county of Cumbria this is of significant importance, because there are several marginal constituencies. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that political parties were endeavouring to woo these voters. The Liberal and Conservative parties may be trying to woo them, but the Labour party is not. The Liberal and Conservative parties have a particular interest because there is a crucial constituency in the county of Cumbria. That constituency, Penrith and The Border, which is highly marginal, is held today by the Conservatives with a majority of only 700, with the Liberals in second place. That constituency has one of the highest percentages of second homes in the whole of the United Kingdom. In parts of that constituency and of my constituency of Workington, which takes in five lakes in the Lake District, there are villages and hamlets where the number of second homes is as high as 30 per cent. The existence of that number of second homes will have a marked effect on electoral results.

I must point the Committee back to a famous by-election in 1976, when Labour lost the Workington constituency. I am not saying that that result was wholly dependent on the existence of second home multiple registration occupiers, but to some extent they will have had an influence on the result. It is known that people choose to exercise their vote in the most marginal seat where they are registered.

Mr. Beith: Is it not also the case that by exercising their vote in a crucial by-election they do not even lose the opportunity to vote in any subsequent election in the constituency where their main home is?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That only compounds the injustice for those who feel that they have lost because of the existence of the multi-registration right.

I hope that in winding up the debate the Government will take note of the considerable feeling particularly in marginal constituencies and marginal electoral wards, where people have that right and where others believe that in having that right they are grossly and unfairly interfering with an electoral system which should at the least produce a reasonable result.

Mr. Penhaligon: I believe that most fair-minded Members of the House, if they consider this matter in isolation and ignore any political opinions which they have for or against the new clause, will recognise that there is potential for enormous abuse. Many people can use a vote in a constituency which is not their main home, and where they spend little of their time. Just because they happen to own that property, and just because they believe that that vote can be more effective in that constituency than another, they use that vote. That is not the basis of our whole electoral process.

That is an issue in my county. In parishes in Cornwall, way over one third of the properties are second homes or summer lets, and the problem arises with both of them. I recall from my personal experience of running for Parliament in Cornwall that I surprised a few by getting elected in October 1974 with a majority of just 464. It is extremely lucky for me that the Conservatives never realised how near I was to removing them, because I am sure that had they realised it they would have organised the holiday vote in my constituency, which was worth more than 464. Come the next election, the vote was certainly organised. In some of the villages a house has not been built this century. Between 1974 and 1979 the electorate suddenly increased by 50 per cent. What is more amazing is that, now my majority has increased to several thousands, those people have all gone again.

That is an abuse. I suspect that the Minister, who, I recognise, has been a fair man, knows that it is an abuse. The system is within the law. I do not complain about that. The system is the system, and one fights elections on the system. However, going beyond that, I am sure the Minister will recognise that there is an abuse and that the system is unfair. Fairness is important in any electoral system. It must at least be seen to be fair. I am sure the Minister recognises that we do not have the correct procedure.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) raised an interesting problem. I welcome the extension of postal

votes to those on holiday. In my part of the world, if an election falls when the holiday industry is on holiday, that seriously affects many who rightly want to exercise their franchise. I do not criticise that. However, there is a real prospect of the situation in marginal seats being abused, especially in Cornwall. It may have happened once already in Cornwall. The abuse might even affect an election result. I do not believe that that is what the Government or the Minister want. The new clause would solve the problem. However, if the Minister would like a slight variation on it, there are other processes.

People feel very angry about the abuse. The anger is not felt, known or read by London. It is a long way away. Such anger is often difficult to register, as people do not understand, do not want to listen and do not want to know. If the people of north Wales, Cornwall and Berwickshire can have their parliamentary representation changed just because some slick organisers use the abuse and the postal vote change to their advantage, that is appalling. Much outrage will be caused among those who live in the area.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I do not defend the present situation in any way, but is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Liberal organisation in Cornwall has not marshalled the holiday vote in any constituency in that county?

Mr. Penhaligon: I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows that when it comes to who owns those houses, "My party don't do too good." It is true that before now we have encouraged people who have holiday lets in Cornwall, who are Liberals, to register their vote, to try to reduce the advantage that the hon. Gentleman's party has. I am not saying that anybody has broken the law. I am not criticising anyone. It is legal. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, his party could gather 3,000 or 4,000 of those votes if it wanted to, and he could save himself on the swing about which we are now hearing. What I am saying is that there is an abuse, people are outraged, and I suspect that the hon. Gentleman knows it. We have it in our power today to stop that abuse, and the Minister has the power to give the House that assurance now.

Mr. Mellor: It is with a feeling of tremendous power and authority that I rise to respond to the debate. I appreciate that several hon. Members feel strongly about this matter and that that feeling is not confined to any one party. I understand the position of those who represent constituencies in which there are second homes who feel that people who are inimical to their interests are daring to cast a vote in those constituencies. I also understand that those who have universities in their constituencies, including some of my hon. Friends, feel troubled, and no doubt some of their constituents feel troubled, that people who are only passing through the area can sometimes have a major impact on the political complexion of that area.

However, there are problems and points that have not been made particularly clearly so far that need to be made. First, as we explained in the White Paper — the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) will know that we have had several discussions about this on the Floor of the House and elsewhere and extensive correspondence — it is difficult to make fundamental changes such as the abolition of multiple registration without changing the whole basis on which the register is compiled in Britain. That is not an easy thing, nor is it necessarily desirable.

In the end we must take the argument down to detail because we are dealing with a severely practical matter. We have had much discussion about second home owners, who seem to be a much persecuted minority group so far as one can judge from the way in which they have been spoken of, although I dare say that some of them are decent enough citizens when it comes down to it. One must look at the detail and ask how helpful are the kind of concepts embraced in the new clause—for example, that of the main qualifying address. What does that mean in the context of a man who lives four days a week in London, three days a week in the country and then spends most of his holidays at his country address? Are we to have a court of law counting up faithfully the days of the year that he spends in each of those places?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Let him choose.

Mr. Mellor: That choice may not be acceptable. Some may feel that he will choose the most disadvantageous area.

Ingenious though the new clause is, as I said yesterday when a peripheral spin-off issue of multiple registration was being debated, it is perfectly reasonable for people to hold the view, as many in the House have, and Committees have reported in favour of abolishing multiple registration, when it comes to the detail it is extremely difficult to do it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I have availed myself of the present law twice, never because of a second home but once because my father was moving with his business when I exercised my vote in north Wales in a constituency where there was a majority of 1,000 instead of in a constituency with a majority of 20,000 and once when I went to college. There need only be a warning on the form that says that only one form a year can be completed before an offence is committed and then no one would offend. There is no practical problem. I hope that it is not a practical disadvantage.

Mr. Mellor: I am glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman is not complaining about second homes on the Bermondsey riviera. Many of the complaints that have been advanced this evening should really be directed to the electoral registration officer. It appears to be suggested that owning a second home in an area is what entitles a person to vote, but it is not. One has to be resident there and the courts have determined that to be resident one's residence has to have

"a substantial degree of permanence".

So, if an electoral registration officer is prepared, on the basis of a few weeks' residence a year, to register somebody as being resident in that constituency, the ERO has got it wrong. I am glad that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who knows a great deal about these matters, and others agree with me that it is then for the parties to challenge, and there are ways in which that challenge can be mounted. But it is not the fault of the Government if EROs are putting people on the register when they should not.

11.30 pm

Mr. Gregory: My hon. Friend has raised a point about the qualifying address. I suggested earlier that this could be the Inland Revenue address. I would like him to address his mind to the clauses dealing with the educational point, because a considerable number of students in the constituency of Putney, which might interest him, and

[Mr. Gregory]

certainly in my constituency of York and elsewhere in this country, amounting to just under 300 constituencies, who are materially affected by this. My clause provides "from which he qualified for a local authority grant".

If my hon. Friend is suggesting that the onus should be on the electoral returning officer, what guidance will he give and what staffing will he give? At present, in most parliamentary constituencies there is one clerk who works throughout the year on this, ably supported at the time of a parliamentary election or European election. To put the onus on the parliamentary candidate to suggest that somebody is acting illegally is quite unreasonable. If we are to be reasonable, I should hope that the hon. Gentleman would accept the spirit of this, because the number of illegalities is clearly on the increase.

Mr. Mellor: I am all for being reasonable, but whatever way we look at it, and whatever arrangements are entered into, people will be required to make difficult judgments. We can print all the forms in the world and give people all the options we like, but if someone is determined to make an assertion that is not the case it is extremely difficult in a practical sense to change the arrangements.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend may not even be aware that it is not the case. Take the example of the universities, where it is the bursar who does the registration. However many warning signs are put on the register, he cannot possibly know that the students will not register elsewhere.

Mr. Mellor: I am beset by the anti-holiday-home people on the one hand and the anti-student faction on the other.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: No, I am not anti at all; I am making a realistic point.

Mr. Mellor: I was not suggesting that my hon. Friend was not being realistic, but I was saying that, if one's motivation in advancing these points is that one objects to a particular category being on the register, it does not make it easy when drafting rules to give total satisfaction on the point that is being made. I just think that in the end we have a clear set of rules. They could not be clearer. It may be that the way in which the rules are being applied by EROs throughout the country has somewhat muddied the pond, but it is perfectly clear to say that someone is entitled to register at an address at which his or her residence has a substantial degree of permanence and to recognise that in the reality of the community as it now exists—and it is not outlandish to suggest that some people should have more than one address — it is possible to have a substantial degree of permanence at more than one address.

It is getting late and I have to say——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: No, I shall not give way and it is no good the hon. Gentleman jeering at me that I am on weak ground. We have been over this ground a great deal. I very much regret, being in the business of giving satisfaction wherever that is humanly possible, that it is not possible for the Government to do so here. We have made it clear in the White Paper, in the debate on the White Paper, in the debate on Second Reading, in previous debates in this Committee and in correspondence that it is our considered view that, whatever the rights and wrongs of multiple registration, it is not possible to reach workable and practicable arrangements that do not make the situation more complicated than it already is.

I am sorry, but I have to advise my hon. Friends to resist the new clauses.

Mr. Dubs: I had not intended to intervene, but I think that we should press the Minister further on this. Throughout the long day, until we reached these proposals, the Minister had been on fairly good form, perhaps because he felt that right was on his side. His last speech, however, was disappointing and well below the standards that he had set himself earlier in the day. I believe that that was because his heart was not in it.

The point of principle here is that when people vote in a constituency they should do so because they have been exposed to the campaign in that constituency, because they know who the candidates are, the candidates have been able to reach them with publicity and canvassing and therefore the electors take a full part in political life there. When people take no part in political life and have no opportunity to do so, there is a weakness in the democratic process. *[Interruption.]* It is no use the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) shouting at me from a sedentary position.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): You are my Member of Parliament.

Mr. Dubs: That is no thanks to anything that the hon. Gentleman has done for me.

There is a point of principle involved and it is no use trying to be jocular about it. We are dealing with the democratic process and the Minister has not addressed himself to the point. Incidentally—this may be just a quirk—I understand that if by-elections were held on the same day in Berwick-upon-Tweed and in Putney people registered in both constituencies could vote in both by-elections.

Mr. Mates: That is illegal.

Mr. Dubs: I wish the hon. Gentleman would stand up and speak or just keep quiet rather than constantly shouting from a seated position. Even if he is my constituent, there is no need for me to be nice to him if he behaves like that.

It is indeed illegal to vote in two constituencies in a general election, but lawyers tell me that it is not illegal if by-elections happen to take place on the some day in two constituencies in which an individual has a residence and a holiday residence. But that is just a quirk and the main point of principle is not attached to it.

I believe that the Minister has not been helpful on this simply because the problem is difficult to solve. Because we do not have centralised control of the electoral register for the whole country by putting all the information on a computer or whatever, the necessary legal means of enforcement will not be perfect. Because it will not be perfect and the problem is a difficult one, the Minister wants to leave things alone and not bother.

Mr. Wigley: Knowing the Minister, hon. Members may accept that his problem may be the administrative difficulty involved, but people outside will believe that the motive is party political advantage. I do not wish the reaction in my part of Gwynedd to worsen any more than it is bound to worsen as a result of postal voting. We have

a reasonably good Bill, but the Minister's failure to respond on this will be a wart on the face of the legislation. I very much hope that he will think again.

Mr. Dubs: I take that point and I hope that the Minister will come back with a more convincing argument. If town hall officials dealing with registration are acting as they should, it is theoretically possible that they could eliminate some holiday voters from the electoral registers. In practice, however, that is difficult to achieve as the law stands. It is a grey area for them and they are under great pressure keeping the registers up to date at all, so unless we change the law in this way it is unlikely that electoral registration officers will take note of the hint given to them by the Minister.

Time-sharing raises another problem, especially in the Lake District and certain other areas. A number of different families could register at the same address and it would be difficult for the electoral registration officer to prevent that from happening. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, by being progressive and giving people the holiday vote we are opening the door to the possibility of abuse. That possibility exists when an individual can be at two addresses at the same time. By giving the holiday vote, we have a responsibility to ensure that it is not abused, and there is a clear danger that it might be.

I urge the Minister to think again. I ask him to re-examine the Government's proposals and to endeavour to return on Report with a provision that will satisfy the views which have been expressed on both sides of the Committee.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I accept that I have not been present for the entire debate, but the Minister's arguments have been weak. The argument does not rest with holiday homes, and the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) is concerned with university, polytechnic or college vote is substantial. There are many ways in which the present system can be exploited, and they could be adequately and properly dealt with, but I do not accept that the Government should act as a perfect policeman. The onus, as in many other spheres, must be on the citizen. If the individual knows that he is breaking the law, he must accept that he is at risk of being penalised. He must accept the implications of committing an offence.

If an individual of 18 or 19 years of age is a student at a college or university, it is probable that he will spend 24, 25 or 26 weeks of the year away from the home which he has left. I am speaking of the normal parental home. Having attended college or university, he might well decide that he will not return to the parental home. He might go into temporary accommodation locally in the summer or elsewhere before moving on or back to his original accommodation. If that happens, it is not an abuse if the student decides that the appropriate place of registration is York, if that is his university. He may spend the larger proportion of the year in York.

I recollect that when I was at college I was spending only two or three weeks at my parents' address each year. That was the family home. I was spending by far the largest proportion of the year at the place where I was at college and during the incidental parts of the year I was elsewhere. The obvious place of registration was my university residence. I retained registration at my parental home because that was the base to which I would presumably return after my university days. That was the only "home" to which I had a right, but it was not the place where I was principally resident.

In many instances, individuals move during the course of a year. My first opportunity to vote was in the constituency of Merioneth, and during the year in question my family moved. Registration had taken place in the October of the previous year at what was the family home. However, my father followed his job to where the company sent him and my family moved to another property, which is where we were on the 10th, 12th or 14th of the month—I confess that I forget the date. It was proper to say that that was the residence at that time. It was the family residence and it was proper for the family so to register. That meant that there was the right to choose when it came to the 1970 general election. I remember making the decision to drive with my father 150 miles from the place where we had gone to live back to the place where we were registered because the percentage relevance of my vote was considerably higher. I am afraid that it did not swing the result—but it moved it far more than it would have done in Pontypridd, which had a majority of about 20,000. There are many examples of where people, for perfectly proper reasons have a choice.

11.45 pm

The Minister's concern is either the expressed concern that the proposal is technically difficult, or the unexpressed concern—a suspicion voiced by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs)—that it is vested interest. If the proposal is technically difficult, why should it be the responsibility of the Government to deal with it in every respect? It is a rule of our electoral system that if someone is a citizen of other than Great Britain, Northern Ireland or certain Commonwealth countries with the right to vote here, he is precluded from voting.

As the Minister will know, because people do not read forms carefully there are some who register and exercise a vote even though they are not eligible to do so. They may be Italians, Cypriots or Greeks who have been living here for a long time. The result is that there is a defect in the system, policeable only if the electoral registration officer has a suspicion. People who abuse the system can be dealt with properly. The Minister should be concerned, not with catching every offender, but with ensuring that the system puts the onus on the voter to decide, following a clearly laid out test, where he qualifies to vote, in the knowledge of the penalties that he may face if he abuses the system.

In view of the all-party support that the recommendation has received, the technical arguments are not sufficient to counterweight the arguments of substance. Even though it may be said that in places like York it is not obvious that the Conservative party will be the beneficiary—in some places it indeed has the majority of the student vote, although that always amazes me—nevertheless it must be perceived as being the beneficiary. That appears to be the case in holiday home areas, and it is presumed to be the case in student towns.

Unless the Minister can adequately respond to the arguments that have been advanced on the technical and electoral bases, this great opportunity for dealing with a major potential for abuse will have been lost, which will be a great failing in the work of this Committee and the Government on what is, in many respects—although we have our criticisms—a good Bill.

Mr. Barron: I had some sympathy with the Minister when he tried to defend the indefensible—the question of multiple registration in parliamentary elections. He defended the Government's position by falling back on such phrases as "substantial degree of permanence", when he knows that that could be used by people to register in more than one and up to six or more areas. The Minister should agree to reconsider the matter and come forward on Report with something that will provide a fairer way to approach the issue.

There are no holiday homes in the Rother Valley, although some parts of it are quite beautiful. I have no vested interest, in that I might never be in the position to own a home in Cumbria, south Wales, Devon of Cornwall. Nor does my constituency have a university. Multiple registration is wrong. No hon. Member can say that it has not been abused in the past. It is even more likely to be abused in future, because of other elements in the Bill. The Government should close the loopholes that allow some people to have a wider franchise than others.

I turn to new clause 2. I think that subsection (2) and (3) somewhat cloud the issue. New clause 20, tabled by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and some other Conservative Members, is probably nearer the mark. It says:

"It shall be an offence to apply to register as a parliamentary elector for more than one constituency in any one year."

The Government should return to the Committee at a later stage and say exactly that. It should be an offence to register in more than one parliamentary constituency in any one year. People should make their choices before they fill in the forms. To talk about substantial degrees of permanency is ridiculous when we all know that someone could pick up the form that drops through the door and never go near that place of residence—whether or not it is in his name—for another two or three months. In those circumstances, multiple registration should be stopped.

Mr. Beith: No one, even among the Minister's more enthusiastic supporters, could say that he has won the argument on this issue. Genuine concern has been expressed from hon. Members in all parts of the Committee about what is widely seen as a loophole. The law is not clear—or, if it is, it is clear in a particularly unhelpful way. If electoral registration officers were able scrupulously and effectively to enforce the test of a substantial degree of permanence with regard to all the applications—and we all know how divorced from the real world such a supposition is—it would not solve the problem that most hon. Members have described.

For example, the classic second home owner has a substantial degree of permanency in his second home. He may go there only for two weeks in the year, but he may have owned it for five or 10 years. There is another category, too, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). I refer to time sharing. There is certainly a degree of permanence about that, because when someone becomes involved in a time-share contract to purchase occupation, use and residence at a particular property, he does so in perpetuity. He buys a week per year in a property. That is a substantial degree of permanence.

Various amendments have been tabled. Some try to assess what the principal residence is, while others place an obligation on the elector to choose. I should be satisfied if the elector had to decide, when he went on the register, what his principal residence was. That would be sufficient. It would remove the problem of electors choosing at will. There is so much dissatisfaction about this issue, and the Minister has so much misjudged the Committee, that I feel that the Committee should return to it at a later stage. The consensus that existed in the Select Committee, when all the parties agreed that something should be done about multiple registration, has been seen again tonight.

We cannot leave the matter here. In view of the Minister's technical criticisms of some of the amendments, and the movement of opinion, perhaps towards an amendment based on the elector choosing which register to be on, I think that the Committee should return to the issue on Report. On that basis, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 15

RIGHT OF A VOLUNTARY PATIENT TO REGISTER

'In the Principal Act, section 7(4)*(d)*(iv), leave out "(other than a mental hospital)" and insert the words "or now resides" after "resided".'.—*[Mr. Stern.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Stern: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The subject matter of the new clause has been raised in the House on several occasions, the most recent being when we debated the Mental Health (Amendment) Bill on Report on 18 October 1982. The wording, however, dates back to the Speaker's Conference of 1973-74, which recommended on 25 October 1973 that the Representation of the People Act 1949 be amended so that it ceased to exclude

"registration in respect of residence of patients at mental hospitals . . . in that all patients in general hospitals . . . can be so registered . . . to place patients in mental hospitals on the same footing as those in general hospitals."

But the difference that I am describing goes back to 1918 and the Representation of the People Act of that year, which provided that

"those in a lunatic asylum, workhouse, poorhouse or any similar institution should not be treated as resident there for electoral purposes."

It was the view of the Home Office in 1973 that that provision was based on the concept that a recipient of charity could not be regarded as sufficiently independent to vote.

The present position dates from 1948. In the Representation of the People Act 1949, the case for excluding registration in respect of residents of mental hospitals was based on the assumption that patients in such hospitals might resent their presence in such hospitals being made public.

Those arguments seem to have gone by the board, and the principal argument adduced by the Home Office when it came to arguing against the franchise to voluntary patients at the time of the 1973 Speaker's Conference was that mental hospitals drew their patients from a wider catchment area than other hospitals and that the result of a poll could be materially affected by patients not otherwise identified with the locality.

That argument was used by the Minister in the debate in 1982 to which I referred, when he said:

"Many psychiatric hospitals are of a considerable size—a thousand beds and more. If patients were given the right to vote in the area where the hospital is situated, this could lead to a

sudden large increase in the electorate in that area. This is naturally viewed with apprehension by local communities. Mental patients will inevitably be to some extent isolated from day-to-day life. We cannot expect them to take a full part in local affairs. Yet the votes of a thousand or so patients could exercise a disproportionate influence, particularly at local elections. The right to cast them could cause resentment in a field where all want to see fears broken down and not exacerbated." —[*Official Report*, 18 October 1982; Vol. 29, c. 178.]

That argument—which can be summed up by the word "swamping"; the fear that the votes from a mental hospital would be of undue significance in terms of a local or general election—has been proved to be unnecessary on two grounds.

It was argued by the Minister in 1982 that the registration of mental patients in the hospitals in which they lived would be inappropriate because they could not play a full part in local affairs. I shall deal with that argument later.

The Minister argued also that mental patients would swamp the electorate in the area in which the mental hospital was situated. Since the 1982 Act, the reverse has occurred. I am indebted to two officials of MIND, David Brandon and William Bingley, for research not in my area of the south-west—that has proved too difficult—but in the north-west. They have monitored the effect of the changes in the 1982 Act which were designed to make it easier for voluntary patients to register to vote. By 1984, when the Act was well known and fully effective, of a total of 4,881 voluntary patients in 11 hospitals in the north-west 251 patients had registered to vote under provisions which were designed, according to the Minister, to give voluntary patients a greatly increased opportunity to vote.

12 midnight

It could be argued that the low rate of registration was caused by the fact that the majority of patients in those hospitals were incapable of voting under the voting test established in the 1982 Act. On looking at the most capable patients—called the Wessex category 1 patients — who are most likely to be going out into the community under the policy of care in the community one finds that, of a total of 614 such patients in the north-west, only 170 had registered to vote.

It is clear that swamping, the ability of potential voters in a mental hospital to control the local electorate, is not happening and was never going to happen, because the number of people from a mental hospital who vote is tiny in proportion to the total population of that hospital. It is clear also that there are other obstacles to a capable person who is a voluntary patient registering to vote. Two obstacles are placed in the way of a long-term, long-stay voluntary patient before he can exercise his vote. The first is the voting test which was set up by the Mental Health (Amendment) Act 1982. I do not propose in this new clause any change in the voting test, despite the fact that the principle of a voting test is abhorrent to many people. The 1982 voting test was a new provision which has not yet been given sufficient time to ascertain how it operates.

The second obstacle is residence. The Government's intention, as set out in the debate on the 1982 legislation, was clear. It is equally clear that what the Government intended has not happened. The Government said:

"The declaration will specify the address outside the hospital at which the patient is to be registered as an elector. Normally this would be the patient's home address, the address of his family, but patients who have no home address will be able to declare an address at which they were resident before admission or, if necessary, they will be able to declare the address to which they expect to be discharged . . . We have deliberately drawn the provision widely enough to ensure that no voluntary patient will be deprived of a vote because he cannot supply an address." —[*Official Report*, 18 October 1982; Vol. 29, c. 179.]

With the greatest respect to the then Minister, subsequent events have proved that that provision was not drawn nearly widely enough. The figures that I have just quoted make it clear that it is the residence provision—the fiction that a hospital in which someone has lived for 30 or 40 years is not his residence—that prevents a considerable number of people from registering to vote.

Residence is a fact. In the debate on new clause 2, the Minister said—I was not asleep throughout the whole debate—that residence implies a substantial degree of permanence. Is residence in a hospital for 30 or 40 years not permanent enough for him?

In our electoral legislation, we rightly tie representation to residence. In this one area, we untie the link. One class of potential voters are not entitled to vote where they reside. We create the fiction that there is somewhere else where they should be entitled to vote, if they choose to take up the option to do so.

I recently held surgeries or advice centres in the two hospitals for the mentally handicapped in my constituency. Not surprisingly, I found that the voluntary patients were bringing to me perfectly normal problems. Their problems were such as we hear about in our surgeries every day—problems about local transport and worries about what they read in the newspapers and about local employment opportunities. But half way through the surgery, it suddenly occurred to me that I was probably breaking every parliamentary rule that exists because, if the people talking to me had registered to vote, they were undoubtedly the constituents of any hon. Member other than myself.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is not breaking a parliamentary rule. He is breaking a parliamentary custom. There is a difference.

Mr. Stern: I am delighted to accept that correction, but some of us do not even like to break parliamentary customs.

Some of those people might only be entitled to register to vote in a constituency perhaps 300 miles away where they might have lived 30 or 40 years earlier. They could not take any of their problems to their hon. Member or to their theoretical local council.

As I have said, the then Minister said of such patients in the 1982 debate that

"We cannot expect them to take a full part in local affairs." —[*Official Report*, 18 October 1982; Vol. 29, c. 178.]

Perhaps that is not surprising when they have no opportunity to play their part. *[Interruption.]* When they wish to make known their opinions about local transport services, whether public or private, it is to the local Member of Parliament that they should be able to turn. When they want to express an opinion about social services in the hospital or to bring pressure to bear on local training centre provision, it is their local Member of Parliament on whom they will wish to rely. They will want to rely on their local Member of Parliament for these and other grievances.

There is another, specific anomaly. According to the 1973 Speaker's Conference:

"the disqualification rests on the actual residence, if they have a home address outside the hospital. If I go for a long stay into a normal hospital and I have a private address, then I can vote

[Mr. Stern]

by virtue of having a private address. If my home has to be sold up and I am in this hospital I can then give the hospital address as my address, and this will be accepted for voting purposes. If I go into a mental hospital and I have a home address, I can still vote by virtue of having a home address. If my home is sold up I can not then give the hospital as my address for voting purposes."

As long as that remains the case, discrimination against voluntary and long-stay patients in mental hospitals will remain an issue.

This is genuine discrimination against people who are entitled to vote as anyone else but who are asked to jump over special hurdles to be able to exercise their vote. They are a small number of people who can already be forced to pass the voting test and who have often been in hospital long enough genuinely to be able to claim that it is their residence. Under existing legislation, however, they are denied the vote. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to think again and to accept new clause 15.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend has made an interesting speech on a matter about which I know he feels strongly. I shall try to reply in the same spirit. The present arrangements by which voluntary patients at mental hospitals are permitted to register as electors and vote were introduced by the Mental Health (Amendment) Act 1982. That was a substantial step forward, which we might have hoped would settle the matter for some time.

My hon. Friend will know from his careful research —he was not an hon. Member at that time—that the Standing Committee on the Bill introduced a provision, against Government advice, allowing such patients to be included in the register for their hospital address in the usual way. When the matter came back to the House, there was substantial objection to that proposal, but the spirit of the Committee's proposal was accepted by giving voluntary mental hospital patients the right to register as electors, but only in respect of an address other than the hospital. That is how the matter was left in the Representation of the People Act 1983.

I do not know whether the reason why so few people have registered has to do with the qualifications for registration and the tests that have been set, or with the qualifying address. I am not persuaded that it has anything to do with the qualifying address, because servicemen register on the same basis. Some of them may have been away for some time from the address at which they notionally register. My hon. Friend may tell the organisations which are pressing the issue and which are in contact with him that I am doubtful whether the spirit of the Committee is with him in seeking to reopen matters that after exhaustive consideration were resolved as recently as 1982. Although he is fully entitled to put down a marker, as he has done, I am not sure that there is significant support for the proposed change. Although I understand the sincerity of his views, I am afraid that I must advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to resist the new clause.

12.15 am

Mr. Stern: I remind my right hon. Friend the Minister that the recommendation by the Speaker's Conference in 1973 of this change was unanimous. Therefore, I hope that he does not believe that the debate in 1982, which was admitted to have resulted in a compromise, has settled the issue for all time I expect that it will be raised again and again until what I see as an injustice is corrected. In view of my hon. Friend's comments and what he says about an apparent lack of support in the Committee, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 19

ADDRESSES OF PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES NOT TO BE REQUIRED

'In Schedule 1 to the principal Act, in paragraph 6 (nomination of candidates) the words "home address in full" shall be omitted, and the form of nomination paper set out in the Appendix to the Schedule shall be amended accordingly.'.— *[Mr. Gregory.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Gregory: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 19 suggests that a parliamentary candidate should not put his private address on the ballot paper. The reason behind it is security. In former days, parliamentary candidates at the hustings participated fully and people knew where candidates came from and their addresses. Nowadays, we have international espionage, international warfare, anti-vivisection lobbies and a variety of areas in which candidates are subject not simply to verbal abuse, but to physical harm. Therefore, if my hon. Friend the Minister can give a good reason why the address should be retained on the ballot paper, I shall be happy to withdraw the new clause. However, at present, I cannot see why 22c Acacia avenue, followed by the postal address, needs to be on the ballot paper.

If one wishes to show the principal conurbation where a candidate resides, it can be given on his manifesto, and if it is absolutely necessary for it to be on the ballot paper I would be happy to modify the new clause, perhaps on Report, to show the town or city. I see no good reason why genuine parliamentary candidates should be open to abuse and threats to their safety and security by giving their full private address.

Mr. Barron: What evidence can the hon. Gentleman give the Committee of acts of violence to parliamentary candidates? It was certainly not offered to me. Does he think that people in Rother Valley may have been influenced by where the three candidates lived? I have lived there for nearly 30 years, another lived in Reading and the third in London. Does the hon. Gentleman think that that might have influenced voters? In those circumstances, his clause might influence people's minds.

Mr. Gregory: The hon. Gentleman has fallen into the trap that I suggested. If he feels that it is material to show from where a candidate comes and the fact that he has been in the Rother Valley for 30 years, that can legitimately be shown in the manifesto. The candidate could put his private address in also, and some candidates do. The town, city or principal place of residence could be put on the ballot paper. A candidate's private address should not be put on the ballot paper. He is then open to the most invidious physical abuse and other difficulties such as we have seen in Northern Ireland. My hon. Friend the Minister is aware of the problems because of his keen interest in the welfare of animals.

We have international terrorism. Rother Valley may not yet have succumbed to it. I hope that the hon. Member

aspires to higher office when terrorists may take a greater interest in him. I belive that the House has a duty to look after genuine parliamentary candidates.

I hope that the spirit of the new clause will be accepted by my hon. Friend and the House. It does not stop anyone from putting his full address on the manifesto or the town or city on the ballot paper.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not clear that some candidates cannot afford to distribute an election address and yet they may wish to tell the electorate that they live locally? How will their problem be resolved?

Mr. Gregory: Their problem can be easily resolved. The number of words allowed on the ballot paper as part of a supporting explanation would permit the candidate to show that he was a local resident. The hon. Gentleman has not raised a genuine difficulty.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is not that a most undemocratic idea? My hon. Friend would be shutting off the aspiring Member from his constituency. He might as well say that all Members of Parliament should go ex-directory. He is denying constituents the chance of getting hold of their Member of Parliament when they may need him.

Mr. Gregory: I am amazed that my hon. Friend should put that above the personal safety of genuine parliamentary candidates.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: We are not cowards.

Mr. Gregory: I am not so discourteous as to suggest that my hon. Friend has had no experience of international terrorism. If she had an iota of an idea, she would not subject people to that form of abuse and blackmail. I hope that she never is. A number of hon. Members have been subject to it. If she brings her private transport into the Mother of Parliaments, she will be aware of the checks to which we are subjected. I hope that safety will not be disregarded, and that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept the new clause.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) raises the terrible spectre of international terrorism swooping down on the Monster Raving Loony candidate for any by-election. I have heard a great deal of piffle spoken in my life, but the hon. Gentleman's argument is as nonsensical as any that I have ever heard.

Who does the hon. Gentleman think he is that terrorists want him? He has taken his own precautions. My hon. Friends, on my behalf, have checked all available reference books — "Vacher's", "Dods" and "Who's Who"—and he has concealed his address all right. They will not get him unless they come to the House of Commons which he identifies as his address, unlike the Under-Secretary who properly lists his address where anyone — animal lib — *[Interruption.]* Well, he gets a free paint job on his house in that way. The Opposition are completely opposed to the new clause. Electors have the right to know the address of the candidate who is putting himself or herself before them. It is as simple as that. Candidates for the House of Commons are not separated from the people by candidature, let alone by election. We are part of the common people. We are not different or special. We ought not to expect any extra protection, safeguard or security that is not available to any other member of the population. The moment elected representatives or people seeking election regard themselves as superior, separate, part of an elite or a target then, if they do not want it, they have a good solution —do not stand for Parliament. Therefore, I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will kick this one right out.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Anyone who stands for election to the House of Commons knows that he is taking risks on his own behalf and on behalf of his family. Anyone who does not want to take the risk does not have to stand for Parliament.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) fondly imagines that those who are determined to injure him will not find him just because his address is not in the telephone book or in *Who's Who*. What a lot of nonsense that is. Those who are determined to perpetrate acts of terrorism, to injure or to damage on political grounds will seek out their victims. The chances are that they will find them. We take that risk voluntarily.

In the aftermath of the dreadful Brighton bombing last year we heard one of the few moments of agreement in the House when there was a fine exchange between the Prime Minister and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). During that exchange I thought that hon. Members on all sides accepted that the process of democracy should continue unabated and unaffected by the acts perpetrated by terrorists and that we must not be cowed into any form of fear or submission because of those acts.

I understand and respect the motives behind the new clause. I do not share the views of those who suggest that it is simply a way of concealing the fact that candidates have come from far away to stand for election. That will come out in any event during the campaign if the local newspapers are reasonably responsible.

We must surely maintain the spirit of the exchange shortly after the Brighton bombing, by resisting the new clause with as great a majority as we can muster.

Mr. Mellor: I was genuinely interested to hear what the Committee thought of the new clause. I think that a message has come across to me. We need to recognise that there is a real issue involved. When the Select Committee dealt with this matter, it recommended that we should reconsider the requirement that the candidate's home address should be printed on the ballot paper.

In regard to the 1979 general election the Select Committee said in its report:

"a good deal of concern was expressed both by the police and the political parties about the security of candidates, and the Conservative Party witness told us that some candidates were most unhappy at having to disclose their private addresses. In view of the recent incidence of terrorism, we consider that the publication of a candidate's home address could lay him open to an unnecessary degree of danger, and we do not believe that its appearance on the ballot paper carries any great significance for voters".

In fact, that was one of the recommendations that we did not accept. We concluded that, because the candidate's address is also given on the nomination paper and the published statement of persons nominated, little would be achieved by removing it from the ballot paper. That probably remains the right view, although I have great respect for what my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said. If scope had been given by the response of the Committee, I would have been prepared to take the matter further.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I do not rule out that it might be possible at some stage to examine the matter again. [HON.

10.15 pm

Mr. Bermingham: I thought that the debate was on new clause 1. Perhaps we can return to that. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) has left the Chamber, but perhaps he will read what I say tomorrow. I intervened in his speech for one reason only. I have read the document which is the product of the joint wisdom of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties. I read it because I am interested in Boundary Commissions and their activities. *[Interruption.]* Again, one of our latecomers is making silly remarks.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South rightly talked about communities. That argument has been at the heart of most Boundary Commission cases. He complained that Stockton was divided in two. I looked carefully at the document to see how communities could be calculated. If we are to have multi-Member constituencies across the country, they should, presumably, be roughly of the same size. How on earth does one equate the community of interest in Leicester which has three seats with the community of interest in Sheffield which has six with the community of interest in Liverpool which has six, with the community of interest in Birmingham which, if my memory serves me correctly has 12? There is no way in which the seats can be made the same size. If the London problem is added in, the situation then becomes absurd.

When I put that matter to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), he referred to the county councils. We changed those boundaries in 1974 and created all sorts of new things. We destroyed no end of communities of interests while we were at it and we still have not got it right. Where does the community of interest lie in the Oxfordshire-Wiltshire border? What divides the interests of one village from those of a village two or three miles away?

No matter how hard one looks at the idea of creating large conglomerate areas with multi-Member representation, there is no way in which those areas can be balanced in a country with some 50-odd million people with diverse social, cultural and work patterns. Compare Cumbria with Cornwall. The needs are different. The seats need to be smaller. I was once shot down by a Boundary Commission for suggesting that we should reduce the size of all parliamentary seats to 50,000. That would give us about 1,000 hon. Members. We cannot have 650, so I do not know what we would do with 1,000. But at least that was the only figure we could calculate where you could get real communities. That is the basic problem. That is why this new clause is really a load of rubbish from top to bottom.

It is easy to say that we will have a single transferable vote as a panacea for all ills. I do not for one moment believe that the system we have at present satisfies all the criteria of representation that one should perhaps have in a parliamentary democracy. It has ills, but of all the systems in Europe, the western world or the democratic world, at least this can be said for our system: it may have its faults but it is the best one we have. So let us not seek to replace it with a system that has as many flaws as any other system in the world.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the hon. Gentleman really believe that we have such a perfect system when a party can decrease its vote, as that party did at the last election, by 3 per cent. and put up the number of its members in this House by about 100?

Mr. Bermingham: I can answer that question extremely simply. If we have a boundary commission that produces a variation in seat size of from 48,000 to 49,000 in England alone up to some 80,000-odd or, if we take the Isle of Wight, over 100,000, and which quite arbitrarily takes as the envelope size the shire county or the metropolitan county and does not allow old communities to rejoin in crossing those boundaries, of course we get electoral distortion. If the hon. Member wishes me to spend many hours lecturing to him about this, I will do so with pleasure.

If we had had a commission that allowed us to go for comparative numeracy, we would indeed have got a very different result in the electoral voting system in 1983. If we take the London area as a small example of this and compare seats in Richmond and areas such as that with the larger seats in Tottenham and places like that, and allow the voting constituencies to cross the London borough boundaries, which are in themselves quite arbitrary, I think the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that the pattern of results within the London area, even on the same votes cast, would have produced a very different parliamentary result.

So our system is not perfect, but it is indeed the best system we have; and long may it remain so.

Mr. Mellor: By an interesting chance we are debating this motion exactly 100 years after it first became the general rule in this country that we elected our Parliament on a first-past-the-post system in single-Member constituencies. This system having been an ornament of our democracy for a century, I should have thought that a compelling and cogent case would need to be advanced before we would contemplate changing it. I do not think that there can be many people who arrived here this evening anxious to believe in the case for proportional representation, but sceptical about it, who would feel that the heavy burden of proof had been discharged by the Benchers opposite during this debate.

I will say one thing in favour of what we have seen this evening. It has been a very different Liberal party from that to which we are accustomed. We are accustomed in the House to debating some of the great issues that trouble our country—and, indeed, trouble many other countries of the world, including some of those with proportional representation systems—with the second Bench either empty or with one disconsolate, rather depressed-looking individual——

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: No. I am not going to give way until I have finished the point. I do not know where the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has spent the evening, but it has certainly not been in this Chamber and it behoves him to keep quiet. There has often been just one disconsolate-looking Member, frequently making a low-key and inconsequential contribution to the debate. But what do we find this evening? They are as men rejuvenated, as if bottles of Phyllosan had been consumed before the great ordeal of delighting us all came upon them.

The smell of power—the thought of getting their noses into the trough of office—has so excited them that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is waving his arms around like a windmill. *[Interruption.]* I shall not be bullied into giving way.

Alliance Members are supposed to be the advocates of the new politics, but they are as boorish as some of us exponents of the old politics when enough of them are gathered together to give them a bit of Dutch courage. We are treated to the delightful prospect of the hon. Member for Mossley Hill behaving like a spring chicken and waving his arms like a windmill, but no amount of animation gives the case the intellectual substance that it so sadly lacks.

Mr. Beith: I hope that the Minister intends to address himself to matters of intellectual substance rather than continuing to make silly jibes. As he has his back to the Conservative benches he may not have realised that when I was addressing the Committee his party was represented by two or three or at most four hon. Members.

Mr. Mellor: I was talking about all the other evenings that we spend here, although I appreciate that the occasions on which Alliance Members are present stick more readily in their memories.

We have had no coherent explanation of the system which alliance Members wish us to adopt and no coherent defence of the manifest failures and inadequacies of proportional representation in so many other countries. Without the advantage of a briefing on the Fisher committee, by which the alliance sets so much store, although I listened with as much care as I could muster to the speeches today, I should have lacked any insight into the type of system which the alliance wishes to impose on us.

No answer was given to the question of numbers and the variation in the size of constituencies, although Labour Members asked pertinent questions on the subject. I believe that I can provide the answer, although it should not be for me to do so. According to the Fisher committee, some constituencies would have eight Members, others would have five and one or two would have just one. "There's a funny thing," as the late Max Miller would say. And blow me down, the constituencies to have just one Member under the Fisher proposals are the Isle of Wight and Orkney and Shetland. Why should that be? The answer is, of course, that those are two of the few constituencies already represented by Liberals, so there is no need to mess around with the boundaries there, is there? No, indeed there is not.

It has not been shown to anyone's satisfaction how eight Members with a large constituency will be better able to represent their constituents' interests in the House or that the links between the single Member and his constituency will not be severed. It is fatuous for the hon. Member for Mossley Hill to assert that one has to be in the same party to represent a constituent's interest. That is nonsense.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: It is an insult.

Mr. Mellor: As my hon. Friend says, it is an insult. Either the link between the individual Member and his constituency would snap, or the result would be the situation that has occurred in the Republic of Ireland. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), who admittedly outstayed his welcome a little, was jeered when he brought the Republic of Ireland into the discussion, but the system proposed by Fisher is almost identical to that obtaining in the Republic of Ireland. Is that the paradise free from unemployment, inflation and all the other problems which the Alliance would have us believe have been brought upon this country by the first-past-the-post system? Again, Irish politics is riven by a parochialism made essential by the fact that each one of five Members is vying to persuade the same set of constituents that he alone holds the key to their interest and that he is capable of being even more parochial than the next Member.

10.30 pm

Mr. Alton: Does this mean that the Government are to bring forward proposals for a first-past-the-post system in Northern Ireland for the European Assembly elections?

Mr. Mellor: That is a flimsy red herring. The more that the hon. Gentleman laughs and thinks that he has been frightfully clever, the more convinced I am that he has raised a flimsy red herring. We have had the politics of the snake oil salesman and nothing of new politics. Do we want the panaceas for unemployment, nationalisation and incomes policy, all the vulgar policies to which we have been subjected, including bad weather and diarrhoea? It is argued that we must have something other than a first-past-the-post system and that without it everything will be so different.

I was fascinated by the intervention of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). I note that he is hiding behind his brief, as well as he might. In an intervention by the hon. and learned Gentleman in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) we were informed that something other than a first-past-the-post system would cure all national ills. Although its aim is to give representation to minority parties, we are told that it is only minorities that everyone loves. It seems that only those minorities will be represented in the House of Commons. That is what the hon. and learned Gentleman told us without the flicker of a smile on his face. This is not the National Front——

Mr. Alex Carlile: The Minister is referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Mr. Johnston).

Mr. Mellor: I am not surprised. There is no question of the National Front and the British National party being represented. Those are minorities that are unacceptable and the system would be well capable, apparently, of weeding them out.

I do not think that the issue is quite as simple as that. We have been told about the way in which the proportional system of representation has worked in other countries, but the charges which have been made against its inadequacies are hard to laugh off. The state of Israel, for example, has the most perfect system of PR, short of the Weimar republic in the 1920s. Every minority that polls over 1 per cent. of the total is represented in Israel, but that does not produce the happiest example of a parliamentary democracy. However, Liberal Members say that their form of PR would not be like that. Of course it would not.

Mr. Beith: It would not.

Mr. Mellor: I believe the hon. Gentleman when he says that. The more tantalising example—it is the one which has made Liberal Members so animated this evening—is that of West Germany. In that country there are two parties which are both capable of polling well over 40 per cent. of the vote at most elections. However, there is a party which is the equivalent of the Liberal party. That party has a 10 per cent. share of the poll even at its best,

Mr. Dubs: The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) said that there were very few opportunities for the House to discuss this matter. In fact, he took full advantage of the many opportunities to discuss it in the debates in Committee and on the Floor of the House on the British Nationality Bill and the House rejected his arguments. The Select Committee also unanimously rejected the argument that he has put forward.

If by some mischance the hon. Gentleman's proposal became law electoral registration officers would be in a very difficult situation. They would have to go through the voting lists and get rid of several hundred thousand people of Irish origin and more than a million people of Commonwealth origin who would not longer be eligible to vote. Few things could be more damaging to the position of Irish and Commonwealth people in this country than the hon. Gentleman's proposal.

Mr. Winnick: The attitude of the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) is very much in line with the comments of the Minister of State, Department of Employment, about Bongo Bongo land. It shows the same kind of racialism, which runs pretty deep in the Conservative party.

Mr. Stanbrook: The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) referred to the difficulties of registration officers in deciding whether a person was entitled to vote as a British citizen, but there would be no more difficulty than there is now when the form states that the person concerned may be a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Irish Republic. Indeed, that entitlement is so vague and so badly understood by the average Briton that it is even more difficult for the registration officer to know who is entitled to vote. The result is that the registration officer does not make inquiries and provided that the householder has signed the form apparently in good faith the names are registered. That would even apply to aliens at present. There would be no extra difficulty if the form stated that the persons registered must be British citizens.

Mr. Dubs: I cannot possibly agree with that argument. There would be a great deal of difficulty if we had to devise a method whereby people of Irish origin had to identify themselves or be identified and to distinguish between those born here and those not born here so as to discover whether they were of British or Irish citizenship. It is no use the hon. Member for Orpington shaking his head. He knows perfectly well that until the British Nationality Act came along children born here to parents of Irish origin became British. There has been no attempt to date to distinguish between those of Irish origin who are now British and those who are not. Even if we could overcome the administrative procedures that have been put before us—it is said that they are simple, but I find them rather complicated—we would be faced with the invidious task of telling those who have had rights in this country for many years that they are to be taken away from them. That task would be all the more invidious as the Conservative Government made the solemn commitment during the passage of the British Nationality Bill that the existing rights of those already here would not be tampered with following the Bill's enactment. Is it being suggested that the Government should renege on that commitment? We would be following a sorry path if the Government sought to breach a commitment which was made so solemnly in response to questions from both sides of the House of Commons.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does the hon. Gentleman know of any other country which grants the right to vote in its elections to foreigners resident within?

Mr. Dubs: There are many features of Britain which are unique and I am happy about many of them. If other countries do things differently, we should not decide to copy them automatically. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not subscribe to the argument that he has just advanced, because he takes pride in the fact that there are features of the United Kingdom which are unique. He is employing a bogus argument which is not worthy of him.

If the provision in question were to become law, those from Ireland and the Commonwealth would see it as an affront. The Irish Government are in the process of providing reciprocal arrangements so that British people living in the Republic will have the right to vote. The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has questioned the loyalty of Commonwealth citizens to Britain. There is a problem for many of them because they want to become British citizens but find that wish difficult to realise because of Home Office difficulties that I do not wish to dwell upon now. For the hon. Gentleman to say that Commonwealth people have no loyalty to Britain—many of them are living and settled here—is casting an unpleasant aspersion on those who in many instances have thrown in their lot with this country. Some of them served in the British forces irrespective of whether they were of Irish or Commonwealth origin. The hon. Gentleman makes an unpleasant insinuation when he suggests that they are not behaving as loyal citizens.

We would be following a dangerous path if we followed the proposal that is urged upon us. It would be damaging to community relationships and I am confident that the Committee will say that it will have none of it.

Mr. Mellor: The voting rights of Irish and Commonwealth citizens were considered by the Select Committee; and the Committee recommended unanimously that civic rights arising out of the status established by the British Nationality Act 1948 and the Ireland Act 1949 should not be disturbed. The Government agree with the Select Committee on that point and nothing that has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has caused me to reconsider the wisdom of the Government's position. I hope that my hon. Friend will not press the new clause to a Division. If he does, I shall advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the motion.

Mr. Stanbrook: I intend to press the new clause to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 18, Noes 100.

Division No. 107] **[12.53 am**

AYES

Beggs, Roy	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Bruinvels, Peter	Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward	Nicholson, J.
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*	Powell, William *(Corby)*
Gregory, Conal	Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Ground, Patrick	Stanbrook, Ivor

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. William Ross and
Mr. K. Harvey.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Butcher, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cash, William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dewar, Donald
Dubs, Alfred
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Penhaligon, David
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 28

COMPULSORY VOTING

'(1) It shall be the duty of every elector to record his vote at each parliamentary election.

(2) It shall be the duty of each returning officer at the close of each election to prepare a list of the names and descriptions of the electors enrolled for his constituency who have not voted at the election, and to certify the list by statutory declaration under his hand.

(3) The list so certified shall in all proceedings be prima facie evidence of the contents thereof and of the fact that the electors whose name appear therein did not vote at the election.

(4) Within the prescribed period after the close of each election the returning officer shall send by post to each elector whose name appears on the list prepared in accordance with subsections (1) and (2) of this section, at the address mentioned in that list, a notice in the prescribed form, notifying the elector that he appears to have failed to vote at the election, and calling upon him to give a valid truthful and sufficient reason why he failed so to vote.

Provided that the return officer need not send a notification in any case where he is satisfied that the elector—

(a) is dead; or

(b) was absent from the United Kingdom on polling day; or

(c) is known to the returning officer to have been ineligible to vote at the election

(5) Before sending any such notice, the returning officer shall insert therein a date, not being less than twenty-one days after the date of posting of the notice, on which the form attached to the notice, duly filled up and signed by the elector, is to be in the hands of the returning officer.

(6) Every elector to whom a notice under this section has been sent shall fill up the form at the foot of the notice by stating on it the true reason why he failed so to vote, sign the form, and post it so as to reach the returning officer not later than the date inserted in the notice.

(7) If any elector is unable, by reason of absence from his place of living or physical incapacity, to fill up, sign, and post the form, within the time allowed under subsection (5) of this section, any other elector who has personal knowledge of the facts may, subject to the regulations, fill up, sign and post the form, duly witnessed, within that time, and the filling up, signing, and posting of the form may be treated as compliance by the first-mentioned elector with the provision of subsection (6) of this section.

(8) Upon receipt of a form referred to on either of the last two preceeding subsections, the returning officer shall endorse on the list prepared in accordance with subsection (2) of this section, opposite the name of the elector, his opinion whether or not the reason contained in the form is a valid and sufficient reason for the failure of the elector to vote.

(9) The returning officer shall endorse on the list, opposite the name of each elector to whom a notice under this section has been sent and from or on behalf of whom a form properly filled up, signed and witnessed has not been received by him, a note to that effect.

(10) The list prepared and endorsed by the returning officer, indicating—

(a) the names of the electors who did not vote at the election;

(b) the names of the electors from whom or on whose behalf the returning officer received, within the time allowed under subsection (5) of this section, forms properly filled up and signed; and

(c) the names of the electors who failed to reply within that time, and any extract therefrom, certified by the returning officer under his hand,

shall in all proceedings be prima facie evidence of the contents of such a list or extract, and of the fact that the electors whose names appear therein did not vote at the election, and that the notice specified in subsection (4) of this section was received by those electors, and that those electors did, or did not (as the case may be), comply with the requisitions contained in the notice within the time allowed under subsection (5) of this section.

(11) Every elector who—

(a) fails to vote at an election without a valid and sufficient reason for such failure; or

(b) on receipt of a notice in accordance with subsection (4) of this section, fails to fill up, sign and post within the time allowed under subsection (5) of this section the form (duly witnessed) which is attached to the notice; or

(c) states in such form a false reason for not having voted, or, in the case of an elector filling up or purporting to fill up a form on behalf of any other elector, in pursuance of subsection (7) of this section states in such form a false reason why that other elector did not vote,

shall be guilty of an offence for which the penalty shall be a fine of not less than £5 and not more than £50.

(12) Proceedings for an offence against this section shall not be instituted except by the Chief Electoral Returning Officer or an officer thereto authorised in writing by the Chief Electoral Returning Officer.—[*Mr. Barron.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Barron: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I have tabled the new clause to test the feeling of the Committee on the question of compulsory voting, though in view of the empty Benches and the lateness of the hour I do not think that I would carry opinion with me if I were to press the matter to a Division. However, I feel it important that the Committee has the opportunity to debate the issue.

The small turn-out at some elections is viewed with dismay, and while my new clause deals with parliamentary elections, I should like to see the concept applied both to central and local government elections. It seems ludicrous that councillors should be elected to office on the basis of only 12 or 15 per cent. of the electorate bothering to vote.

I have no doubt that from time to time hon. Members have considered the idea of compulsory voting. In a democratic society people have the right to vote; and, being sovereign, they also have the right not to vote. Our form of parliamentary democracy is based on that concept. There could be dangers inherent in that system, however, for if people did not feel the need to vote and turned out in extremely small numbers, we could find ourselves with a Government who were totally unrepresentative of the public at large. In other words, the Government could be elected more by apathy than by the voting determination of the people.

Of course, in a democratic society the state itself is sovereign. That is all the more reason why machinery is needed to ensure that people participate in the organs of government. We must, therefore, balance the two—the need to maintain free elections but to ensure that people participate by voting at elections.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. The Under-Secretary of State is endeavouring to prevent an hon. Member from intervening.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): A number of hon. Members are trying to tempt other hon. Members on all kinds of things. We should continue with the debate on the new clause.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) accept that the right not to vote must be as sacrosanct as the right to vote? Is it not unusual for a sponsored Member to propose this measure when the NUM is not terribly keen on ballots?

Mr. Barron: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Perhaps the Conservative party is not keen about electing chairmen. I thought that we were trying to discuss in detail the content of new clause 28. If hon. Members want to digress into a discussion on the mining industry or the absence of a ballot in the NUM, I would be prepared to discuss such matters with them.

People feel that compulsory voting is incompatible with free elections. I believe that it is logical to have compulsory voting while there is a free choice on how to cast one's vote. The individual must have the right to stand for election in a democracy. Some hon. Members might disagree, but I do not believe that there is anything wrong with that, given that people are casting their vote in an acceptable and democratic way and given that people are free to stand for election.

The only time it is wrong to have compulsory voting is when something prevents people from standing for election. We should approach this issue in that light rather than see it as a matter of people being forced into a ballot booth to vote. Perhaps Conservative Members will put their views on that point later.

The provisions in the new clause are based primarily on what happens in Australia where there has been compulsory voting for a long time. I do not believe that any one would say that there is great opposition in Australia to compulsory voting. We are not talking about a country which people view badly. The turnout in general elections in Australia is about 96 per cent. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. It is becoming increasingly difficult to listen to my hon. Friend with meetings, sub-meetings and conversations on the Conservative Benches. My hon. Friend is making an important point.

Hon. Members: Look at the Opposition Front Bench.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I deplore the number of sedentary interventions.

Mr. Barron: The provisions are based on what happens in Australia, which is a part of the Commonwealth. All hon. Members should recognise that we can learn from what happens in different parts of the Commonwealth, even though sometimes Conservatives give the impression that we cannot. Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the Indian Congress party, was once asked what he thought of western civilisation. He said that it would be a good idea. When I consider how the civilised part of the globe conducts its affairs, I think that he was quite right. We have much to learn from different parts of the Commonwealth and from its leaders.

We should believe in the system as it operates in Australia. Individually — I have never discussed the matter with my party — I believe that in any circumstances it is better that more people should vote than fewer. I therefore do not object to compulsory voting.

1.15 am

Mr. Stanbrook: How would the hon. Gentleman cope with those who wished to abstain on an issue? Abstaining can be a positive act. It is a perfectly honourable thing to do and is often done in this place.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman should look at new clause 28 and elsewhere. In Australia, since the introduction of compulsory voting, there have naturally been more spoilt ballot papers. Simply by the law of averages, more voting would mean more spoilt ballot papers. One could make provision for abstention to be registered on the ballot paper, but even if there were such provision, someone might decide not to vote at all as a matter of principle. One would then have to consider the penalties that might be incurred for not voting as required by the state. In Australia the penalties are very small, and I submit that the penalties in new clause 28 should be small, too. I suggest a fine of

"not less than £5 and not more than £50."

Even £50 is not a great sum for some or perhaps most people in this country, given that parliamentary elections are only held once every five years. I do not believe that the right to abstain is a major issue.

Mr. Winnick: I am most interested in my hon. Friend's arguments. Many hon. Members will wish to speak on the new clause, which offers scope for much useful debating. It is rather early in the evening——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Is this an intervention or a speech? If it is an intervention, it must be brief.

Mr. Winnick: Would my hon. Friend make provision at some future stage of the progress of the Bill for those who refused to vote on religious grounds, such as Jehovah's witnesses? If it was accepted that some people cannot vote because it is against their principles to do so, there might be more sympathy for what my hon. Friend is trying to do.

Mr. Barron: That would be a difficult question. If one made provision for such people, many other people might claim exemption, too. To some people, the right to abstain itself could be as important as a religious principle. We need to make a decision about the penalties to be imposed. I would not be prepared to make any detailed provision for the right to abstain of religious groups or of anyone else. Anarchists, too, might wish to be added to the list, if I was prepared to make one.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does my hon. Friend agree that we might devise the term "Christian Abstentionist" to cover people who wanted to be in that category?

Mr. Barron: We could define such a group, but that does nothing to stop us from opening the door to people getting away from exercising their vote, which is what the state is asking them to do.

Mr. Bermingham: It is not the state asking the individual to intervene but the individual exercising the right to influence the state. Surely my hon. Friend has it the wrong way round.

Mr. Barron: I dealt with rights at the beginning of my speech. I thought that my hon. Friend had been listening.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is interesting that the Liberal Benches were full when we were discussing proportional representation and that there is only one Liberal Member and no Social Democratic Members present now?

Mr. Barron: Perhaps the alliance does not think that my new clause will get it as many seats in the House as new clause 1.

The only objection that anyone could have to new clause 28 is subsection (1), which provides:

"It shall be the duty of every elector to record his vote at each parliamentary election."

Later parts of the new clause deal with the anomalies, on the assumption that subsection (1) is accepted. No major crime is involved and nobody would be sent to prison.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is said in Australia that compulsory voting favours the Labour party? It is clear that Labour voters often do not vote. Would my hon. Friend like to reflect on that while on his feet?

Mr. Barron: I have found no such relationship. My hon. Friend has said that Bob Hawke and his party have gained from compulsory voting, but it seems to me that the real beneficiary is the country as more people participate in elections.

I have some figures on general election turn-outs in Australia before and after legislation. People will want to know why I tabled new clause 28, and stand in the Chamber at this early hour of the morning to discuss compulsory voting. The third edition of the 1977 Australian encyclopaedia gives the turn-out figures.

Mr. Winnick: What page?

Mr. Barron: It is page 349. It states:

"The penalties for non-voting are small, but nevertheless the system produces an average poll of 90 per cent. of the registered voters, as compared with less than 50 per cent. when voting was optional."

In Australia the turn-out was lower before compulsory voting was introduced than it is now in general elections in the United Kingdom. The entry continues:

"The 50% figure is actually something of an exaggeration, as the total turnout at the general elections before 1925 was:

1901	52·1%;
1903	39·0%;
1906	46·9%;
1910	59·8%;
1913	70·9%;
1914	61·4%;
1917	68·2%;
1919	69·4%;
1922	54·3%.

It is, however, undoubtedly true that the 1925 election showed an immediate leap to 90·5%."

At subsequent elections the turn-out has always been between 90 per cent. and 96 per cent. All hon. Members will agree that in Australia since 1925 turn-outs have been substantially higher than those in Great Britain.

Subsection (2) to subsection (10) of the new clause deal with the practicalities of finding out exactly who has not voted, and sets out the manner in which to define that. A list is made of those who have not voted for

"valid truthful and sufficient reason".

It is important that the list is made up properly so that no one is penalised who should not be penalised because he has good reason for not turning out to vote at a general election. It is important that the introduction of compulsory voting in the United Kingdom should have the same safeguards. That must be considered extremely carefully.

Subsection (10) to subsection (12) deal with the penalties for people who have not voted and not given good reason for not having performed their duty. The penalties are not less than £5 and not more than £50.

I do not intend to go on for much longer. I am sure that some of my hon. Friends will be disappointed about that. This is an important matter and it should not be talked about frivolously. There is some merit in compulsory voting. It is not an infringement of anyone's right to decide whether to vote. It is a way to get more people to vote. The more people who vote the better. That would not necessarily mean that they are better informed politically. That is not something that we should decide on the turn-out in a general election. It has more to do with the education system, and the need for political parties to be active in society to ensure that people are politically more conscious when they go into a polling booth.

1.30 am

Mr. Beith: This is one of the most ludicrous and unattractive proposals that I have seen placed before us in the time that I have been a Member. It is the ultimate confession of failure. If we cannot persuade people to vote for us, we will force them to go into the polling station at a general election. It is not part of the democracy that any of us believe in that we have to force people to vote. Our approach must be to persuade them.

[Mr. Beith]

The new clause is not open to criticism. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has set out the details of what he has in mind. The true offence comes when one reads that the returning officer will send a form to each elector who has not voted inquiring why he failed to vote at the election

"and calling upon him to give a valid truthful and sufficient reason why he failed so to vote".

Someone might live in Rother Valley and find the hon. Member unattractive and not wish to vote for him. That person will receive one of these forms on the doormat and will have to give a

"valid truthful and sufficient reason"

for not voting. He will have to send the form back to the returning officer. When that local government officer receives the form he will give his opinion whether the reason contained on the form is a valid and sufficient explanation for the elector's failure to vote. That is grotesque. It is one of many such forms that would land on the doormat in the kind of society in which the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends would like us to live, where there is nothing that we can do for which we do not have the permission of the state, and where the failure to do the things that the state requires of us leads us to being dragged before some commissar to give sufficient and valid reason why we failed to do this, that or the other. That is not the kind of state in which I wish to live. I wish to live in a state where men are free. A state in which voting is compulsory is not relevant.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was a little hard on what I found to be an entertaining speech by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). He was right to raise the subject of getting more people to participate in our democracy. We all want that. I am not sure, however, that I can go all the way with him in thinking that we should make voting compulsory. We must recognise that people have the right to opt out as well as in. In any event, for the reasons that we have been going over interminably for the past two days, it is difficult to obtain an accurate register upon which one could base a compulsory voting system.

The hon. Gentleman was right to raise the issue. He has researched it carefully. A great many of the basic premises from which he starts are fair, but in going to the point of saying that there should be compulsory voting he has taken the matter a little too far. I hope that he will feel that, having properly aired the subject, he can let it go—and let us go as well.

Mr. Barron: I was nearly going to say that I was grateful for the Minister's comments. Having been given the opportunity to debate the matter, the Committee has not had a great deal to say, except in sedentary interventions.

The idea of forcing people to vote, which has been happening in Australia since 1925, has never stirred any great complaints about the inhuman or ill treatment of people casting votes in general elections in Australia. Earlier the hon. Member was trying to force people to vote by a different electoral system. I thought that there might have been further debate on the new clause.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 29

THREATENING LANGUAGE

'After section 97 of the principal Act (disturbances at election meetings) there shall be inserted the following section

"97(A) It shall be an offence for a person or persons at a lawful public meeting to which the last foregoing section applies, to use words which are threatening abusive or insulting to any racial group in Great Britain.".'.—*[Mr. Winnick.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Winnick: I beg to move. That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause deals with the difficulties which arise at meetings held by racist groups. The purpose of the new clause is to make it illegal:

"to use words which are threatening abusive or insulting to any racial group in Great Britain".

I have press cuttings referring to some of the scenes which took place at election time involving organisations like the National Front. It is interesting to note that a newspaper has argued that the way in which these organisations carry on racialist meetings at election time makes a mockery of the freedom to hold such meetings.

The Observer said on 29 April 1979:

"Freedom carries with it many responsibilities, and few would deny that to speak in such a way that groups of people are put in terror makes a mockery of that responsibility. Yet, as the law stands, the National Front has the right to hold meetings in areas with large immigrant communities and preach its frightening humiliating anti-gospel of race hate."

I agree with that comment. It is distasteful, repulsive and ugly that racist candidates can organise meetings at election time with the purpose of making threats and insulting speeches against people who belong to ethnic minority groups.

The law needs to be changed. If we say in the House of Commons that we are opposed to intimidation of people because of their race or colour, and if we pass legislation like the Race Relations Act 1976, we recognise the problem. The new clause tries to change the position in relation to election meetings. It is important that we should try to remove the possibility of the National Front deliberately holding a meeting in an area where it knows that there are a large number of Asians or blacks. This is precisely what Mosley did before the war. He held his meetings in areas like the east end, where there were a relatively large number of Jewish people.

The new clause is modest in scope. If the wording is faulty, obviously it can be rectified on Report. The problem is sufficiently serious for the minority groupings who feel threatened by National Front meetings to make us think that it should be possible to give them the kind of protection outlined in the clause.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am intervening in the debate as I feel that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) deserves support for the thrust of the new clause, which sets out to protect minorities. None of us can feel happy when in newspapers in various parts of the country and in news bulletins we hear reports of attacks, both physical and verbal, on minorities

Such minorities look to Parliament for the resolution of their difficulty. They feel that it is only in Parliament that decisions can be taken that can transform their position and secure their rights. The new clause is simple in so far as it makes it an offence for

"a person or persons at a lawful public meeting to which the last foregoing section applies, to use words which are threatening abusive or insulting to any racial group in Great Britain."

It is a simple new clause, and I should have thought that the Minister, who on some issues tonight has shown a little flexibility, would think that in the light of the reports—I ask him to listen to what I am saying—that frequently are brought to the attention of his Department, the Government should respond.

The new clause can hardly be opposed in all reason by the Minister. I had thought that, in winding up, even if he were to be unwilling to accept the thrust of the new clause, he would wish and seek to give to the House undertakings that would meet the objectives as set out in the new clause.

My hon. Friend has several press cuttings that reveal that some chief constables believe that they currently have the powers to deal with the problem. However, there are other chief constables who recognise that the powers that they have are not sufficient to deal with it. Therefore, equally, the Minister should identify what powers he believes currently exist to deal with it. He should be willing to address himself in his reply to the question whether, in his view, and on the basis of reports that he has received from chief constables following incidents throughout the United Kingdom, it can be said that those powers are sufficient. I believe that they are not.

If the hon. Gentleman wishes to establish the basis of my belief and that of my hon. Friends who would seek to support me and my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North, he need do no more than invite to his Department, to discuss these matters with him, representatives of the various immigrant organisations in various parts of the United Kingdom, in places such as Birmingham, Manchester and London. When they come to the House and seek the ear of hon. Members, they repeatedly draw attention to what they believe to be a deficiency in the law. While on the one hand the Minister tells us that the law will work—no doubt he will try to reassure us of that when he winds up—on the other hand, those people tell us that the law is not working.

There is clearly a conflict in view. The only way that we can resolve such conflicts is either for internal mechanisms available to Members of Parliament in the form of Select Committees to flash into action, if that be the term, and carry out their own inquiries to establish the truth, or for the Minister himself to set up an independent inquiry or, indeed, a Home Office inquiry to establish the truth.

One way or another that problem must be resolved. People believe that those who address public meetings in the way that has been suggested by my hon. Friend are inclined to use language which is racial in tone and which can unsettle communities. If people believe that and know it to be true, it is for the Minister in this society to ensure that every possible legal power is available to the courts and to chief constables to secure compliance with the law and the protection of minority communities.

1.45 am

Mr. Bermingham: I take on board what my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has said, and I suggest that there has been, and has been known to have been, a difference in practice among various chief constables in dealing wth what are basically section 5 offences under the Public Order Act 1936. If the Minister were to undertake tonight to amend section 97 on Third Reading to make it clear to chief constables that section 97 is in line with section 5, and that therefore section 5 proceedings could be brought in future, we would overcome the problem and get rid of many of the arguments that have been put forward. In some areas police will prosecute people for offensive behaviour at public meetings, whereas in other areas the police do not seem willing to prosecute because they argue that they do not have the powers to bring those proceedings for incidents arising out of meetings.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) has, as always, been most helpful. In referring to a lack of consistency in prosecution practice he is referring to a gap in our criminal justice system to which we are applying our minds at this moment with the Prosecution of Offences Bill and the creation of the independent prosecution service, which should have the effect of achieving greater consistency in prosecution practice.

I listened with great care to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), supported by his hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The hon. Member for Walsall, North will remember our debate earlier in relation to the use of public meetings to hold rallies by racist groups and the discussion that we had on that. I think that I made it clear there that we share the hon. Gentleman's resentment at such behaviour and recognise that it is intended to be deliberately provocative. Indeed, as we know, in Southall in 1979 it succeeded in so being.

I have looked at the hon. Gentleman's new clause, and if I thought that there was any hiatus in the law I would be prepared to address it. But the law on this point is clear, and provided that we can make prosecution practice consistent, which I think the hon. Member for St. Helens, South will be minded to agree will come about with the independent prosecution service, it is hard to think that people will be able to stir up racial hatred in speeches without being brought to book.

I was invited by the hon. Member for Workington to state with clarity the present law. It is contained in section 5A of the Public Order Act 1936, which was amended by the Labour Government in 1976 by section 70 of the Race Relations Act 1976 to provide that:

"A person commits an offence if—

(a) he publishes or distributes written matter which is threatening, abusive or insulting; or"—

this is the relevant part for public meetings—

"*(b)* he uses in any public place or at any public meeting words which are threatening, abusive or insulting, in a case where, having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up against any racial group in Great Britain by the matter or words in question."

I should have thought that that would catch any racially inflammatory language of the kind the hon. Member for Walsall, North has rightly deplored. If, having had the opportunity of hearing what I say, he can bring to my notice any cases where it appears that the law is not being enforced, or any instances where reprehensible behaviour has occurred where apparently no breach of the law took place, I shall be more than willing to investigate.

I hope that I have made it clear to the hon. Gentleman that the law, which has been looked at within the last decade by a Labour Government, was intended, rightly, to be tight on these matters, and I hope that, certainly after

[Mr. Mellor]

the Prosecution of Offences Bill becomes law, we shall be able to deal with this problem wherever it might arise in the country.

Mr. Winnick: I have listened to the Minister and I think he recognises that the problem exists. The new clause was moved on the basis that as the Bill was going through the House it was a good opportunity to try to rectify the situation.

I have in my hand reports of meetings over the last few years in various parts of the country. They refer to riots at National Front meetings and make comments such as, "National Front meeting erupts into violence", "Police called to National Front election meeting", "Police break up electoral brawl", "Violence grows at hustings", and so on. It is in cases such as these that many of us are concerned that there is a breach of the law.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) pointed out, people seek protection from the House of Commons. It is all very well to say that protection exists, but if at a general election or a by-election meeting people come in who are little more than political gangsters, whose sole purpose is to produce as much violence and hatred as possible in an area where there are large numbers of people from an immigrant background, in my view the law needs to be rectified.

The Minister is saying that there might be some other means of tackling this problem in the near future, but I would be much happier if the Government were willing to accept either the new clause which I have moved, or another clause perhaps differently worded, which would to a large extent deal with the problem which I have outlined to the Committee today.

Question put and negatived.

Schedule 4

REPEALS

Amendment made: No. 84, in page 48, line 30, at end add—

'1984 c.60.	The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.	In Schedule 7, in Part I, in column 3 of the entry relating to the Representation of the People Act 1983, the words "In Schedule 1, paragraph 36"'. — *[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Bill, as amended, to be considered this day; and to be printed. [Bill 87.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

WINE REGIME

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9182/84, 11388/84 and 4096/85 (replacing 9469/84), draft Regulations reforming the wine regime and amendments to the original proposals; and supports the Government's intention to achieve reforms in the wine policy so as to curb over-production of wine and wine alcohol.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Human Embryos

1.54 am

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I beg to ask leave to present, on behalf of 1,000 or more of my constituents, a petition for the protection of the human embryo. This petition, which has been signed by constituents from all parts of South-West Hertfordshire, affirms that the newly fertilised human embryo is a real, living, individual human being.

Today, as the previously accepted moral position is pressed by scientific advances, it is perhaps opportune that I am presenting this petition on the very eve of the Second Reading of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). The petition concludes:

That this House of Commmons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure which involves the purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experimentation, unless this is done solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned.

To lie upon the Table.

1.55 am

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I beg to ask the leave of the House to present a petition signed by 3,450 people from all parts of my constituency relating to the Warnock report and the issues outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page). The petition is in the same terms as the one that he has presented. As he has so fully outlined the circumstances and as so many similar petitions have been presented to the House, I shall develop the matter no further save to say that I entirely agree with all those who have signed the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Molesworth Airbase

1.56 am

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I beg to ask the leave of the House to present a petition on behalf of myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), whom I am delighted to see in his place, and our constituents, relating to the Molesworth airfield. The petition reads as follows:

The Humble Petition of the residents of villages in the Parliamentary constituencies of Huntingdom and Corby

Sheweth

That there is disruption locally as the result of legal and illegal protests against the siting of Cruise Missiles on the Molesworth air-base.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House

Remove the illegal settlements on or near Molesworth Airfield

Provide adequate policing of the area to prevent the return of the illegal settlements

Enforce the law vigorously: prevent intimidation of residents and theft of property throughout the area

Ensure that the cost of the operation does not fall on the ratepayers but is funded by Central Government.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray &c.

The terms of the petition have to a substantial extent already been met and I know that my hon. Friend's constituents join my constituents in thanking those who have made that possible. The petition has been signed by 90 per cent. of the residents of the parishes of Clopton and Titchmarsh in the county of Northamptonshire and the parliamentary constituency of Corby, 90 per cent. of the inhibitants of the villages of Old Weston and Molesworth in the county of Cambridgeshire and parliamentary constituency of Huntingdon, and a substantial number of residents of surrounding villages in both counties.

Our constituents greatly resent the inaccuracies and distortions that have appeared in the media in the past few days and desire me to say that many of the reports have been entirely wrong. Our constituents are anxious that hereafter they be left alone by the people still unlawfully surrounding the Royal Air Force base. They wish to be left in peace to get on with their lives in the ordinary way. There has been substantial damage to crops and trees, theft of property and a large number of unfair allegations against our constituents. These are deeply resented and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdom joins me in expressing our support for our constituents and our determination to ensure that they are able to live their lives in peace hereafter.

To lie upon the Table.

Air Transport (Government Policy)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

1.58 am

Mr. Edward du Cann (Taunton): I have just one point to make and I am grateful for this opportunity to make it. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for being here to reply to the debate.

The air transport industry is one of Britain's success stories, but we need to work at keeping it that way. We cannot afford any more company failures such as those which wiped out a large part of Britain's passenger and all-cargo capacity in recent years. Some good names have gone from the passenger world and especially from the cargo world—Scimitar, British Cargo Airlines, Pelican and Redcoat. British Caledonian and British Airways, both brilliantly led companies, no longer have all-freighter aircraft, unlike Lufthansa, Air France, KLM, Japanese Airlines, and so on. One asks "Why not?". The all-British jet aircraft fleet has reduced from 21 to four. That is worrying and dangerous and, in my view, the reduction need never have happened. So I shall tell the House, if I may, what should be done by way of remedy. Before doing so, I declare my interest. I am the chairman of the company operating three of the four remaining freighters, and chairman also of its parent. My experience prompts me to voice considerable anxieties about the health of the British air transport industry. Cargo carrying is a small part of the air transport industry but what I have to say applies also to the passenger carrying industry. In any event, I believe that it is in Britain's vital interests, both strategic and economic, to maintain an effective and profitable presence in the market.

The way things are going, we shall soon have no British cargo-carrying industry left. If that happens, we shall be at the mercy of foreign operators. I am convinced that that would be unacceptable. There is an extraordinary parallel with our merchant fleet. Flags of convenience and lack of co-ordinated Government support are decimating British shipping. I do not want similar circumstances to be allowed to eliminate our aviation fleet. The road hauliers, too, have similar worries.

What is the solution or remedy? The British Government must be more positive in defending British interests. That is my advice. The Government must put Britain first. That is the clear suggestion that I wish to make to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

It is clear that 1984 and 1985 are proving to be watershed years for British air transport. The long and hard battle by the United Kingdom and United Kingdom operators to win cheaper fares on many air routes, both long and short-haul, is having considerable success. That is to be warmly welcomed, especially if it means cheaper fares in Europe. So is the deregulation of the United Kingdom's domestic routes. That, too, is a good start. Let us hope that that is extended to international routes. The route-swapping arrangement between the state-owned airlines and privately owned British Caledonian have been successfully launched. We hope this year to see specific proposals for the privatisation of British Airways and the British Airports Authority, another body which is well led by Sir Norman Payne.

The Government deserve great credit for this progress, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able to keep up the good work. However, there are other matters to be considered. For instance, what progress is there with the draft European Community air freight directive? It is essential that further improvements at Stansted, Heathrow and Gatwick go ahead without any more delay. Facilities must be able to cope with the traffic. Another and more worrying matter is the decline of Britain's cargo-carrying capacity.

Policy in general was clearly laid down by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport in a speech given after the White Paper's publication in October 1984. I am glad to pay tribute to my hon. Friend, for I have the greatest respect for his ability and for his wisdom. I greatly agree with what he said in the speech to which I have referred, from which I shall quote. He said:

"Our long-term goal"—

I am sure that he remembers this—

"is to liberalise air transport wherever possible . . . where foreign competition is fair and British interests are not prejudiced."

He added:

"We will . . . ensure that . . . airlines . . . will not have to face unfair competition and . . . safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour are adequate".

I fully endorse those statements and objectives; my complaint is that they are not being carried out by the Government machine. There seems to be an irreconcilable difference between the stated objectives of Ministers and the Civil Aviation Authority on the one hand and, on the other, the actual rules and regulations of the Department of Transport. I pay tribute to the man at the CAA of whom I have seen most and with whom my company has been negotiating, Mr. Colegate. He is a most able and, invariably, helpful man.

I return to the CAA. Paper CAP 501 is a statement on air transport licencing policy which was published a month ago. It states that the Civil Aviation Authority

"will seek to ensure that efficient British Airlines have the opportunity to operate profitably so as to attract and justify the investment necessary for the maintenance of their services."

The thrust of what should be policy is clear enough and in line with the Minister's statements. The document also states:

"the authority will continue to pursue liberal policies for the regulation of scheduled service freight rates and freight charter services."

That statement sounds just fine to the uncommercial ear, but the reality is that, if we wish to create conditions where efficient British carriers can operate properly, we cannot pursue unilaterally liberal policies because the predatory foreigners will treat the United Kingdom as a port of convenience. That is happening today. The result is that the possibility of bankruptcy for the home team is not merely a possibility but a probability.

Equality of treatment between our own much-regulated industry and the under-regulated foreign industries is imperative. That is not protection, it is common sense. Almost every other country in the world—the United States, France, Germany — appears to recognise that need. In my view, the United Kingdom should also.

Of course, I do not suggest that it is solely the operating regulations that have affected British cargo carriers adversely. The advent of wide-bodied passenger aircraft with large freight capacity in their bellyholds has been a factor for cargo carriers to compete with.

The document shows clearly that the CAA aims progressively to reduce cross-subsidisation, presumably to the point where passengers no longer subsidise freight on passenger airlines. If it is true that passengers are subsidising freight, perhaps that is a subject that should be inquired into. In any case, the policy announced by the CAA cannot possibly be carried through if passenger carriers, and especially foreign passenger carriers, are allowed to reduce freight rates according to their desire for extra sterling revenue without any reference to the real cost of carriage, and thereby to compete unfairly in the United Kingdom. As I shall illustrate in a moment, it is a fact that the Government machine exacerbates an already difficult climate because it does not seem to practise what Ministers and the CAA both preach as policy.

I shall list four ways in which the British Government positively discriminate against British business. First, in spite of the Prime Minister's exhortation to buy British wherever possible, the Government have on occasion used foreign carriers to carry British aid. Why? I can think of no good reason. Surely it should be an invariable rule that all goods exported that have British Government support —if only ECGD cover—should be carried by British carriers. All other donor or manufacturing countries designate their carriers, and so should we. The phrase, "American wheat in American bottoms" is well known. I suggest that our rule should be British goods in British ships and planes.

Secondly, on 1 January 1986, United Kingdom carriers will be required to fit engine hush kits. Fitting hush kits to a Boeing 707 involves spending some $2·25 million —an expensive addition to costs. Yet European airlines will be allowed a one-year exemption. Why? Third world airlines will be allowed a two-year exemption. Again, why? Why should British carriers be put by the British Government at a competitive disadvantage in the British market against our foreign competitors? Why should foreign noise be acceptable in British airspace, and British noise not? Why put fetters on British companies that we do not put on our competitors?

Thirdly, I come to safety. The Government rightly insist on a high standard of safety in respect of British aircraft and British carriers. Of course I support that. But the Department of Trade and Industry merely relies on a certificate of competence from foreign carriers. There are no checks. It is a fact that some foreign carriers operate overloaded aircraft with lower maintenance standards and overworked crews, and thus enjoy a lower cost structure than the United Kingdom carriers. That is unfair competition at best, and at worst, it is highly dangerous. Sooner or later, as sure as that we are all here this evening, there will be a serious accident in British air space. Why do we let these people fly in our air space? In my view, the public interest, let alone fairness, demands equality of treatment by the Government of British and foreign carriers.

Fourthly, I turn to a slightly more complex matter. There is an old rule, called the "4 City Pairs" rule, operated by the United Kingdom and, so I understand, by no other country in the world, which allows foreign carriers to operate in and out of the United Kingdom, to and from countries other than their country of origin— in effect giving their aircraft almost unlimited freedom to do business in Britain. That is also monstrously unfair.

I do not believe that any foreign operator should be allowed to operate fifth freedom flying in or out of the United Kingdom if a British carrier is available to operate a third or fourth freedom flight in its place. In a word, all applications by foreign carriers should be subject to a no-objection rule by British carriers. At present, foreign carriers are pilfering cargoes which should be carried in the bellyholds of British passenger aircraft and by British cargo-carrying planes. I say to my hon. Friend the Minister as plainly as I can that that should stop forthwith.

I have given four examples of ways in which the British Government discriminate against British carriers and in favour of foreign carriers in contravention of their declared policies. I deplore the growing emergence in civil aviation of a flags of convenience problem; the same problem which for so long has been a scourge in the merchant shipping world.

The question has to be seriously asked whether the British Government, whom I strongly support, at the end of the day want there to be any remaining British-registered air-freighter airlines. If they do not, certainly a policy of masterly inactivity combined with further high-sounding but in practice empty statements should see the demise of my company and others. As I have said, that would leave the British exporter with no alternative but to use foreign carriers, which are certain to exploit this eventually to maximum advantage. It would leave the United Kingdom as the only major trading nation in the world—and the United Kingdom depends more than any other nation on foreign trade—without a national or quasi-national all-cargo carrier. That would be a damaging result for the national wellbeing, and it would arise from official carelessness.

It would also seem a curiously paradoxical situation when so many of the high-tech goods that we are increasingly beginning to export, naturally seek to travel as air freight, as distinct from the days when we were, for instance, exporting large amounts of steel or coal, whose natural means of transport were by ship. In my view, such a situation would be wholly unacceptable strategically and economically.

If, on the other hand, the British Government want to preserve their residual all-freighter aircraft capability—I am sure that they do, and that my hon. Friend the Minister does—and to increase the cargo revenues of British passenger airlines — which I am sure that the Government do—they must impose the same rules on predatory foreign carriers operating in the United Kingdom as they impose on their own carriers, so that conditions of more equal competition exist.

It is nonsense to talk about reciprocity. We often hear about that, but it is nonsense to talk about it when Britain offers opportunities to foreign carriers which are not offered in return. Reciprocity must mean parity not only in terms of regulation but in terms of commercial opportunity.

We in this country are major exporters of high value goods, and to compare, for instance, the opportunity for third world-based operators to fly out of the United Kingdom with the opportunity for a United Kingdom operator to fly out of their country is unlikely to be in any sense reciprocal.

In essence, therefore, we need conditions where British carriers are encouraged to compete as freely as possible with each other on a fair basis and where foreign carriers must comply with our regulations, if they are to be allowed to operate in the United Kingdom. Additionally, the frequency with which they are permitted so to operate

[Mr. Edward du Cann]

should be governed by the extent to which that gives British carriers reciprocal commercial opportunity based on real cost.

As I have said, for strategic and economic reasons—and, I suggest, also for defence reasons—we need a healthy, British-owned, British-managed, all-cargo fleet capacity. Britain can have that asset, given good will and given the will to have it on the part of Her Majesty's Government. I hope that tonight the Minister will assure the House that that is exactly what will occur in future.

2.16 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) for allowing me a minute or two in which to intervene in his debate. I am grateful to him for giving the House, even though it is not well attended at this hour, the opportunity to have on record details of one of the most serious developments to be taking place, not just in the air freight industry but in the scheduled airline industry. I congratulate him on drawing attention at an early stage to the problem.

The Government say, on the one hand, that they passionately believe in free market forces, competition, deregulation, relaxing controls, breaking up monopolies, rolling back the frontiers of Socialism, bringing forward private enterprise practices, outlawing predatory actions and restoring pride of place to British companies. There is, however, a yawning gap between what they say they believe in and what is happening.

My right hon. Friend referred to the freight airlines. One could also mention the scheduled and charter airlines. Why do the Government, to take one example, allow United States airlines to take predatory action out of Heathrow by way of the fifth freedoms, so that they can fly across the Atlantic into Heathrow and their passengers can then go via other American aeroplanes to Europe, while the British companies are not allowed to fly out of Heathrow in competition to British Airways or any other European carrier? They are actually debarred from competing with other airlines. The Government must make putting that right one of their first priorities.

I join forces with my right hon. Friend in asking the Government to liberalise the airways and to prevent the predatory action of foreign airlines from doing our airlines out of business.

2.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): I wish at the outset to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) for giving us this opportunity briefly to discuss the problems of the air cargo industry.

Recent discussion of civil aviation policy has tended, naturally, to concentrate on the passenger business, and my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has played his part tonight, as he has on many previous occasions, in drawing our attention to the problems of that sector.

As the subject of this brief debate is air freight, I shall concentrate on that. Air freight plays an increasingly important part in international trade. In 1983-84, for example, goods to the value of £16·5 billion—13 per cent. of our total visible trade — passed through Heathrow airport. We estimate that nearly 20 per cent. of our total visible trade travelled by air. A large proportion of this was carried in the holds of British passenger aircraft, particularly the long-haul, wide-bodied jets which have such extensive cargo space. I understand that this increased ability to mix passenger and cargo traffic has, as my right hon. Friend suggests, put pressure on the specialist air cargo services. I very much agree with him, however, that these specialist services will continue to play an important role and warmly welcome this opportunity of considering the problems facing these specialist carriers.

I agree wholeheartedly that, in pursuing our aviation policies, we must be ever mindful of our national interests, with respect to the aviation industry and more particularly perhaps to its customers.

At the passenger end of the business, through increasing competition and deregulation, we have developed a multi-airline industry whose growing strength and effectiveness is becoming the envy of the rest of the world outside the United States. I agree completely with my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams that this strength must be maintained. This British airline industry is, as a result, well placed to meet the challenge of fair competition—like my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton and my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams, I emphasise fair competition—from whatever direction it comes. It is our express policy to widen the scope of this competition, especially within the Common Market which, so far as the airline industry is concerned, barely exists. Our objective must be to ensure that British airlines play their part in the Common Market.

As my right hon. Friend has so generously acknowledged, we are deeply immersed, through negotiation, in the process of pulling down the barriers to competition in Europe and opening up new opportunities for our airlines. My right hon. Friend encourages us to even greater effort, and I have listened most carefully to what he has had to say on this matter.

The anxieties which my right hon. Friend has expressed, with particular reference to the specialist freight business, are based properly on the question of how fair is the competition. In effect, he asks, are we in Britain still playing by the rules of cricket while the rest of the world swings rounders bats in our face? My right hon. Friend has given four examples of these anxieties, and I shall do my best to respond to them. If time runs out before I deal with all my right hon. Friend's various points, I shall write to him about the outstanding points.

I turn first to what my right hon. Friend had to say about fifth freedom rights. It is certainly true that there exists in Europe a liberal charter regime. A British operator who can obtain the business is free to carry cargo from the east midlands to Munich, pick up cargo there for Maastricht, and pick up another cargo in Maastricht for the east midlands. His costs are reduced because he does not need to fly an empty aircraft on the Munich-Maastricht leg.

It is also true that we would like a similar liberal regime to be adopted in other parts of the world. Some countries are, indeed, liberal in this respect. Others, I regret, are not. Because of the wider benefits of liberalisation, we freely permit most foreign airlines to operate four fifth freedom charter flights on any particular sector in each year—the so-called four city pairs rule, to which my right hon. Friend referred. We allow them to operate further flights

if, and only if, they can show that no British carrier is ready and willing to carry the cargo in question on broadly comparable terms.

Our experience has shown that a few airlines seek to operate an unduly large number of fifth freedom flights. We have told these airlines that we shall not be prepared to allow them the benefit of the four flights per city pair concession and shall only be willing to allow them to operate fifth freedom flights where no British airline can carry the cargo on reasonably comparable terms.

We are monitoring developments in the charter market very closely and are prepared to apply the more restrictive policy to any other foreign airlines that seem to be attracting an undue proportion of fifth freedom traffic. I have asked my officials to continue to keep closely in touch about this with the company with which my right hon. Friend is associated. We shall very carefully consider the position of any foreign carrier drawn to our attention as abusing our present liberal policy.

I turn next to what my right hon. Friend has said on the question of contracts for the carriage of aid to foreign countries. I understand that Government contracts for carrying aid supplies overseas — like almost all Government contracts—are placed with the airline able to operate on the route and offering the best terms. On many occasions these contracts are placed with British airlines.

The Government, however, have a duty to the taxpayer to ensure that he gets best value for money in the carriage of freight as in other areas of Government purchasing. Where this is not so I suspect that the Public Accounts Committee might well have something to say on the matter.

I turn next to my right hon. Friend's anxieties that our high safety standards put British carriers at a disadvantage. I have to say that I am not aware of any case where the Civil Aviation Authority's safety standards have operated to the detriment of British airlines. The CAA's safety standards are based on the requirements laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation which form the basis of the standards used in all member states.

It is true that in some cases the CAA standards have been set at a higher level than the minimum ICAO requirements, but, far from working against the interests of the British airlines, they have usually tended to work in their favour, as the industry as a result an enviable reputation for safety which it can use to its commercial advantage.

Foreign air freight carriers need to have a certificate of competency issued by the state of registry before they are allowed to operate in United Kingdom air space. These certificates specify that aircraft will be operated to minimum international standards laid down by ICAO.

I agree with my right hon. Friend that in some areas the CAA standards are higher than those set in other countries, but I hope that he will agree that in these cases the answer is not to lower our standards but to encourage other states to raise theirs above the minimum ICAO requirements. I assure my right hon. Friend that the CAA always seeks to do this within the ICAO framework.

Turning finally to the always sensitive question of noise regulations, I am convinced, like my predecessors, that in order to provide much-needed relief to the people living close to our major airports the early phasing out of the most noisy types of aircraft is essential. The Government's task is to strike a balance between the legitimate claims of the industry on the one hand and those of the environment on the other.

My right hon. Friend will no doubt remember that it was as long ago as 1978, as it happens under the previous Labour Administration, and following wide consultation, that the ban date of 1 January 1986 on non-noise certificated subsonic jet aeroplanes was chosen.

United Kingdom operators will have had nearly eight years in which to arrange for their fleets fully to comply. With hardly any exceptions, they are now well advanced, either replacing noisier aircraft with quieter ones, or hush-kitting to a noise-certificated standard.

Both the European Civil Aviation Conference and ICAO have requested member states not to prohibit the use of non-noise-certificated, foreign registered, subsonic jets before 1 January 1988, and we have accepted this. All such aircraft will be banned from that date.

On the other hand, despite the later European domestic ban dates, I believe that a number of European operators have already moved substantially to noise-certificated fleets. Indeed, by the middle of last year, of the whole European Civil Aviation Conference fleet embracing 22 states, over 75 per cent. was already noise-certificated, and that proportion is growing steadily.

In the short time available to me, I hope that I have adequately addressed myself to the very pertinent questions my right hon. Friend has raised.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Two o'clock.

[Mr. Mellor]

MEMBERS: "No."] I am saying that the Government's position is as set out in the White Paper. We concluded that we should not accept the recommendation of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, but I do not think that, because the hour is late, we should underestimate the legitimate concern that people have in this day and age about their address being made known. I do not think that the address on the ballot paper is a matter of such fundamental substance that it is not open to reconsideration. That is why I say to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) that if he withdraws the new clause it might be possible to look at the matter again in future.

12.30 am

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose——*

Mr. Mellor: Of course I shall give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Carlile: I only wanted to ask the Minister this question. Does he agree that if a terrorist wants to find out the address of a candidate, the ballot paper is the least likely place to find it because, in order to see the address on the ballot paper, he must be able to vote in the constituency in any event?

Mr. Mellor: I said politely, in deference to the Select Committee and others, that I thought there was an issue that might not be concluded tonight. The hon. and learned Gentleman should not assume that because I said that I had swung four square round to strongly advocating the position that we had demolished in our own White Paper with as much elegance as the hon. and learned Gentleman did in his speech. The ballot paper is not the most likely place that the terrorist would look for the address. That is not to say that if candidates legitimately feel that they do not want their address disclosed we should not give some thought to whether we should make this a requirement in the new clause. Whether or not it is the most likely place for terrorists to look, there is still the issue whether having the address on the ballot paper serves any particular purpose. It may be said that it shows that the candidate lives in the constituency, but he would normally have his election address in the constituency.

The Government stand by what we said in the White Paper, and it coincides with what the hon. and learned Gentleman wants us to say. I shall leave the matter there.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend the Minister said. I am saddened by the mock bravado of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). He is out of touch with his hon. Friends, because I have been in touch with quite a few of them and I know that they are sympathetic. Furthermore, I hope that he will never have any wish to regret the rather harsh words that he used.

Nevertheless, I fully accept the point made by my hon. Friend. I hope that he will consider the new clause in the next few days as we prepare for Report. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Hon. Members: No.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 25

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORS TO BE BRITISH CITIZENS

'In section 1(1)*(b)*(ii) of the principal Act, leave out from "is" to end and insert the words "a British citizen".'. — *[Mr. Stanbrook.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take new clause 26 — *Local government electors to be British citizens:*

'In section 2(1)*(b)*(ii) of the principal Act, leave out from "is" to end and insert the words "a British citizen".'.

Mr. Stanbrook: I recognise that this matter — the definition of the electorate, and elegibility to vote in this country — has been studied by the Government in the light of the Select Committee's report, but the Committee should consider it because we do not often have an opportunity to deal with matters concerning the electorate and voting rights in this country, and another opportunity may not come for some time.

The question deserves consideration by the House of Commons because, if asked, a majority of the British people would not agree with what the Government have decided. I feel certain that, if there were a poll of British citizens, they would overwhelmingly reject the present law. In simple terms, what is at issue is whether the citizens of foreign countries, not being British citizens, who happen to be living here should be entitled to vote in British elections. Most people do not even know that this is the present law, but in fact British citizens are not entitled to vote in this country because they are British citizens.

Those who are qualified to vote are defined in section 1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 as Commonwealth citizens—citizens of every state in the Commonwealth, independent, including the United Kingdom, as well as colonies — a definition which embraces some 1,000 million people around the world, plus citizens of the Irish Republic. British citizens as such are not mentioned in our electoral law. The electoral registration form requires that a householder shall declare that the people on it are Commonwealth citizens or citizens of the Irish Republic. It must be puzzling to the average British citizen that he is not mentioned as such.

Why on earth do we perpetuate that old-fashioned outdated, eccentric, romantic, extravagant anomaly? Why do we persist in living in the past? The anomaly is the result of a wet, sloppy sentimentalism about the old empire which sits uneasily upon a reforming Conservative Administration.

In the days when the British monarch ruled over a quarter of the globe—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] —everyone born within the British empire was a British subject and owed allegiance to the British crown. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] There were no problems about jurisdiction or voting and the King's writ ran over the whole empire. Any British subject could come and live in the United Kingdom and if he were here on 10 October in any one year he could vote in ensuing elections during the forthcoming year. I hope that hon. Members will not applaud too loudly; they may miss some of the wisdom on which I am about to embark.

The change that has come over the scene is fundamental.

Mr. Bermingham *rose——*

Mr. Stanbrook: We must not waste time, and I am sure that time would be wasted if the hon. Gentleman were to intervene.

The change that has come over the electoral legal scene in Britain is fundamental. Almost all the countries of the Commonwealth are now independent states, indistinguishable in law from foreign states. Their citizens owe no loyalty to this country or to our Queen.

More ironic is what has happened to the people who live in the Republic of Ireland. They have shown many times over the past few centuries that they want to be independent of Britain. They reject the attempts of successive British Governments to make them, or treat them as being, British in any way. They rejected the idea that they were still part of the Commonwealth. They are not part of the Commonwealth. Yet successive British Governments have sought to foist a British connection on them.

Even as late as 1960 a British Government made an extradition treaty with West Germany which exempted from its provisions the nationals of each party and citizens of the Irish Republic. Could anything be more absurd?

Those citizens of the Irish Republic who live in the United Kingdom, like citizens of Commonwealth countries living here, obtain British citizenship on preferential terms, usually by the mere act of registration. Would it then be an act of injustice to remove from the register those who refused to take advantage of that facility? Of course it would not. On the contrary, it is a great injustice at present to the people of this country who are British citizens and give Britain their loyalty to allow certain foreigners who owe no loyalty to Britain to help choose our Government. We do not allow the same right to good, like-minded friends like the French or the Germans living in our midst. Why should we give it, then, to the Indians, the Nigerians and the Republican Irish?

I beg the Government, even at this late stage, to stop this nonsense and to say that the electoral register is for British citizens and British citizens alone.

Mr. Bermingham: I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) and sought to intervene for a very personal and particular reason. I happen to be Irish. What the hon. Gentleman has said tonight will cause grave offence to many hundreds of thousands of Irish citizens.

Mr. Stanbrook: Rubbish.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman says "Rubbish". Let him look at the facts. Throughout the northern part of this land of ours there are hundreds of thousands of people who were either born prior to 1916 in Ireland, or in the period 1922 to 1948 when Ireland was part of the British Empire, or who may well be the sons or daughters of people born in those periods, or may have been born post-1948, some of whom were born in the United Kingdom, and who, because of their Irish parentage, find themselves in the interesting position where they are either British citizens or, if born before 1948 and have lived all their lives in the United Kingdom, found themselves suddenly not British citizens any more but British subjects, who, of course, this new clause would exempt.

It is all right the hon. Gentleman taking that attitude, but in this land there are many millions of us who pay taxes. I am now a British citizen because I paid £70 to become one. I understand that the figure has now been reduced. *[Interruption.]* I listen to what the hon. Gentleman with his castles in Crawley has to say, and I take as much notice as is normal.

I say to the hon. Member for Orpington that time after time this crack is made at the Irish as if we were second class citizens of the world who have no rights. Yet many of us and many of our families have for centuries fought for this land and we are as loyal as any other citizen in this land to this land. And that is the way it will continue.

Mr. Forth: In the course of making his remarks, will the hon. Member address himself to the possibility that if individuals feel they owe loyalty to the United Kingdom they might seek citizenship of the United Kingdom in order to exercise both the full rights and privileges and the loyalty that he has just mentioned?

Mr. Bermingham: I thought loyalty came with oaths, not with the payment of money. Many of my family and many of the Irish in this land fought in the British Army and the Navy in the wars. We are the children of those who fought. They took an oath of loyalty. Their children were brought up in this country. When one enters certain professions and jobs, one sometimes takes an oath of loyalty. No one has ever questioned our loyalty to this land, and no one has ever questioned the loyalty of many hundreds of thousands of people to this land—loyalty which the clause seeks to deny.

The point that I make is a very simple one. If we reach a time when those of us who have lived all our lives effectively in this country are called upon to pay a sum of money for the right to vote in a land to which we have always been loyal, it says nothing for this land.

I am sure that the Government have got it right on this occasion, where they have continued to support the rights of the resident indigenous Irish in this land and of other Commonwealth citizens who take exactly the same stand, who come to this country, work in this country, pay their taxes and are immensely loyal to this country. It would be an insult suddenly to tell all those people that if they do not pay £70 here on £110 there they will not have the vote because they are second class citizens.

12.45 am

I sincerely hope that the House will not go down that path, because if it did it would do a grave disservice to community harmony in this land. People will begin to think that there are two classes of citizen. That has never been the case. I hope that the hon. Member for Orpington will seek leave to withdraw the new clause.

Mr. William Powell: The hour is late and I do not propose to make a long speech. I am certain that the principle that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has sought to advance is a sound one. The right to vote in this country should reside in citizens of Great Britain who are registered to vote.

Mr. William Ross: What about Northern Ireland?

Mr. Powell: I shall not go into the arguments again, but if my hon. Friend is minded to press the matter to a Division I encourage him to do so and I will support him in the Lobby.

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

those already presented, on behalf of my constituents in Ealing, North. They are in the names of Mr. A. S. Girling, of 13 Wynchgate, Eastcote Lane, Northolt, Mrs. S. Leahy, of 231 Carr road, Northolt and Captain Roger Horsley of the Church Army, of 127 Coldershaw Road, West Ealing, London W13.

My constituents who have signed these petitions take the strong view, which I share, that life begins at conception, and that all life is made in the image of God and is therefore sacred and not to be violated in any way.

The petitions conclude:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure which involves purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment (unless this is solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned).

To lie upon the Table.

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): I have the honour to present to the House a petition for the protection of the human embryo signed by Mr. David Soames of Atherstone Avenue, Mrs. Denise Robinson of Heltwaite Court, Bretton, and Mary McDonagh, of Axiom Avenue, all in the city of Peterborough, and signed by 654 of my constituents.

It welcomes the fact that the status of the embryo is a matter of fundamental principle which should be enshrined in legislation, and in terms it is identical to those already brought to the attention of the House by other hon. Members.

I have pleasure in presenting this petition for its contents and because it substantially represents my own view in this matter.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I have the honour to present a petition in the names of several thousands of the residents of the Tatton constituency in identical terms to that read out in such mellifluous tones by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas). In view of that, I shall not rehearse its wording. I say only that I agree with it wholeheartedly.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I beg to ask leave to present to the House two petitions from my constituents living in Rugby and Kenilworth. The first was initiated jointly by the Rev. Kahn and the Rev. Martin Greig, both of Rugby, and contains about 57 signatures. The second was organised by the Rugby Life Group and contains about 1,700 signatures.

All petitioners believe that the newly fertilised human embryo is a real, living human being and oppose any attempt to discriminate against it.

The petitions continue:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment (unless this is done solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned).

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I beg to ask leave to present two petitions bearing the signatures of 2,300 of constituents in Twickenham, Teddington, the Hamptons and Whitton collected mainly by Miss Harper of Waldegrave gardens, Twickenham, praying in precisely the same terms as those already read out by hon. Members.

These petitions are presented on the day of the debate on the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill to emphasise the deep conviction that large numbers of my constituents feel that this is a moral issue, that human embryos must be protected, and in the hope that the House will decisively reject the horrible suggestions to the contrary.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) to move the Second Reading of his Bill, I must tell the House that more than 40 right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have have indicated their wish to take part in this debate.

I propose to apply the 10-minute limit on speeches between 11.30 and 1 o'clock, but I hope that those right hon. and hon. Members who are called both before and after that time will bear that limit broadly in mind.

9.48 am

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill has a single and simple purpose. It is to render it unlawful for a human embryo created by in vitro fertilisation to be used as the subject of experiment or, indeed, in any other way or for any other purpose except to enable a woman to bear a child.

Almost as important as what the Bill seeks is what the Bill does not seek to do. At this early stage in my speech I want to bring that firmly to the attention of the House. The Bill does not concern itself in any way with questions such as those of surrogacy, abortion, or the source of the gametes of a fertilised ovum. All that side of this great question lies outside the scope of the Bill, from which it is my opinion wholly capable of being separated.

The second thing which the Bill does not do is to interfere in any way with the procedures which are in use at present for enabling women who would not otherwise be able to do so to bear children. The Bill is deliberately and carefully drawn so as in no way to interfere with those procedures.

At this point I invite the attention of the House to the successive provisions of the Bill. It had been my original intention, as is the ambition of most hon. Members who are lucky in the ballot for private Member's Bills, to be able to frame a single-clause Bill which would outlaw the mischief at which the Bill is aimed. But both advice and reflection convinced me that that would be neither effective nor right. It is not possible for this House to proscribe as unlawful a particular action but to provide no means whereby its will can be carried out and the execution of its intentions subjected to surveillance and policing. It was necessary to set up under the Bill a mechanism which would ensure that the purpose of the House and its objective, if it accepts the Bill, is carried out.

That is not a difficulty which is unique to this Bill. Those who sought to frame legislation to carry out the recommendations of the Warnock report, to permit experimentation under licence upon a human embryo, would find themselves equally obliged to establish a system of notification in order that the licensing might be effective. In order to permit, it would also be necessary to prohibit. It is not a vice of this Bill that it is obliged for its purposes to create the machinery which is set out in the Bill. The Bill proceeds, then, by prohibiting the procurement of a fertilisation or the possession of a human embryo except under specific authority. The remainder of the Bill is concerned with the definition and the operation of that authority.

The authority is the authority given by the Secretary of State, subject to the conditions that are set out in the Bill.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): May I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether it is his intention, because it is not made clear in the Bill, that the provider of the ovum and the person who receives the embryo should be the same person? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that if that were to be the case it would severely limit the range of infertility problems that could be treated?

Mr. Powell: I am much obliged to the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson). I had hoped I made it clear in my introductory remarks that there was no question of the origins of the gametes from which the fertilised ovum proceeds being in any way controlled or regulated by the provisions of the Bill, nor is there any power in the Bill to do so.

The over-arching requirement of the authority is that it be given solely for the purpose of enabling a named woman to bear a child. The reason why the woman has to be specified is that if the authority were to be for the general purpose of promoting childbirth or fertility, it would not be possible for the intention of the House, if it accepts the Bill, to be seen to be carried out: the process has to be authorised as specifically for the benefit of a certain woman in order to enable her to bear a child. That is a condition which the Secretary of State has no power to limit or to modify. The law would lay that down as an overriding condition.

The Secretary of State's authority would automatically be given upon the application of two medical practitioners. This is essentially a trigger mechanism. It does not entrust to the Secretary of State, or impose upon him, any discretion to pick and choose between one such request and another. It is an automatic compliance with an application duly made.

However, the Secretary of State does have certain duties in respect of the authority which he gives, namely, to specify the persons by whom the operation is to be carried out and also the place or places where it is to be carried out and the persons who may have possession of the embryos produced by fertilisation. Those requirements are necessary for it to be possible to establish that the provisions and intentions of the Bill are being carried out.

Perhaps I should say at this stage that I accept that, if the will of the House and of Parliament is clearly made known in terms of legislation, I do not impute it to the medical profession that it would be looking for ways to evade the will of Parliament. The procedure laid down in the Bill is necessary so that it may be seen that the will of Parliament, if the Bill is enacted, is being carried out.

As to the duration of the authority, that is deliberately so chosen as not to intefere with the procedures at present being carried out to enable women who would not otherwise be able to do so to have children. But should the periods that are set out in the Bill not be satisfactory in a particular case — should, for example, a series of mischances make it impossible for the insertion to take place within the four or the extended six months—no limitation whatsoever, no inhibition, is placed on a renewed application *de novo* for a new authority.

The Bill proceeds to make provision for the details of the application for authority and of the granting of

[Mr. Powell]

authority — details that will need, in the terms of the Bill, to come before the House before effect is given to them. They are clearly necessary so as to ensure that the Secretary of State has the power to obtain the necessary particulars in order that his authority may be duly and appropriately given.

Subsection (5) is a penalty clause. Again I must confide to the House that my original intention was different from that which appears in the Bill. I had originally thought that a merely nominal penalty would be appropriate to what I have already said about my view of the attitude of the medical profession. But again, upon reflection and advice, I was convinced it would be inappropriate for this House to identify a matter of such great gravity that it should be prohibited by law without the infraction of that legislation attracting a penalty appropriate to such a serious offence. However, I say again that I do not regard the penalties as the real nature of the deterrent or of the authority which I am asking the House to give. It is in the opinion of the country, as I hope this House and Parliament will express it, that the real sanction and the real authority reside.

Of finance, hon. Members will understand that I had no alternative, unless I was to seek a money resolution from the Government, to make the Bill as it stands self-financing. I do not like this. If the House gives a Second Reading to the Bill, I shall ask the Government, in view of the decision of the House, to provide a money resolution so that the actions of the Secretary of State in implementing the Bill can be carried out under the same financial conditions as the other duties laid upon him by law.

Such, then, are the provisions of the Bill. Hon. Members will have seen that it has been drawn with a jealous care to ensure that it inhibits or prevents no one from obtaining the blessing of a child by means of in vitro fertilisation through any process which is at present in action. Indeed, it would be true to say that the Bill in no way inhibits the future improvement of those processess by those who are engaged in carrying them out.

If within his clinical responsibility the practitioner in charge decides, with a view to increasing the chance of success in enabling a woman to bear a child, to use a process which has not hitherto been used, in good faith and with the intention that it should increase the chance of the embryo surviving and of a child being born, there is nothing in the Bill which will prohibit it.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I declare an interest in the matter. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the Bill will prevent medical research into in vitro embryos of up to 14 days, research which is central to the overcoming of many genetic disorders which are transmitted down the female line, and in so doing will end the hopes and aspirations of countless thousands of families of disabled children and prevent doctors from undertaking research which can be accomplished successfully within the next few years?

Mr. Powell: I hope that it will be the hon. Gentleman's good fortune to catch the eye of the Chair later in the debate, but I trust he will credit me with not having intended to conclude my speech without referring to so substantial a matter as that which he has mentioned.

I was making it clear that no new methods, no alterations in procedure, which are adopted in order that the process of insertion may have a better chance of succeeding for the purpose of enabling a woman to bear a child are excluded in any way by the Bill.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge) *rose*——

Mr. Powell: I am anxious not to take too much of the time of the House. May I ask for the patience of the hon. Gentleman, because I may clear his point? If I appear not to be doing so, I shall gladly give way to him at a later stage.

There is an essential and visible difference between what I have just described and the process of experiment. There is a difference between adopting a procedure hitherto not tested with a view to a greater prospect of success in enabling a woman to bear a child and on the other hand using a human embryo, normally to destruction, in order to increase the sum of knowledge. There need be no quibble or doubt about the boundary line between progress in the fertilisation procedures and what is meant by experimentation which the Bill intends to eliminate.

The question may now be asked — it has been anticipated in a sense by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley)—why should a Bill be brought forward to forbid the use of a human embryo thus produced from becoming the subject of experiment? If I may, I should like to begin to answer that question in personal terms.

When I first read the Warnock report I had a sense of revulsion and repugnance, deep and instinctive, towards the proposition that a thing, however it may be defined, of which the sole purpose or object is that it may be a human life, should be subjected to experiment to its destruction for the purpose of the acquisition of knowledge.

I formed that view and it was strengthened by my indignation at the suggestion that the House might be asked to surrender its judgment and powers in such a matter to the judgment of a body of persons, however eminent or distinguished, however expert or inexpert, who would, from case to case, decide whether a process inherently repugnant should be performed.

I soon discovered, having formed that opinion for myself, that it was widely shared. It came to my knowledge that it was shared inside as well as outside the medical profession, that it was shared among all classes and callings and throughout the people of this country. That early impression has been abundantly confirmed by the expressions of public opinion since it became known that there was a possibility of this legislation.

I do not appeal to some abstract principle from which such deductions can be drawn. I do not appeal to a definition of the embryo which would seek to settle the probably impossible question of the stage at which a human being becomes a human being. That question is unanswerable, because it goes to the heart of the great unanswerable question: what is man?

Many of those who wish the Bill well, many of the millions out of doors who we know want to see the Bill reach the statute book, believe that it is authorised by and in accordance with their religious beliefs. I have no complaint or criticism of that. On the other hand, I have a great envy of people who have that faith and certitude. Yet I must tell the House that I would make the plea that

I am making this morning exactly as I am doing if I were addressing an assembly of atheists in an atheist country. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Perhaps the right hon. Member will continue. This is an important debate and we do not want it to be interrupted if we can avoid it.

Mr. Powell: The repugnance with which those of many religious persuasions or none view the actions that the Bill would forbid is of a more fundamental character. It is an instinct implanted in a human society. This is the recognition by a human society of its obligation to itself, to future generations and to human nature.

It is argued—and this is the principal case as the hon. Member for Caenarfon said against the Bill—that to permit the use of the fertilised embryo for research would open the way to new and useful medical knowledge. I do not stand here as a layman to dispute that. True, I must admit I have a suspicion that the inquiring human spirit will, if denied one avenue of arriving at truth and information, speedily find other ways of doing so. I have also been impressed to see a profound difference of opinion on this very point among people apparently equally qualified in the medical profession and in the sciences.

Nevertheless, I do not ask the House to reject that proposition. On the contrary, I ask the House to face it. I ask the House, in coming to its decision, to make the assumption that by means of what the Bill will prohibit, useful and beneficial knowledge could in future be obtained. I ask the House to exercise a choice—it is indeed making a choice — and to decide that nevertheless the moral, human and social cost of that information being obtained in a way that outrages the instincts of so many is too great a price to pay.

There is at issue that sense in all of us which we inadequately describe as a sense of what is owed to the dignity of man. In that remarkable compilation of thought and wisdom known as the Talmud, I found a principle enunciated and argued that seemed to crystallise the very essence of that which this Bill asks—"Gadol kavod haberiot". Those three Hebrew words mean, "In case of doubt or difficulty, of conflict of authority or interest, let the dignity of man always prevail". I hope that the decision of the House on this Bill will accord with that principle. I believe that it is a principle which the country preponderently wishes to see affirmed by its representatives in Parliament. I ask them to uphold and assert the dignity of man by giving the Bill a Second Reading.

10.11 am

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): In some senses the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has put his finger on the essence of the debate in assuming that it concerns only the dignity of man. However, it also concerns the dignity of women, and that should not be forgotten. I am not being frivolous. At the beginning of the debate, Mr. Speaker announced that more than 40 hon. Gentlemen wished to speak, and in so doing ignored the fact that there were several women in the House who also wanted to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): It may help my hon. Friend's case if I inform her that the word "beriot", used by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), does not mean men but creatures, and thus includes women.

Ms. Richardson: I am not sure whether that intervention helps my case, but it shows that there is some difference of interpretation of the Hebrew words as between my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) and the right hon. Member for South Down.

Today, the House could take a most serious step, and that is why it is so full. The private Member's debates that we hold on a Friday are quite different from the debates held on other weekdays. Unfortunately, we usually know the outcome of debates held on other weekdays, because they are predetermined, but on Fridays we all have an opportunity to make our individual view known, and the outcome is not certain. Nevertheless, we could take a very serious and retrograde step today, which would enshrine in law what the magazine *Nature*—not exactly a Leftist feminist magazine — described in its editorial of 7 February as

"home-made and half-baked legislation."

The right hon. Member for South Down, with his knowledge of the House, his command of drafting and his meticulously prepared speeches, is listened to with the greatest of respect, although we do not always agree with everything that he says. I am sure that he would be offended by that description in *Nature*, but it represents the views of many practitioners and laboratory researchers who have been working for years to help infertile women and to try to eliminate the miscarriages that cause so much physical and emotional suffering, and who have tried to make some progress towards the prevention of congenital malformations in future generations. They have also been working to help male infertility. Indeed, male infertility accounts for about half of the problems of infertility.

Although the right hon. Member for South Down and his supporters claim that the Bill will not interfere with research into infertility, that is not the opinion of distinguished men and women who are qualified in a way that we are not. Having read the Bill, they believe that it will have the effect of outlawing such research. Even if the right hon. Gentleman is right, and the Bill does not close the door on infertile couples, and the doctors are wrong, the Bill will impose the most serious and alarming procedures on the practice of in vitro fertilisation, under which the infertile woman will have to be named in advance by physicians and will have to await the Secretary of State's express permission.

That procedure, which is incredibly bureaucratic, represents a serious threat to the civil liberties of the women concerned. Hon. Members should note that yet again women are not to be allowed to decide for themselves, in conjunction with their doctors, but will have to await the Secretary of State's express consent.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Richardson: I shall give way in a moment.

The right hon. Member for South Down said that such consent would be absolutely automatic. I accept his word for that, and that was no doubt his intention, but that is not what the Bill says.

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): Although the Bill states certain rules specifically, it does not withdraw discretion

[Mr. Leo Abse]

from the Secretary of State. Thus the proposition is being put to the House that we should have licensed motherhood at the behest of anonymous bureaucrats in Whitehall.

Ms. Richardson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and that is my point. The Secretary of State is not a doctor but a politician. Neither he nor his officials—after all, very few of them are doctors—could possibly have the expertise to say yes or no to such a request. Under the Bill, the decision would be quite arbitrary, no matter how many forms the doctor and patient had to complete.

The Bill restricts to four months the period in which any woman can have in vitro fertilisation and requires a further application for this to be extended by two months. There is no medical or justifiable reason for that. The criminal offence hanging over the medical profession will literally mean the end of the observation of human embryos. No one in their right mind would be willing to risk making a paperwork mistake because of the fear of prosecution. The Bill brings the criminal law and the threat of prosecution into yet another area of reproduction, paving the way for more and more restrictive laws that limit a woman's choice.

Hon. Members and the public have understandable pictures in their minds of genetic engineering—a sort of Hammer movies nightmare version of manipulation that would produce a race of Frankensteins. Of course Parliament must control and monitor the activities of practitioners and researchers. Indeed, that is what the Warnock committee, with all its months and months of deliberation, came to a conclusion about. The practitioners and laboratory researchers have said time and again that they want to be accountable for their actions. But to rush into legislation, as we are doing, that will close the door entirely on the beneficial effects of the years of patient research — which has resulted not in a generation of Frankensteins but in a movement towards eliminating the pain and suffering of children and their parents—is a cruel and unnecessary blow to the hopes of infertile couples, and will deprive us all of the benefits of properly controlled research.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Lady is making a powerful speech in which she is asserting the rights of women. Does she intend to speak about the rights of the embryo—the rights of one human being not to be subjugated to the interests of another—or is she saying that the human embryo has no rights?

Ms. Richardson: If the hon. Gentleman will be patient, I shall come to that.

We are repeatedly told that 2 million people have signed petitions opposing all experimentation. I do not dispute the figures, though I have in mind a picture of organisations—I do not know who or what they are—in back offices totting up the totals. This morning we heard about petitions containing thousands of signatures and, as I say, I do not dispute the figures. However, I am willing to bet that few of the signatories—and I do not doubt their sincerity in signing—were given all the facts and had all the beneficial effects explained to them.

Like other hon. Members, I have discussed this matter with groups of people in my constituency and elsewhere. Their mental picture of experiments, I found, was of doctors and technicians chopping away at perfectly formed miniatures the size of tadpoles. Of course that idea revolted them, just as it revolts me. When I explained to them that an embryo was one of 1,000 or even 100,000, the rest of which died anyway, and that it was at day one smaller than the point of a pin and invisible to the naked eye, they were nonplussed.

I am not suggesting that size necessarily affects the argument if one believes that, from day one, the embryo —or the conceptus, which is the correct word to use—should have the protection of the law. I am sure, however, that many of those honest signatories might have taken a different view if the picture had not been painted for them of evil scientists chopping up little babies, because that impression has been given.

I prefer to take not just the emotive views of people but the informed view, for example, of the National Federation of Women's Institutes. That body took the trouble to debate at its county federations the issues arising from Warnock. They represent about 350,000 women of all denominations and political views, and 51 of the 70 federations presented their views. Those views were divided, some being on one side, others being disturbed by some issues raised by Warnock and others being concerned with other matters in Warnock. However, on in vitro fertilisation, they agreed

"that IVF and artificial insemination by husbands should be available, subject to the controls proposed by the Warnock Committee."

Regarding research on human embryos, they were almost unanimously repelled by the idea of research, but they were divided on the nature of any future policy. They therefore

"reluctantly agree with the Warnock Committee recommendation that research on human embryos should be permitted only under licence, up to the fourteenth day after fertilisation."

That is a sane and sensible point of view to hold.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen) *rose*——

Ms. Richardson: I hope that the hon. Lady will permit me to continue my argument.

The federation has approached this issue in a serious way, respecting and acknowledging the reactions of many of its members who, though totally opposed, are adopting a common-sense attitude. The House would do well to follow that example today.

The Government could immediately legislate to set up a licensing authority providing that research teams should disclose their plans and obtain approval for them. There would be nothing against that, and most hon. Members would agree that that would be a sensible step to take. It would give us a breathing space in which to give proper consideration not just to the problems created by research but to the beneficial effects, which take a considerable time to become clear. We cannot tell in a matter of weeks or a few months what those beneficial effects will be. However, if we gave ourselves a breathing space, we could examine the beneficial effects and then, with a balanced picture before us, consider permanent legislation.

I find it hard to understand the moral argument that is put forward about the protection of the embryo. There appears to be no suggestion of protecting all embryos—for example, those which are lost through the use of the IUD, the interuterine device; there is no suggestion that all conceptuses should be protected. It is accepted that millions are lost, and there is no law to collect them, as it were; they die naturally and there is no feeling for them.

The moralists are being selective in their approach. I am selective, too. I am selective about the future well-being of all children. That, I believe, should take precedence over the protection of individual embryos. I hope that all in this House want healthy children born free from possible disorders which hamper them and their parents and cause so much distress.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): When the hon. Lady says that she wants to protect children, is she saying that she does not believe that the embryo becomes a human being at conception? In other words, does she not consider that the embryo, within the first 14 days, is a human being and of life?

Ms. Richardson: Some embryos become humans and others die. I pointed out that hundreds of thousands get lost, anyway.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Ms. Richardson: I shall not give way. I am anxious to conclude my remarks so that others may contribute to the debate.

The Bill, if passed, will not only endanger the prospects of healthy and happy parents and children. It will prevent that. I urge hon. Members to look into their hearts and ask themselves if that is really what they want. The Bill represents an attack on one of the most promising forms of infertility treatment for women, on the small amount of work that is being done on male infertility, on the doctors and scientists who do that work and on the value of research in general.

Couples anxious to have children—I heard two of them speaking in a moving way on Radio 4 this morning—are listening to today's debate with apprehension. They are waiting to hear what this House, in its inexpert way—I emphasise that—decides.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): This male-dominated House.

Ms. Richardson: As my hon. Friend points out, this is a male-dominated House. I beg hon. Members to think carefully before taking what is an extremely serious step.

10.28 am

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas (Chelmsford): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) on his intervention on the Hebrew language. At a time when slanging matches in this House are, alas, becoming common, it is comforting to find that the art of parliamentary debate is not yet quite dead.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) on introducing the Bill. He has moved in where angels fear to tread, although some of the noises he aroused from above—from the Strangers' Gallery—were the reverse of angelic. He is tackling one of the most complex and intractable problems of our time. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman is always on the side of the angels, and if I were to say so, he would not thank me for it. However, I believe that in this case he is, and—if he will allow me to say so—his speech matched the importance of its theme with its rationality, clarity and, above all, restraint.

There are very great procedural difficulties with such a controversial Bill. I know that from experience. My National Audit Bill reached the statute book only by a combination of extraordinary luck and unpredictable events, including the calling of a general election. The right hon. Gentleman's Bill deserves a Second Reading. I hope and believe that it will get it. But the rock on which private Members' Bills founder is not Second Reading, but Report. The right hon. Gentleman asked for a money resolution. May I add a plea to that—that if the House passes the Bill today, the Government will give a clear undertaking that they will provide time for its further consideration on Report? There is precedent for that. It was done on such an issue by a previous Government. I hope that the present Government will follow their example. Better still, let them introduce a Bill of their own.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Hear, hear.

Mr. St. John-Stevas: That view is shared in different parts of the House. There are certain points that we have in common, and it is well that they should be stressed.

The complexities of the whole situation are so great that the matter needs to be tackled by Government legislation. Today we are dealing with only one small part of the problem. Of course, there must be a free vote on any Government Bill. There can be no doubt about that. But it is only the Government, who have the drafting resources behind them, who can produce such a Bill. However, I hope that when the time comes for the Bill to be introduced, the Government will take fully into account the expressions of opinion made in the House during this debate and in others and the result of any vote that may be taken today.

I think that the right hon. Member for South Down was very wise to stress what the Bill does not do. It is concerned with only one aspect of a complex problem. It does not deal with the emotive but minor question of surrogate motherhood. Whatever moral reservations there may be about that, at least it has the merit that it is dealing with a life-creating, not a life-depriving, situation. Let me quote a distinguished clinician, Professor John Marshall, professor of clinical neurology in the university of London, who makes the distinction in these words:

> "To bring the embryo into existence with a view to implantation as a way to relieve the burden of a couple's infertility is one thing. To bring it into existence with a view to its destruction through experimentation, albeit in the pursuit of useful knowledge, is something quite other."

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. St. John-Stevas: I should like to continue because so many hon. Members want to speak.

The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) made a valid point when she expressed fears about the future of research if the Bill is passed. There is controversy on that point. We must discuss it fully in the House, because while there is a body of opinion that supports the hon. Lady's view, there is also a body of opinion that takes a contrary view. I quote a leading genetic medical research scientist, Mr. Ryn Johnson, and Professor Jerome Lejeune, the professor who discovered the extra chromasome responsible for Dow's syndrome, who hold that such research is not necessary to relieve the tragic predicament of infertility. Let the evidence come out and let it be discussed and considered.

I wish to consider the Bill against the complex and difficult moral background of the issues that it raises. I do

[Mr. St. John-Stevas]

not believe that public opinion in Britain on the issue is either amoral or obscurantist. There is not so much a rejection of the sovereignty of morality in this area as much moral confusion and bewilderment. It is a similar situation with morality in general. I do not subscribe to the view that there has been a great moral decline in Britain. There is widespread uncertainty about moral standards and values. That is quite another matter. However, what people are seeking in relation to this subject are some clear moral principles to guide them through this labyrinth. That is the principal reason why the Government rightly appointed the committee under Lady Warnock, which laboured for two years to provide that guidance.

I do not agree with all the conclusions of that report, but I pay tribute to the unselfish and unremitting work that was done by the chairman and members of that committee. Lady Warnock herself is an outstanding academic. She is one of our leading educationists and philosophers, but not even she—and she has a mind as sharp as Occam's razor—could produce a consensus from the differing opinions expressed on her committee.

If we are looking to that report for clear moral guidance on this matter, we simply will not find it. Therefore, the task of clarifying the issues and leading public opinion is passed to Parliament. It is essential that public opinion give the law to law. That cannot happen unless those matters are thoroughly debated in the House. Of course, one cannot look to the House of Commons for infallible rules of moral guidance, but one can look to it to show where, as a society, we should draw the line. That is what the House of Commons has to decide.

The first principle that can assist us in reaching a judgment on the matter is the principle of respect for human life. We need not bother ourselves about recondite questions of when the soul, if there be a soul, enters the body. That is a theological question. It does not provide the opportunity for a final answer. Nor need we, in my opinion, discuss when a human personality is present in an embryo. Again, that is a metaphysical question.

Let us stick to the scientific facts that we know. We know beyond the faintest scintilla of doubt that the embryo is a unique form of matter, that it is human, that it is alive and that it has the full potential to become a human person. That being so, it is morally wrong to stimulate its creation, to bring it into existence for the purposes of experiment or dissection, or merely to discard it as useless into a dustbin.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. St. John-Stevas: I will when I have finished this point.

That was basically the view of seven of the 16 members of the Warnock committee.

The first thing that the law should do—it is what the Bill seeks to do—is to bring all experimentation to an end. The Warnock committee wanted a ban after 14 days, but it gives no logical basis for that. Such a limitation would be ineffective and open to abuse and there would be endless pressure for its relaxation.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) conceded that life exists from conception when she said that, within the 14-day period, some embryos live and some die? To die, one must have lived.

Mr. St. John-Stevas: I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Barking said, and I noted that point. Hers was a complex speech containing a number of ideas, one qualifying the other, so I do not think that it is entirely fair to her to take one sentence of what she said and draw conclusions from it. Nevertheless, I appreciate what my hon. Friend said.

The second principle that can help us is recognition of the paramount welfare of the child. Throughout the tangled web of British family law, there is one golden thread which is always to be found—the interests of the child come first.

Mr. Wigley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. St. John-Stevas: Let me finish this point.

Infertility should certainly be relieved if it can, but not by any means. Parents exist for children, not the other way round.

The final issue that I should like to discuss——

Mr. Wigley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. St. John-Stevas: Many others wish to speak. I normally give way, but I shall not this time as nearly 40 hon. Members want to get in. The hon. Gentleman looks so annoyed, I shall give way.

Mr. Wigley: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. It was not annoyance but disappointment at not having the opportunity to press him on the well-being of the child. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the well-being of the thousands of handicapped children who are born each year and those who are doomed to die at an early age—I suffered the loss of my son six weeks ago—should also come into the equation? In balancing one against the other, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there is a need for medical research, which should be facilitated?

Mr. St. John-Stevas: I accept entirely the sincerity and importance of the hon. Gentleman's intervention. There is a conflict of evidence on this matter, as I said when commenting on the speech of the hon. Member for Barking. We must continue to debate the matter. I hope that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) will have an opportunity to speak on whether this type of research is necessary.

Will our society deal adequately with the extraordinarily difficult problem with which we are now faced? Aldous Huxley, not George Orwell, has been proved the prophet of the 1980s—1984 has come and gone and we have survived, but 1985 has hardly dawned and we are at the beginning of the "Brave New World". I confess to some uncharacteristic pessimism. I look with dismay at a society that combines a low level of thinking and feeling with a high level of benevolence and good will, and which is, on the whole, unwilling to accept any forms of self-restraint.

Like Janus, technology has two faces. Technology gives mankind an opportunity of an escape from the dreadful treadmill of poverty, want and famine, which has been the lot of the majority of the human race throughout the centuries. We have all been rightly shocked by the terrible events in Ethiopia, yet the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs was told that it would be possible, by the end of the century, to make hunger only a memory in Africa. All we need is the will.

However, technology can also be destructive. We have the threat of destruction from a nuclear war and, more

subtly, there is the threat that we are discussing today. I am glad that we are facing it seriously. We are confronting the complexity of the problems that are raised by legitimising a technology that promises benefits perhaps, but which could end by destroying the essential humanity of man. If the power is there, why should it not be used? In the end, we have to go back to traditional values to protect ourselves. We have a tradition on which to draw. We have a true Koinonia, a community made up of the Judao-Christian tradition, the experience of a long and tried democratic tradition and the detached and cool judgments and reflections of the common law.

Man is not the absolute master of his own fate. We are the created, not the creators. We are limited and contingent beings, holding our lives on trust for higher purposes. The technology that promised a paradise now shows signs of delivering a hell. Our responsibility is to proclaim the old values of the dignity and uniqueness of all human life. That is the only effective way in which to encourage the pursuit of knowledge, which, I agree, is a vital part of the vocation of man, and to erect barriers beyond which the tyrannies of scientific techniques shall not pass.

10.46 am

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The Warnock report was an extremely good piece of work. It analysed the new issues that are raised by developments in the treatment of infertility, which I understand affects about one in 10 couples in Britain. It would be wrong and dangerous for the Bill to be given a Second Reading. I should much prefer to wait for a Government Bill to be presented after full consultations on the Warnock report, rather than hurry through this dangerous legislation.

There is a moral contradiction at the root of the Bill. If it had been passed years ago, developments in vitro fertilisation would not have happened, yet the House says that it wants to protect the right of infertile couples to benefit from that technique. How can the House maintain that it wants to protect that technique while wanting to outlaw the process that led to its development?

At the moment, in vitro fertilisation is a chancy business. I understand that only about one in 10 implantations succeed. We should consider the emotional trauma experienced by couples who are trying to have children through that technique. If the technique is morally acceptable, why is it not all right to continue work to perfect it, so that it might be successful most of the time?

The House must also face the problems thrown up by hereditary defects. Are people to be given the right to have children, knowing that they will not inherit a defect? Further research is necessary if that is to be achieved. The House appears to be saying that couples who might pass on hereditary defects must allow the foetus to develop for 24 or more weeks, and then possibly to be aborted as, at the moment, that is the only way in which couples can prevent a damaged child from being born. Is the House really outlawing research which could detect whether defects might be passed on a few hours after conception?

If the Bill is passed, the House will be contradicting its morality. Hon. Members will be saying that in vitro fertilisation is good and that they want to help infertile couples, but by passing this legislation they will prevent development of the technique which we all agree is acceptable and desirable.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am listening carefully to the hon. Lady. Does she deny that the research can be done by means other than experimentation on embryos? In other words, does she deny the opinions of Professor Lejeune and Mr. Brinkworth that the research can be done on human gametes?

Ms. Short: Yes, I deny that. Obviously some methods of research do not require experimentation on conceptuses in the early stages of their existence, but all the work cannot be done in that way, and the House must face that. The technique could not be improved and we could not screen out genetic defects at an early stage of conception, if the Bill were passed.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Lady admit that the research that has so far been conducted on the removal of abnormalities and congenital defects is not sufficiently proved and that the entire matter is covered with ifs, buts and maybes?

Ms. Short: Obviously that is so. If we had all the answers, further research would not be needed. All hon. Members believe that research must be extremely carefully controlled. Experimentation on conceptuses, although they are only a few cells in the early stages of life and not minute babies as many people imagine, must be limited to research that is absolutely necessary. The House cannot have it both ways. Unusually for the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), he fudged the issue by suggesting that the development and improvement of the techniques would be possible within the limits set out in the Bill. The Bill states that such fertilisation can take place only for a specific woman and a specific conception. That outlaws all the research to which I have referred.

Many people who signed petitions on the matter are confused about the facts. I received between 20 and 40 letters from constituents before the Bill was drafted and after the Warnock report was published. In each case I replied and asked whether the person was suggesting that children such as Louise Brown and the other 250 children who are living in Britain and were born to parents who desperately wanted children and who love them, should not have been born. I explained that if that were so, they were in favour of outlawing the sort of experimentation that made the birth of those children possible. I received further letters which stated, and I met people on the street who said, "Of course not. We think that it is wonderful that those children were born. We are in favour of life and children." That shows that people can draw different conclusions from the same facts. I do not believe that the people who signed the petitions understood that they would be outlawing the development of the techniques that have led to the birth of such babies.

The priest who baptised me and comes to the house to give communion to my father preached a sermon which led to another spate of letters which connected the protection of life in Ethiopia with the outlawing of experimentation. I say that to show the religious and cultural roots from which I come. In each case I replied to the individual, including some of my relatives, and spelt out the arguments that I am now putting to the House. Many committed Roman Catholics who had written at the request of their local priest wrote back to me to say that in that case they took a different view. I think that that would be true for large numbers of people if they knew the facts.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I support the hon. Lady's view. I expect that we shall all reach different judgments on the Bill today. This is not a simple issue. Many people would regard the Bill as a holding measure at best. Whatever one's straightforward morality and theology, the issues are often over-simplified outside the House. Often we need a debate such as this to get to the real issues, which otherwise are avoided.

Ms. Short: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I do not wish to detain the House, but I wish to amplify the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). Women understand these matters in a way that men do not, because they deal with them in their daily life. They menstruate, conceive or do not conceive, worry about whether they will have children, sometimes have to face the question whether to have a abortion, and so on. Women are more familiar with the subject, whereas men set it up as a set of moral principles and logical constructs. Women know that thousands of conceptuses are wasted by nature. It is not the case that each conceptus becomes a perfectly formed human being. Nature has organised fertility wastefully. Conceptuses are destroyed month by month, through miscarriages, the use of the coil and for all sorts of reasons. Men must face that.

The Bill should be opposed, and the Government should introduce comprehensive legislation which will set up the licensing authority which the Warnock report recommends. I emphasise my point that the public have been misled about the development of the techniques. I appeal to the House not to disappoint all the infertile women and couples who desperately want children and want the techniques to be improved. More important, I appeal to the House not to disappoint the couples who know that they are carrying a genetic defect and want to have whole and healthy children, because that is what the House will do if it passes the Bill.

10.57 am

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I support the Bill, not because it will tackle all the problems which arise from the wish of some of our scientists to experiment on human embryos, nor because it deals with all the issues raised following the publication of the Warnock report, which we debated some time ago, but because it represents an attempt by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and those of us who are sponsors to step where the Government have been too slow or lacked the moral courage to tread.

I do not in any way criticise the Secretary of State for Social Services for initiating the Warnock report. In doing so he showed an awareness of the multitude of difficulties for the House and society as a whole, which the recent welcome advances in medical science and the treatment of infertility have made apparent. However, I criticise the Government for having failed to act quickly and decisively on the issue of experimentation on the human embryo. Nearly every hon. Member has recently been asked to present a petition seeking to outlaw such practices. Indeed, a massive record-breaking petition was presented earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas). That is a clear and unequivocal sign of the desire of British people for a moratorium on what they see as unnecessary and unjustified experimentation. Furthermore, a recent MORI poll established that no less than 85 per cent. of respondents felt that experimentation should be banned now.

. That is not to suggest that it is the duty of the House always to legislate in accordance with what is perceived to be the majority feeling of the electorate. There are always minorities to be considered, catered for and, above all, protected. The Bill seeks to do precisely that. It has the clear support of British people. It considers infertile couples who wish to conceive through the technique of in vitro fertilisation. Most important of all, it gives protection to that weakest sector of our society, the unborn child, who is unable in his own right to influence this Chamber.

The Bill has what every proposed piece of legislation must have if it is to be effective — the support of society. It is not just the religious groups that have made representations on it. The weight of correspondence from hon. Members' constituents has shown the growing unease with which they view the recent direction that medical science has taken.

I remind the House of a recent declaration of the World Health Organisation at Helsinki:

> "In research on man, the interest of science and society should never take precedence over considerations related to the wellbeing of the subject."

That is a welcome and perhaps long-overdue restatement of the Hippocratic principles on which our medical professions have for so long based their actions. The medical professions have not as a whole denied that fundamental principle, although there are several horrendous historical examples where they have done just that. I am sure that I do not need to remind the House of the barbaric practices which were carried out under the guise of medical and scientific research by Nazi and Japanese doctors. *[Interruption.]*

I have a great deal of respect for our own medical professions, as I am sure all hon. Members have. Therefore, I welcome the efforts by the Royal College of General Practitioners, whose members know best the needs of their patients and the effect that medical advances can have on them, and the society in which they live, in seeking a moratorium on such techniques.

The Royal College of Nursing has recently restated its belief that embryo research should be banned immediately, that

> "from the earliest moment of life the embryo should be treated as a human being and that only research which will enable the particular embryo to come to full term should be permitted . . . The idea that spare embryos would be generated by super-ovulations specifically for research programmes was felt to be repugnant and unacceptable and in direct conflict with the Royal College of Nursing's view that basic human rights are applicable from the moment of conception."

It is exactly in those terms, in the vacuum of inactivity left by the Government, that the Bill was drafted. Immediately it became apparent that such experimentation was an issue, the Government should have introduced a moratorium on such procedures until this House had adequately considered the issues involved and acted to introduce the necessary safeguards for the medical professions, for society as a whole, and for the individual embryos concerned.

The tortuous logic used in the Warnock report to justify experiments upon human embryos leads to the totally unacceptable conclusion that some human beings should be subjected to utilisation and death simply because some good consequences may ensue for other human beings. The rejection of civilised traditions in that conclusion is readily apparent. Surely civilised tradition must exclude the killing of the innocent, no matter what their age, size, status or accomplishments. But we must ask ourselves why

such experimentation should be deemed necessary in the first place, and question the claims that such techniques are essential in the study and treatment of infertility and the study and elimination of genetic disorders. I readily accept that there is a great need for further research into infertility, but I do not accept that experimentation on the human embryo is either necessary for that purpose or even acceptable to the people of the country as a whole.

Time does not permit me to elaborate further, except to mention the tremendous and inspiring progress in genetics by such scientists as Professor Lejeune, and to stress his repeated claims that such experimentation on human embryos is absolutely unnecessary and unjustified.

Great steps have been taken in the treatment of those suffering from genetic disorders. Down's syndrome is the largest single cause of mental handicap worldwide, with approximately 6 million cases. Mr. Rex Brinkworth, director of the Down's Children's Association, and an internationally acclaimed expert on the treatment of Down's sufferers, has made his position totally clear. In reference to a point that was raised earlier, may I tell the House that this gentleman has a handicapped child—his daughter is a mongol — so he has great personal experience, apart from his interest in science and experimentations. He says:

"whatever justification scientists wish to use for experimenting on human embryos, they cannot justly say that their studies will benefit those with Down's Syndrome. In any event they would have to examine at least 200 embryos to find one with Down's Syndrome (as far as I know not one has been found yet by Steptoe and Edwards), and the examination itself would kill that embryo —scarcely something to its advantage."

So there are eminent people in the field who agree that such experimentation will not necessarily improve research into genetic disorders.

I conclude with the chilling thought that it should not be left to some members of the medical profession, no matter how eminent or how responsible, to play God and decide who is to live and who is to die. We are all aware of the dreadful consequences and possibilities of genetic engineering. It is because I respect human life in its most vulnerable and innocent form at conception that I support the Bill wholeheartedly. I believe that it deserves the support of the whole House in its specific aim to protect the unborn child.

11.6 am

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I am sorry that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is not in his place at the moment, because I wanted him to know that I regard him—as, I am sure, does every other hon. Member — as never doing anything lightly and never tackling anything in other than a very serious and considered way. I do not happen to support his Bill and will seek to say why not, but he has treated the subject, as he always does, with the seriousness of his intellect.

The right hon. Gentleman has not introduced a small Bill. It is a very profound Bill, with enormous interest outside the House in the whole country, measured in millions. In some ways that interest is reflected by the large attendance of hon. Members here today. It would have been so much easier for many of us to keep our heads down today and not to be present. It is clear that the many hon. Members who are present are not afraid to put their heads above the parapet on either side.

I respect the views that have just been expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) in speaking so strongly in favour of the Bill. Indeed, I respect all hon. Members who have advanced their views today. It is not an easy matter on which to hold a view or to make a decision.

As the House knows, I am the parliamentary member of the Medical Research Council. That does not determine my views. I am not a scientist; I am a parliamentary lay member of that council. I do not have to follow what it does. I may be influenced, I may be instructed, and I may be a little more aware than other people of what the council does. In the field that we are talking about, there are many more professors, scientists and researchers — in the Medical Research Council and the units under its direction in our universities — than the Professor Lejeunes who have been mentioned today, but they keep their light under a bushel. We do not hear enough about them.

The object of our interest in medical research into embryology and human fertilisation is to help humanity, not to work against humanity. It is to help those who are infertile and to help to control fertility. Above all, it is to help to prevent congenital abnormality and to try to do something to cure the tragedies in our midst. We are all concerned—perhaps not all of us are as well advised as some hon. Member who have spoken today — having given thought to the problem raised by Warnock and precipitated by the right hon. Gentleman's Bill.

Researchers are seeking to provide society with techniques to overcome certain medical problems. One of these is infertility. Today, in Britain, 250,000 couples cannot have children because they are infertile. The Bill will allow them to be helped. It will allow in vitro fertilisation to be performed. Test tube babies will be permitted. We must acknowledge that. The right hon. Member for South Down is not denying that that technique should continue. The process is quite safe, but it is not sure. It is simply a means of bringing the sperm of the husband to the wife's egg and fertilisation takes place in vitro—not strictly in a test tube, but in a dish. Once the fertilised egg has started to grow it is transferred back to, or implanted in, the mother. It is by no means an easy, exact or certain process.

Pregnancy is not easily achieved for many couples, and certainly not by the medical and clinical help which is provided by IVF. For that reason, and for that reason alone, more than one fertilised egg or embryo are transferred back to the mother's womb. Perhaps two, three or four are returned to the mother, because the scientists and clinicians are not sure what will happen. Some of the fertilised eggs will be rejected by the mother. We do not know enough about the matter.

We must rest on the clinical judgment of the doctors, with the consent of the mother. The mother might reject some of the embryos. That is a human and natural process. Perhaps only one will develop into a foetus, become a human being and a child will be born. However, more than one of the implanted embryos might be accepted, resulting in twins, quads or even more human beings. A high risk is involved for the mother if she is to bear twins or quads successfully. Greater social and economic problems than were anticipated or are welcome will have to be faced by the married couple.

Research into IVF is new. The world has barely 15 years' experience of it. We need to know much more to help the childless couple. The Bill allows us to proceed as far as our present knowledge permits, but very little further. There is still too much that we do not know that

[Mr. David Crouch]

we need to know. The Bill permits us to continue with IVF as it is, which means that we shall have to continue taking a chance with mothers. We shall be experimenting with mothers. The Bill permits that, with the mother's consent. She will be warned that it might not work, or that it might work too well.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Crouch: I hope that my hon. Friend will excuse me, but so many hon. Members wish to take part. Perhaps I shall give way later.

The mother might accept the fertilised egg and have a healthy baby. On the other hand, she might not, or she might have quads. Infertile couples so yearn for children that they will clutch at straws. They will accept the risk of a multiple birth. Medical science should be able to do more than offer such couples guesswork, which is all that we can do today.

It is estimated that before the end of this year about 1,000 babies will be born in the world by this new technique, but the technique that I have described is inefficient, and only one in 10 of the implanted fertilised eggs will produce a baby. That is not a good success rate. If we knew more we could offer a better medical solution to infertile couples.

The Bill requires us to stop research the moment that the measure becomes an Act. We must pause and consider all the arguments — the ethical, moral and scientific arguments. This House in its wisdom, as a collection of people representing the nation, has a responsibility in its lay fashion to weigh in the balance the ethical, moral and medical judgments.

We can fertilise an egg and implant it in the mother —but no more—under the Bill. We can help to produce babies, but we are required to stop there. It is argued that we should not be allowed to go further in studying the fertilised egg—the embryo—to see what happens to it. It is said that we should not be allowed to study the nutrients needed by the embryo, to examine it for deficiencies or abnormalities. Should we allow ourselves to stop there? Should we give authority to stop there?

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Crouch: I cannot. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

Some people who support the Bill argue in all honesty that we must not study an embryo other than to produce a baby. To study an embryo and not transplant it in the mother would be a crime under the Bill. It would be a criminal offence. It would be regarded as the destruction of life in its earliest form.

This is not an easy debate. Many people consider that such an action should be regarded as the destruction of life. The Bill permits the transfer of the fertilised egg back to the mother, but what about the spare fertilised eggs implanted in the mother and rejected by her? What about the eggs that are not used and are still in the laboratory? They too must be rejected by the researcher. Under the Bill he must not study them, but he must allow them to die.

The researchers are not monsters, but scientists. They are medical scientists working in response to a great human need. We should be very proud of them. The infertile parents who have been helped are grateful to them. The scientists are also responsible people. They want to respond to society's needs and restraints. They are aware of the delicacy of their work. They are helping in the creation of human life. They want to help when that process is imperfect and inefficient.

However, they do not want to be left alone. They want acceptance under the law, control and supervision. They want approval of everything that they do by an authority comprising lay and church members as well as scientists. They want licences and inspection. In short, they want their work to be legitimate. We must not ban them. We shall not control the progress of science if we attempt to ban them. That might even drive them underground into private clinics. This work must go on in public. It must be under control and strictly licensed.

I have spoken about the need to improve our knowledge and techniques in in vitro fertilisation, but we seek two other aspects of knowledge in research. Helping couples to have children is a wonderful objective, but today society places a duty on us to control fertility as well as to assist it. Abortion is the last resort in controlling fertility. Parliament has permitted abortion for medical and social reasons, but it is a fearsome and tragic solution.

Contraception is encouraged and taught. I believe that to be right, but it is not perfected. It is not always acceptable in various forms, on medical, social, moral or religious grounds. The intrauterine coil is a device for the destruction of the human embryo. We must not forget that. We have already permitted it.

We could perhaps find a more acceptable method of contraception if we knew more about the early events in fertilisation. It could be more effective to control conception at the point of fertilisation, but we cannot find out without studying the embryo in its very early days, before the placenta is formed, and before it develops into the embryo proper. In the first 14 days it is invisible to the naked eye, with no development of heart, brain, limbs or any tissue. It has no recognisable components of a human foetus.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is extremely difficult for anybody to make an assessment of congenital defects that may be observed in an embryo that is less than 14 days old?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will bear in mind that interventions prolong speeches.

Mr. Crouch: Research is also needed into congenital abnormalities such as Down's syndrome and spina bifida. It is thought that such abnormalities originate during sperm and egg development, at fertilisation or during early development. If we knew more about what is happening at those stages, we might be able to find a way of preventing such abnormalities.

Virtually nothing is known about the metabolism and nutritional requirements of the embryo. We should not be denied the opportunity for further study of the human embryo.

We have already debated the Warnock report and we are indebted to that committee for its meticulous study of delicate and difficult questions. Warnock recommended:

"The embryo of the human species should be afforded some protection in law."

Of course. The Committee also recommended:

"Legislation should provide that research may be carried out on any embryo resulting from in vitro fertilisation, whatever its provenance, up to the end of the fourteenth day after fertilisation".

There was a division of opinion on the committee and, in an expression of dissent, three members declared against research on the embryo. They said that embryos that were surplus to the mother's requirements should be allowed to die.

It is clear that we need much more thought from the Government about the Warnock recommendations and about the study and response of the Medical Research Council. We need legislation, not just a code of practice. We need a Government Bill covering human fertilisation and embryology. This Bill is not enough and it is not good enough. It is harmful to the progress of human knowledge and it would be a barrier to the relief of human suffering. We should not allow it to become law.

11.22 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I congratulate the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) on introducing his Bill. I had hoped and prayed that I would have an opportunity this year of introducing a piece of life legislation. I believe that the legislative role of Parliament has not moved with public opinion on life issues. My Bill would have dealt with surrogate motherhood, the embryo and an amendment to the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929.

The problem with life legislation is that we cannot hide behind our political philosophies; we spend most of the week doing that. But when we debate and analyse life issues in private Members' time on a Friday, we take subjective positions. Our difficulties on Bills such as this are little different from the difficulties that we face on life issues generally. Whether it is abortion, surrogate motherhood, life support machines, euthanasia or the embryo, political parties and philosophies have not managed to embrace those issues.

Some confusion exists in the House because hon. Members do not have the discipline of political guidance on these matters. The only concessions made to political concepts are on abortion, where the debate has become tangled with a political argument about the right to choose, and on murder, which is also a life issue and requires life considerations but which has become embroiled in political arguments about law and order.

For politicians, life issues are fraught with difficulties. It is easy for the Church to pronounce on these matters. A Christian need do no more than pronounce his article of faith. He says, "I believe in the sanctity of life." For those of us who subscribe to such views, they may be sufficient justification for supporting the Bill, but I do not believe that that approach, without the intellectual base that requires deliberation and evaluation of the merits, is sufficient to convince the House. Therefore, it is not a basis on which an hon. Member could make up his or her mind during the debate.

Therefore, we have to look elsewhere for justifications. During the considerations of the Warnock committee, there was much discussion about where life begins. That is a good question. But Warnock refused to define both when life begins and the position of the embryo at its inception. Perhaps the committee had a good reason for refusing to make those definitions. Perhaps it recognised that if it had defined when life begins it would have put the arguments about abortion on a *different plane and* would have brought the law on abortion into the area of absurdity. The whole life lobby interested in the further restriction of abortion in the United Kingdom would have turned its argument on Warnock's findings.

In ducking that issue, Warnock destroyed an opportunity for a far wider debate on another issue, which is equally important to hon. Members. I believe that life begins at conception and with the creation of the embryo, but that is but an article of faith and I do not believe that the House will necessarily subscribe to my view. If we are to argue the case, we must look for a justification that we can rationalise and that will appeal to the atheist. His position is crucial, because he must be convinced, for a reason, that there is justification for legislation.

It is interesting to note that the arguments on medical and scientific advance fall within the territory of the opponents of the Bill. They claim that the Bill will impede medical and scientific advance.

To some extent, I accept that view on abortion. I have moved from the moral case to the one that was put, though perhaps not very well, in the film "The Silent Scream". Whatever one thinks of the background and presentation of that film, it drew attention to the pain felt by the embryo. The case put by the doctor in that film was that the embryo felt pain.

Ms. Clare Short: I understand that during an abortion the embryo is normally frozen and that the movement shown in that film is not normal. Other films show that the embryo feels no pain.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Many interpretations are being placed on that film, and I hope that the Government, as they have been requested to do, will make a statement. We would all like to know the truth. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) may be correct. It is not my view that she is correct, but all that we want to know is the truth. If the truth is that the foetus feels pain, the public and the country should be told, because it will transform the argument. Let all the information be made available.

This has become my approach to abortion. With the embryo, the argument should turn on a medical, scientific factual argument. The question is, what is the effect on, and what is the response of, the embryo, and what is the experimenter seeking? He maintains that one can safely carry out experiments on the embryo that one would otherwise wish to carry out on the human being. Therefore, one must make the assumption that the experimenter expects a human response from the embryo. That is that the response of the embryo would be similar to the response of the person if he or she were the subject of the experiment.

Ms. Clare Short: Nonsense.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In that assumption rests a concession to our argument. The experimenter is treating the embryo as if it were a human being. The response that he expects is indicative of a human response. If that is nonsense, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood says, why does he not carry out the experiment elsewhere? Why does he always pick a human embryo? Is there something characteristic to a human embryo that allows him——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise that there are

House of Commons

Friday 15 February 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Human Embryos

9.34 am

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): I beg to ask leave to present a petition, signed by Mrs. Loasby, the Rev. Paul Rose and 1,076 of my Kettering constituents. It is entitled

"Petition for the Protection of the Human Embryo".

They affirm their belief that

the newly-fertilised human embryo is a real, living individual human being.

They oppose all practices that

discriminate against the human embryo or violate his/her human dignity and right to life.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves the purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment. Unless this is done solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I beg to ask leave to present two petitions from my constituents on the subject of the treatment of human embryos, bearing together over 1,000 signatures collected by Mrs. Margaret Campbell-Preston of 1 Bishops Way, Stradbroke, Suffolk, and the Rev. Brian Toll of The Rectory, Claydon, near Ipswich. I share my constituents' deep concern, expressed in this petition. It says:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves the purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment. Unless this is done solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I have the honour to beg to ask leave to present a petition from my constituents in Edgbaston, which has been signed by over 3,000 people. The wording has been passed as correct and, because of the pressure of time, I shall not repeat it. None the less, I claim that free expression, freely given, is a matter of concern to the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas (Chelmsford): I have the honour to beg leave to present a petition to the House concerning the protection of the human embryo and signed by citizens from virtually every part of the United Kingdom. It represents the final batch of signatories that have come from constituencies all over the kingdom. There are now 2 million signatures, the largest number since the Chartist petitions of the 1830s and 1840s, which have been collected in less than two months. The number of signatories speaks for itself and shows the deep anxieties and concern felt about the fate of the human embryo in the light of technological advances and the recommendations of the Warnock report.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the residents of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland showeth that we affirm that the newly-fertilised human embryo is a real, living individual human being.

Therefore we welcome the statement of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Human Fertilisation and Embryology (the Warnock Report) that 'the status of the embryo is a matter of fundamental principle which should be enshrined in legislation', and its recommendation that the embryo of the human species should be afforded protection in law.

And therefore we oppose all such practices as are recommended in the Report which discriminate against the embryo or violate his/her human dignity and right to life.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves the purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment (unless this is done solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned).

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): I have the privilege to present two petitions to the House, one standing in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Pearce, of 27 Brookfield Road, Fratton, and several hundred constituents in Portsmouth, South, and the other in the names of the whole of St. Edmund's Roman Catholic sixth form in Portsmouth. Both petitions are the same in substance and relate to the issue before the House today.

The petitions affirm

that the newly-fertilised human embryo is a real, living individual human being; therefore we welcome the statement in the Report of the Committee of Inquiry . . . (the Warnock Report) that 'the status of the embryo is a matter of fundamental principle which should be enshrined in legislation,' and its recommendation that the embryo of the human species should be afforded protection in law; and therefore we oppose all such practices as are recommended in the Report which discriminate against the embryo or violate his/her human dignity and right to life. Wherefore your petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment (unless done solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned).

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I beg to ask leave to present a petition primarily organised by Mrs. Merville Pidgeon, of 52 Castlemain Avenue, Bournemouth and the Bournemouth Life Group, signed by more than 2,000 of my constituents in Bournemouth, East, which affirms the Christian belief, which I wholly share, that life begins at conception and that human embryos must be protected in law. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that the House of Commons will take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research and experiment . . .

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I have the honour to present three petitions, which are similar to

Mr. McQuarrie: Nonsense.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Member may say "Nonsense", but that is so. It is interesting that the work of Dr. Steptoe and Dr. Edwards has shown that women who could not have benefited personally from their work willingly donated eggs to help with that research. Of course there is a need to regulate research and the whole of the medical profession is desperately anxious to do so, but the arguments of the hon. Member for Workington, although they have logic in essence, do not have logic in the way that research develops and in the way that we look at aspects of public and personal health. If the hon. Member were right, we should not have eliminated smallpox or polio, nor should we be able to look at ways and means of getting rid of genetic diseases such as haemophilia and Huntington's chorea.

At some point it is conceivable that a Bill will have to be introduced if there is abuse of research, although that research is aiming to abolish genetic defects which nobody suggests ought to be retained if they can be removed. Therefore, it is not a legitimate objection to the Bill to suggest that future scientists may take research beyond acceptable grounds. The question before us is whether we have reached the limits of benevolent knowledge and research in relation to infertility. I believe that the balance of the argument lies against the Bill.

11.51 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I agree with the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) at least in one respect. Each of us in a debate of this kind has to look into his own heart and decide where the truth lies. For me the starting point is the nature of the human embryo. If it were not a member of the human family from the moment of conception, there would be no need for the Bill; but I believe that it is an embryonic human being and that it deserves our protection.

It is not only essential to grasp this point from the outset but imperative to understand that the Bill is a response to the invitation of eminent doctors and scientists that Parliament should give its blessing to experiments which for the first time in the history of this country are not in the interests of the individual upon whom they are performed. Even the Warnock committee, which throughout refused to discuss the nature and status of the embryo, was forced to concede that a moral dilemma faces us, since it recommended:

"The embryo of the human species should be afforded some protection in law."

Yet the committee went on to recommend that experiments on human embryos should be permitted under licence up to 14 days after fertilisation.

The majority of the committee also recommended that embryonic human beings should be produced specifically for experimental purposes. Just how Warnock could recommend that the human embryo should be afforded some protection in law but could also be used for experiments which result in its destruction, or, if it survives the experiments, could be put to death by the experimenters is almost impossible for the moral mind to grasp. Warnock offers no rational basis whatever for such mutually exclusive propositions.

If we consider the basic requirements of a truly civilised society, we can surely agree that at least in their constitution our American cousins got it about right when they declared that all human beings have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But note that the right to life comes first. There can be no right to liberty or to the pursuit of happiness if first there is no right to life. There is no protection in law worth having unless we are first guaranteed the right to life. It is a condition of all human rights. If this House were to reject the Bill and thereby to endorse the Warnock proposals, we should have accepted the principle that some human beings, albeit at a very early stage in their development, are to be regarded as "non-persons" if it suits the interests of science and is held to benefit others.

Nobody could argue that embryonic human beings represent a threat to the rights or interests of anyone. On the contrary, they are isolated, incapable of threatening anyone and innocent of any wrongdoing. To argue that spare embryos used in experiments will die in any case is morally no different from justifying the use of any of us as a guinea pig if, say, we contracted some incurable disease, on the ground that our death was inevitable because of that disease. Ethical medicine has always upheld the principle that experiments, even in terminal cases, can be conducted only on the ground that they might be of benefit to the patient.

The Nuremberg trials roundly condemned a whole regime and its servants on the ground that it ignored this principle. The Nazis were condemned for treating some human beings as non-persons and using them as experimental objects for so-called scientific purposes, for the so-called good of society and for the benefit of a so-called master race. We are all familiar with the argument that the end justifies the means. That idea did not die with Hitler in his bunker; it is alive today. Only a fortnight ago the police captain Piatrowski, one of the murderers of Father Popieluszco, told a Polish court, apparently without any remorse:

"I believed that a small evil was necessary to end a larger one."

To justify a very small evil we are now told that it is necessary, if we are to make progress in discovering more cures for infertility, more abortifacients and more efficient methods of contraception, to experiment on human embryos. That kind of suggestion does not tug at the heartstrings to the extent that its advocates would wish. We are now told that only experimentation on the human embryo can find the cures for chromosomal diseases and other congenital handicaps which distress us all.

It was in this very House that William Pitt the younger, one of the greatest parliamentarians of all time, warned:

"Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants. It is the creed of slaves."

Necessity is undoubtedly the argument of those who do not wish to be constrained by ethics or even doubt as to where their monstrous new techniques for freezing, cloning, manipulating and killing human embryos are leading mankind. I salute the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for bringing out into the open the direction in which such research is proceeding all over the world. The Medical Research Council is not a body to which I would entrust 100 per cent. the task of self-regulation of research or preventing decline in medical ethics. Ironically, the need to experiment with human embryos to find the cure for, say, Down's syndrome is not proven. Through Warnock, Parliament is being asked to

grant to scientists the right to play God for up to 14 days when it is well known that the claimed results could not be obtained in so short a period.

There is the rub. Bolder spirits among the experimenters are already declaring publicly that 14 days is of no use to them. They demand 30 days. There are others who want 42 days. Believe it or not, there are others still, including a member of the Warnock committee, who have already been experimenting on live aborted feotuses. That takes place in this country.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Where?

Sir Bernard Braine: It is all in the medical literature. The hon. Gentleman can see for himself. I have only 10 minutes, but it is all in the medical literature. I shall lay it on the Table of the House for any hon. Member to see. I repeat that a medical researcher——

Ms Richardson: Name him.

Sir Bernard Braine: Professor MacNaughton—has conducted experiments on live aborted foetuses. He has injected them with steroids.

Ms Clare Short: That is illegal.

Sir Bernard Braine: Apparently it is legal. Apparently, under the Medical Research Council, such research is permissible.

A number of us were privileged to hear Professor Jerome Lejeune when he spoke in the Grand Committee room last week. He is one of the most eminent geneticists in the world. It is clear from what he says that it is misleading nonsense to assert that experimentation up to 14 days can add anything at all to our knowledge of diseases such as muscular dystrophy which affects the muscles, because the muscles are not there in the embryo up to 14 days, or cystic fibrosis which affects the lungs because there are no lungs in the foetus up to 14 days. The moment one examines this in any detail, one sees the falsity of the claims.

There is only one body in Britain which can safeguard the embryo and save the honour of our people and that is Parliament. Here the buck stops. Either we accept that the right to life incorporates the right not to be experimented upon for the sake of others, or we lose all moral credibility and history will judge us as decision makers who ran away from their most fundamental duty. The Bill gives us a chance to stop the rot.

12.2 pm

Mr. Leo Abse (Torfaen): In the 10 minutes that are now available to each of us, I want to direct the attention of the House to two matters. The first of these is the Bill itself. I challenge the unequivocal assertion by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) that the Bill in no way interferes with existing in vitro procedures. I say that it does. In fact, if the Bill went through it would mean that in vitro pregnancies in Britain would be likely to come to an end.

The second point with which I shall attempt to deal is the foundation upon which the right hon. Gentleman rests the Bill—his belief, not in religion as he frankly says, that his instinctual reaction is one which should govern his Bill and the opinion of Britain.

Each of us knows, or should know, that so far single-egg collection, the limitation of the fertilisation to one ovum, has led in almost all cases only to misery of miscarriages. I am informed that in the last 28 cases in which it was performed in a National Health Service hospital, at probably the best infertility unit in the country, only one pregnancy resulted. Therefore, we must accept that the existing clinical practice requires that an attempt is made, first, to fertilise six or seven eggs in the hope that the end result will yield at least four embryos for transfer. Sometimes, of course, fertilisation of all the eggs takes place. Although there may be seven, it would be reckless even to think of disposing of the extra embryos until the transfer procedure was believed to have been successfully completed, lest, as sometimes happens, mishaps and difficulties arise in the transfer.

The Bill traps the gynaecologist. According to the Bill, from the moment that the embryo insertion has been completed, the authority for the gynaecologist to have an embryo in his possession immediately and automatically ends. He is left with two or three extra embryos in, according to the Bill, his unauthorised possession. That means that he is immediately liable to a two-year sentence of imprisonment. That is the effect of the Bill.

I challenge the right hon. Member for South Down to deny my assertion, even as I challenge him to tell the House what the gynaecologist is able to do with the two or three embryos that may be left. He will not be able to utilise them for research. He will not be able to freeze them with the mother's consent in order that they perhaps could be used to produce a child for another infertile couple. No.

I challenge the right hon. Gentleman. What happens to what are unhappily called the spare, but which I prefer to call the extra, embryos? I challenge him directly. Is it not the case that every gynaecologist who, under the Bill, attempts an in vitro pregnancy will, immediately on the successful completion of that, be placed in jepoardy of imprisonment?

Let me give a second reason why in vitro fertilisation will come to an end if the Bill becomes law. There is a gap between the clinical practice and the abstract principles of the Bill. Characteristically, the right hon. Gentleman's idiosyncratic approach and idiosyncratic logic leaches him away, as so often, from reality. He affirms—no one has mentioned it yet except for him—the time limit of the authority to be granted. He talks of the four months and the two months.

I could not understand why the right hon. Gentleman came to those conclusions. I went to the man who is generally regarded as probably the leader in the in vitro field within the NHS, at the University of London institute of obstetrics and gynaecology. I went to Mr. Winston and I have his authority to give the House his comment on the four-month rule. He said:

"The four-month rule, even with extension for two further months, makes an impossible"—

I repeat—

"an impossible restriction on our services. Good treatment often requires many months of preparation, finally choosing the most suitable menstrual cycle in which to collect the eggs. We put our patients through a series of assessment cycles and may decide at short notice to collect eggs because of propitious hormonal omens . . . Currently in our programme, it takes an average of 14 months from the start of assessment for i.v.f. until pregnancy is established. Of course, some women are much luckier than this; others may need longer."

What has to be done when that is the actuality of the situation? The right hon. Gentleman is insisting that again and again applications would have to be made. The doctor in each case would have one eye on the clock to make sure that he did not suddenly become a criminal, and one eye

[Mr. Leo Abse]

on his work. He would be choked with a bureaucratic procedure which would go on for ever. No self-respecting doctor, in my judgment, would be able to tolerate continuing in that way.

There is a third reason why I say that in vitro fertilisation will undoubtedly be arrested by the Bill. The Medical Research Council, through Mr. James Gowans' letter to *The Times* a few days ago, made it clear that as the Bill would stop all research aimed at improving in vitro fertilisation it would indirectly

"lead to the shutting down of many of the best IVF clinics. This is simply because many doctors will not continue providing a relatively inefficient service if they are prevented from improving it."

They will not be able to feel justified in making any woman take on that heavy burden when there is such a slim chance of her having a baby. That is the third reason why in vitro fertilisation will be brought to an end by the Bill.

But there is a fourth and final reason why in vitro fertilisation will be brought to an end. The right hon. Member for South Down confidently said that under the Bill the Secretary of State could make an automatic grant, once two doctors had made an application, but I do not see anything in the Bill to suggest that the Secretary of State's discretion is so limited. The Bill lays down certain mandatory provisions which the Secretary of State must observe, but it does not state what he can or cannot do beyond those provisions.

As I have already said, any woman who wanted in vitro fertilisation following the Bill's enactment would have to go through the process of making an application to the Secretary of State for permission to be a mother. The right hon. Member for South Down is saying that we should introduce licensed motherhood and that the decision should be made in Whitehall by a faceless and anonymous bureaucrat. That is an intolerable suggestion — *[Interruption.]* In my view, a Bill which makes such a suggestion and which piles such humiliation upon a woman should be rejected.

The right hon. Member for South Down says that he is guided by his instinct. He does not plead religion, and is honest and frank about that. But my instincts are different. I come from a different culture from that of the right hon. Gentleman. I am a secular Jew, not a religious Jew. I do not share the view of the orthodox, whether they are rabbis or bishops or cardinals. I was brought up to believe that it was a wonderful thing, in accordance with the Old Book's injunction, to multiply as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky. That is a wonderful adage. Thus my instinct is different from that of the right hon. Member for South Down with his monkish habits. Some days ago I observed him challenging a young black girl. He was promising her a future of fear because he was concerned, as he always is, with the disproportionate number of blacks that will come along. He is always interested in birth. It is no surprise that he should have introduced the Bill. He has always been interested in the births of blacks — *[Interruption.]* That is his statistical — *[Interruption.]* His interest is founded on his prurient curiosty about their sexual habits.

Mr. McQuarrie: Wind up!

Mr. Abse: I shall do so, if the hon. Gentleman will let me. In this case, the same instinct is at work. The machoism of some men is being threatened, because men who are not confident in their sexuality fear in vitro fertilisation. If there were fewer eunuchs in the country, there would be fewer Enochs in the House.

12.12 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I rise to speak after one of those paranoid demonstrations which the House sees performed from time to time by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse). When the arguments are analysed, it will be seen that there has been a lot of sound and fury, but that there is very little substance to them. An examination of what has been said will show that red herrings have regularly been drawn across the Bill.

I sympathise with those with human problems and with the tragic position of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). I am also aware, from my pastoral and personal responsibilities, of the problems of parenthood. Although I respect the general practice of medical science, I realise that doctors may differ in their opinions and that patients may die. On the subject of foetology, I am reminded that if my family had accepted the medical opinion given 23 years ago, and had accepted, after a test had been performed, that the child in the womb was dead, we would not now have a healthy daughter of 23.

My point is that some of the arguments that have been put forward are questionable. Although opinion was divided, Warnock asked for 14 days for experimentation. However, others working in the area have said categorically that that view is doubtful. I should like to quote a witness who submitted recent evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee which examined this issue. He is a specialist, and is consultant paediatrician at the Royal Maternity hospital, which does a tremendous amount of work in genetic research and the care of children. He said:

"As a practising paediatrician prevention of these abnormalities would be highly desirable. They remain a major cause of neonatal and infant death in Northern Ireland. However, I am not convinced that research during the first 6 weeks after fertilisation will provide the wealth of knowledge that some researchers claim. Furthermore, there is a danger that if human embryos are kept alive for this period of time that new drugs would be tested for their effects in causing abnormalities. This would clearly be a misuse of human embryo research."

The time has come to lay down guidelines for the researchers. At an earlier stage in the development of medical science there were some who encouraged researchers not to go down the road of in vitro fertilisation for humans. But researchers went down that road and Warnock has now requested legislators to get them out of their difficulty and to legalise the proceedings. It is now for us as legislators to say that they have travelled far enough along that road. Despite the comments of the hon. Member for Torfaen — who has now vacated the Chamber — we are dealing not with the question of infertility, but with that of research that uses embryos.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am trying to keep my speech within the 10-minute limit. I do not want to be unfair to any hon. Member, so I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will not press me to give way to them.

We have already been told that if we restrict further research in Britain it will be carried on elsewhere. Several countries have already been named. The same argument could have been used when Members of Parliament

wanted to abolish slave trading—if we abolish it, it will go on elsewhere. Thank heaven, on that occasion the House gave moral leadership to the world. Today we have an opportunity to give similar moral leadership to other nations.

If others go wrong, we should not follow their example. Accordingly, I urge hon. Members, especially those who have argued against the Bill, to think again. I say that in particular to those who have spoken largely from the point of view of women. I appreciate their arguments, but I suggest that if we followed the road that some of them would have us travel, there could be fewer women in the future crying out for the place of women because of the process of selection through genetic engineering.

We are arguing today, not on behalf of male or female, but, following the quotation from the Hebrew given by my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), on behalf of humanity. It is important to consider the matter, not from one point of view or another in terms of male and female, but from the point of view of humanity as a whole. Men and women are created in the image of God and are brought into the world distinct from any other form of creation.

At the time of the Nuremberg trials certain guidance was given. That guidance stated that there should be a preparedness on the part of the scientist

"to terminate the experiment at any stage if the experiment is likely to result in injury, disability or death to the experimental subject."

The subject is the important word there, for while we may talk about a potential human being, or a human being with potential, we are discussing the future of a human subject. The question of research for genetic defects is not involved in the Bill. Let us continue to try to help those with an infertility problem.

12.22 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I support the motion. When we consider a Bill on Second Reading, we are concerned primarily with its principle and general intent. The intention of this measure is set forth in its title — the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill — and it is vitally necessary at this time that we should have a measure with that title.

The title of the Bill recognises that the human embryo is a human being, and proof of that cannot be gainsaid. The fundamental strength of the Bill lies in its title. So long as the title is retained, there will be a platform for clarification and, if necessary, for the strengthening of the measure at later stages. If the title of the Bill is forgotten —if it is lost—or if the solemn basis disappears, society will be at a disadvantage. Thus, we must retain the title of the Bill.

A frightening and terrifying situation has come about in our country when a scientist can boast that he possesses 300 embryos in cold storage. To pick up a newspaper and read that Dr. Edwards has pleaded "Let embryos grow in pigs" is utterly repugnant to the people of the nation, be they of no religion or of strong religious faith. *The Guardian* reported on 19 December 1984 that Dr. Edwards had said

"that he had not put human embryos into animals . . . But the work might become necessary to improve the technique of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and to minimise abnormalities in babies. It might be necessary to put an embryo in the oviduct (the tube leading from the ovary to the womb) of a pig or a rabbit for six to 12 hours and then take it out again."

Dr. Edwards claimed that that needed to be done in the interests of his research. As I say, that is totally repugnant to the people of Britain. *The Guardian* also reported Dr. Edwards as having said:

"the first British frozen baby is expected early next year."

What sort of child will that turn out to be? Science has run wild and we in this House must do something about it. That is why I support the Bill.

The measure would make it an offence to produce, or have in one's possession, a human embryo without the authority of the Secretary of State, which authority must be expressly given for the purpose of enabling a child to be born by a named woman. That would be an immense step forward from the present position, where there is no regulation or control.

I should like the Bill to be amended in Committee to ensure that no human embryos would be created which were not transferred into a woman, except in exceptional circumstances—for example, where life might be put at risk. Under the Bill as drafted I fear that many embryos could be produced which would not need to be used for a named woman. The question, therefore, is what will happen to them. We must face up to that question.

Believing, as I do, in the sanctity of the marriage bond, I cannot accept that embryos should be donated to women outside the marriage relationship. Experimentation, freezing and the purchase and sale of embryos are repugnant practices and should be outlawed.

The Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of General Practitioners are 100 per cent. against all embryo experimentation. Two million people have petitioned Parliament against it. Today scientists are trying to play God. I reject that right of science to usurp the authority of God Almighty.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) quoted from the Bible. I, too, will quote from the Old Testament scriptures, reverenced by both Jews and Christians. The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said that the unanswerable question was, what is man? I disagree, because the Revelation in the Bible gives us the answer to that question. That is what the whole Christian revelation is about. The Psalmist tells us:

"Thou hast possessed my reins, thou has covered me in my mother's womb. My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret. Thine eyes did see my substance. I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

I plead today on behalf of the unborn child that cannot speak. It cannot defend itself and it is a prey to the whims of scientists. It is the plaything of their experiments.

In the name of these helpless, defenceless, voiceless human beings, whose rights must be protected — especially their right to live—I urge hon. Members to support the Second Reading by an overwhelming majority. By so doing we can take a first step against the exploitation of this section of the human race. All human embryos are equal and should be equally protected in law.

12.28 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): The longer the debate goes on, the more convinced I am that this subject, at this time, is singularly inappropriate to be dealt with a private Member's Bill.

I have sat through the proceedings on all the abortion Bills from 1967. We have had the usual and entirely predictable emotional language about playing God, about Hitler and the Nazis and all the other things from eunuch

[Mr. Willie W. Hamilton]

to Enoch. We have heard it all from my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who was outstripped by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). All conveyed the message that those who oppose the Bill are guilty of a heinous offence. They say that we are murderers. I have been accused of that before. Roman Catholics in my constituency have accused me at public meetings of being a mass murderer of children because I happen to take a contrary view to theirs.

I have not presented a petition in the House. One was sent to me, signed mostly by Catholics, although I suspect that others signed it, too. I did not present it to the House; I sent it to the Minister for his considered reply. That was performing as useful a function as has been performed by the meaningless exercise of bringing forward a great wad of signatures. If one counts all the signatures, by definition at least 50 million of our population have not signed. Therefore, I take no account of that except to say that there are, of course, very acute divisions of opinion in the country and the House, and no amount of logic or emotion on either side will resolve those differences.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point said that to reject the Bill is to endorse Warnock. That is simply not true. There are organisations——

Mr. McQuarrie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

There are organisations and individuals who say that they oppose the Bill but who also have reservations about Warnock. It would be surprising if that were not so. I should like to make one simple point. The Warnock report made 64 recommendations, excluding the two expressions of dissent, which were signed by two and three members of the committee respectively out of a total membership of 16. Even the Warnock committee, composed of all sorts of experts, objective people with no political axe to grind, was also divided in the majority of the recommendations.

The 64 recommendations included nine on the legal limits on research and 14 on the legal changes deemed to be necessary. That is a measure of the complexity of the problem that we face and the controversial character of the recommendations.

All that makes the issue singularly inappropriate to be dealt with piecemeal by a private Member's Bill. However competent the Member is who introduces it—the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is no more competent in these matters than any Member of the House——

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I have never claimed otherwise.

Mr. Hamilton: I was just saying that, however eminent and eloquent the right hon. Gentleman might be, he has no qualifications whatever for playing God, if I might say so. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] It is exactly right. The right hon. Gentleman sought to create the impression —perhaps unconsciously—that somehow, because we take a contrary view to him, we are guilty of some kind of offence. [HON. MEMBERS: "He did not say that."] All right. I am simply saying, and I repeat the complaint that I made, that this is a matter that is not appropriate to be dealt with in this way. I suspect that the Minister will say that, too.

It is only seven months since the Warnock report was produced. The Government have asked for organisations to make their representations to them on those matters. According to an answer given to the House a few weeks ago, no fewer than 120 organisations have already made their representations to the Government. I forecast that there is no unanimity among those 120 representations received by the Government so far. I do not know what consultations the right hon. Member for South Down made when he drafted his Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Abse) showed that he has not consulted some of the experts who might have something worth while to say on the matter. It is extremely important that, before reaching any decisions, this democratic assembly should take careful account of lay hon. Members—that is what we are—and of the multifarious organisations with a point to make. Only then should we attempt to legislate. Only after the Government have conducted nationwide consultations are we likely to get the type of legislation that will cover the problems that Warnock investigated. I hope that the House shares my view. It would be disastrous for infertile men and women and others who might pass on defects if we act, as I believe we are acting, with unseemly haste on deeply controversial issues.

12.35 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) makes light of 2 million signatures, but that is the biggest collection that I have seen in my time in the House. The number shows that there is vast public disquiet about the implications of the Warnock report.

We are here not to rubber-stamp the views of the public, but we cannot ignore them. We can safely assume that the majority of those who signed the petitions are equally worried about childless couples and congenital malformations, although I do not concede that allowing research to continue would help to solve those problems.

I share the revulsion and repugnance felt by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) on reading the Warnock report. I am thankful for the fact that he has been fortunate enough in the ballot to introduce the Bill. It does not seem inappropriate that the Warnock report was published in 1984. One of the organisations that support the Bill put it well when it wrote:

> "Warnock's view of the human race is chilling. Human eggs, semen and embryos are little more than materials for laboratory manipulation. Human sexuality is simply a biological phenomenon of the animal kingdom . . . love is not mentioned. Children are products. We are in a sanitised, clinical and dehumanised world. There is no awe, little reverence, less concern for dignity".

I take it that the Bill prevents experimentations with the human embryo. That is a worthwhile aim. Like abortion, experimentation with the human embryo is a grave sin. Some sections of the scientific world would have no restraint if some curb were not put on their activities. That is part of the spirit of the times in which we live. The right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) said that he did not believe that there had been any fall in the moral standards of society. I regret that I have to disagree. He also said that society is unwilling to accept restraint. The arrogance of man knows no bounds.

It has been claimed that ending some forms of research would end investigation into certain diseases, such as Down's syndrome. One of the leading experts on Down's syndrome says that there is no evidence to suggest that the lack of experimentation on embryos would affect research into that syndrome. The right hon. Member for South

Down answered the question about infertility. Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have argued that there should be a Government Bill. Meanwhile, we must maintain the position. I hope that when the Government's Bill is presented to the House, it will incorporate the aims of this Bill for the protection of unborn children, as nothing could be worthier than that.

12.40 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I welcome the Bill and congratulate the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) on tabling it and for the way in which he presented it. I have reservations which I shall mention shortly, but I fully endorse the proposition that experimentation on human embryos should be treated by the law as a grave offence, because a human embryo is a human being with a genetic code for its full development as an individual from the moment of conception. I therefore hope that the title of the Bill will remain unchanged.

It has been suggested that experiments on human embryos are justified because of the knowledge that may be gained to save the suffering of others. I recognise the sincerity of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and I am aware of his deep concern for the disabled, born of personal family tragedy. However, as many hon. Members have said, there is grave doubt whether experiments are or could be of value. We have heard that leading experts on Down's syndrome and spina bifida, who are responsible for important discoveries in these fields, say that human embryo experiments have no validity and are unnecessary. At the end of the day we are left with the question whether it is right for one human being to experiment on another, and for me that is the sticking point.

To legislate on in vitro fertilisation, the right hon. Gentleman has had to tiptoe extremely carefully in order not to offend too many sensibilities. Infertility causes great anguish and distress. If a married couple have physical difficulties in conceiving naturally a much-wanted child, it is hard to deny them the opportunity of overcoming those difficulties by artificial means. However, that is not a cure for infertility, but a substitution.

One of the weaknesses of the Warnock report and, if I may say so, of the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health in reply to the debate on 23 November is that, although great play was made of the need to overcome the consequences of infertility, nothing was said about effecting a cure or seeking medical research into the causes.

In vitro fertilisation has been evolved as a clinical technique to overcome the problems of infertility mainly caused by tubal occlusion, the commonest causes of which —accounting for 90 per cent. of all cases—are previous abortion, the use of intrauterine devices and sexually transmitted diseases. That is not to say that all cases of infertility result from such avoidable causes, but their significance is such that we should perhaps do more to make vulnerable members of our society more aware of the dangers that they face. We should seek to avoid causes rather than to bypass them, as in vitro fertilisation seeks to do, in the distressing circumstances in which the need arises.

However, may I say to the right hon. Gentleman that the weaknesses of the Bill seem to be in the conditions under which in vitro fertilisation may take place. I am nervous of leaving it to the Secretary of State to determine the criteria and circumstances in which an embryo may be inserted. The Bill gives no guidance on that matter to the Secretary of State or to his officials who will be advising him in individual cases. Also, the Bill leaves it possible for human embryos still to be bought and sold. It does not give any directions as to the provenance of the gametes to be used. No consideration is given as to whether the Secretary of State should keep a register of donors. I mention that because the Bill is giving for the first time legal sanction to the creation of children by artificial means; therefore, account has to be taken of all the legal consequences of that sanction.

At some time in a child's life, medical questions in which hereditary factors are important will need to be examined. If there is no register of donors, and the woman who has given birth to the child did not necessarily produce the ova, or if the man to whom she is married did not produce the sperm, how can one trace the hereditary factors which may be vital in determining the medical conditions that may arise in the later life of that child? Also, for the very reasons that I have mentioned, considerable problems of inheritance could arise. Does the child inherit from the donor of the sperm or from the father of the family into which the child is born? Does he inherit through the mother from whose womb he came or from the mother who provided the ova? Those questions of inheritance cannot be tackled in a Bill of this kind, but the law must address itself to those social problems in due course.

The creation of spare embryos and their being kept in frozen storage remain possibilities under the Bill. I regard both as objectionable practices detracting from the dignity of human life. Moreover, I understand that, since the development of techniques for the painless retrieval of ova with ultrasonic guidance and without general anaesthetic, at the Manchester NHS IVF unit, the need for spares and storage for implantation purposes has gone. However, those are matters than can be more fully discussed at a later stage of the Bill, and it would be churlish of me to dwell on them too long and to detract from what I regard as the inherent value of the Bill.

At present there exists under our law no protection for the human embryo. Scientific developments have intruded at a pace into areas where the law did not see the need for its application. Once again, I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on seizing the opportunity, and I wish his Bill well.

12.48 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): Several hon. Members who have spoken in support of the Bill have referred to Professor Lejeune, who works in Paris and has made several pronouncements about the care of disabled babies. For example, he has suggested that spina bifida can be cured by the intake of large quantities of vitamins. Scientific information in Britain does not wholly support that view, and the Medical Research Council has set up a nationwide trial to prove the authenticity or otherwise of Professor Lejeune's claims. Professor Lejeune is trying to treat the abnormal conditions that occur after birth; he is not carrying out research to prevent those abnormal conditions from arising. His experience and views, therefore, are not relevant to the debate.

[Mrs. Renée Short]

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who was fortunate to win a place in the ballot for private Members Bills, could have chosen more wisely. He has chosen a Bill that will deny medical research scientists of distinction and high ethical values the right to continue research into one of the most distressing conditions that can affect a marriage — infertility. I protest at the attitude displayed on both sides of the House by hon. Members who support the Bill and at the denigrating remarks that have been made about scientists.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) referred to the problem of abnormality. It is a heartbreaking and unaccountable tragedy for many families when a child is born suffering from a hereditary disease or a congenital abnormality.

on Members have referred to in vitro fertilisation, but I wonder whether they realise how long it took to develop that technique. Research went on for 15 years. It takes a long time and much devoted work to produce new techniques to deal with the problem with which the Bill purports to deal.

The success rate is still low, so research must continue. If the right hon. Member for South Down has his way today, that vital work will cease. Work on the treatment of patients suffering from recurrent miscarriages, for example, following normal conception will cease if the Bill is passed. The Medical Research Council says that at least 10 per cent. of ill health in man is a direct consequence of inherited defects in our genetic make-up. Some of the defects are trivial, but others are very serious. I refer to inherited diabetes, blood-clotting diseases, blindness and deafness. Hon. Members have not mentioned those today. Inherited diseases cause enormous distress in families.

Some inherited diseases are even more catastrophic. There are inherited cancers, lethal blood conditions and defects responsible for gross physical and mental abnormalities or abnormality in the number of chromosomes, for example, which is responsible for Down's syndrome. These conditions are a common and intractable part of the burden of childhood abnormality that must be borne by some unlucky, unfortunate people and by the families who have to bring up such children.

Mr. Tracey: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Short: No, I am sorry.

Few of the serious inherited diseases are curable, and we are still unable to cure some of the less rare diseases such as cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy, which again no one has mentioned today.

Many genetic disorders can be diagnosed during pregnancy by amniocentesis. That is frequently performed on older women fairly late in pregnancy. The alternative to abortion if the tests are positive is a deformed child. If such tests cannot be carried out, the woman is condemned to bearing a deformed child. How much better it would be if we could make that selection much earlier in pregnancy —the earlier the better. That is the point of much of the medical research.

If research cannot continue, late terminations of pregnancy certainly will. Is the right hon. Member for South Down content with that? Has he faced up to that? Relief from such abnormal conditions lies in research which has been going on for some time. In vitro fertilisation can provide the means of checking an embryo to ensure that it does not carry an abnormal gene before the embryo is transferred into the mother. That has not yet been done, but it is possible. Then the pregnancy can continue with the knowledge that the child will be born perfect.

In relation to cystic fibrosis, I understand that one in every 20 people has one copy of the abnormal gene. Though those people are normal, they are carriers of the abnormal gene. One in 2,000 babies has the disease because he or she has two carrier parents. If two carriers marry, one in four of their children will have the disease. How can hon. Members say that we must not carry out the research that is needed?

The Warnock report does not define an embryo, and a great deal of misguided fuss has been generated by the bizarre belief that the human sperm-hamster egg fertilisation system is one step towards the creation of a part-human, part-animal hybrid. But that process develops a zygote, not an embryo. It will not develop into an embryo, but it provides a simple and useful system to measure the fertility or otherwise of the human male. That is why the experiment is being carried out. It is an important test which provides information about the chromosome content of the donor's sperm. It can also reveal information about the effect of radiation or exposure to chemicals on human sperm. Clearly, it will provide important information when a man claims damages against his employer after an industrial accident.

That is an important area of research which has nothing to do with human embryos. It has been misrepresented by those who put out inaccurate, misleading and irrelevant propaganda against the Warnock report as a whole.

The most immediate research area is fertility, the treatment of infertility and the understanding and improvement of methods of contraception. I hope that the Minister will emphasise that a voluntary code of practice was introduced following the Peel report on the use of foetal material. He knows that it works effectively and is under strict control.

If the Bill succeeds today, we shall retreat along the road of bigotry and intolerance, turning our backs on the misery and lasting damage to families of infertility or genetic disease blighting their hope of a normal family life. I hope that the House will vote against the Bill.

12.57 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I start by declaring an interest, or perhaps a cause of bias, similar to that declared by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley).

The Bill seeks to prevent the possession or procurement of an embryo except under licence, and we can all agree with that. However, it restricts the grounds on which a licence may be granted exclusively to the purpose of enabling a child to be born by a particular woman. I disagree with that, because it is possible to adduce a number of other purposes that might be legitimate and should not be made unlawful.

I shall concentrate on only one of those purposes, one which other hon. Members have spoken about — the procurement and possession of an embryo for the purpose of research into the causes and prevention of congenital abnormalities. We must not underestimate the scale and

seriousness of the problem. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) has given us sufficient data on that.

The emotive short title of the Bill is the "Unborn Children (Protection) Bill." This expresses the idea that an embryo is an unborn child which should be protected from any human intervention which would prevent it from being born. But are there not other hazards, such as the intervention of nature, which is sometimes unkind, against which we may seek to protect unborn children? Might it not also be said that research that could prevent serious congenital abnormalities also constitutes the protection of unborn children — their protection from such abnormalities, which may deprive them of the opportunity for a full life, or even of the opportunity for life itself?

Of course, as many hon. Members have said, there is controversy among scientists about the necessity for experiments on embryos for the prevention of congenital abnormalities. I believe that the answer to this point is that as long as there is a possibility that such a line of inquiry may produce results, we are taking a grave responsibility on ourselves if we prevent it from being followed. For those hon. Members who stand for the right of unborn children to a normal passage into the world must surely admit that there may also be a right for unborn children to benefit from advances in medical techniques which may assure for them the possibility of a normal life.

It cannot be said that the right hon. Member for South Down—I cannot help but think of him as a right hon. Friend—is taking his stand on the principle of respect for nature, although this is the principle which some hon. Members have adduced in debate, and it may perhaps attract some of them into the Lobby with him. After all, as he as made clear, the Bill is designed to license the unnatural procedure of conception in vitro. Not only that, but it permits behaviour that is inconsistent with current social norms, for it is silent, as has been pointed out, on the question of the legal relationship of the sperm to the ovum, so that it permits the possibility not only of artificial insemination by donor but of artificial insemination by husband, and of surrogate motherhood—practices which some of my constituents who have writen to me have described as nothing other than a species of prostitution.

I do not agree with these constituents on this point, and I am glad that the Bill does not exclude these possibilities. However, having admitted that these unnatural and unsocial methods of conception may be tolerated and licensed, one is obliged to ask on what principle the Bill is based. The right hon. Member for South Down sought to answer this question. He admitted that there was no principle but that there was prejudice—his instinctive revulsion. It is true that Dr. Johnson once said that one prejudice is worth 20 principles. But however that may be, if there is a principle underlying his case it is that the embryo is a human life, and that this life cannot, in any circumstances, be legitimately terminated by human intervention.

I respect the point of view of the right hon. Member for South Down, just as I respect the views of those hundreds of constituents who have been in touch with me and whose petitions I have presented to the House. However, in the context of the abortion law—this point was made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—the House, after long consideration, decided not to accept that principle. Parliament has licensed the termination of the life of embryos by abortions up to the 28th week after conception. In short, the House has previously considered and rejected the principle upon which this Bill is based.

Among the circumstances that are implicitly allowed to permit an abortion is the possibility of serious congenital abnormality in the unborn child. Parliament has thus recognised the legitimacy of terminating the prospect of human life for a defective embryo. Should it now turn its back on the emergence of technical possibilities which might enable such an embryo to come to a normal and natural life with its abnormalities corrected or prevented in the womb? These technical possibilities, as hon. Members have pointed out, might make it possible to avoid procuring an abortion. In these circumstances we must surely ask which stance is "pro-life" and which is "anti-life".

I say this with trepidation, but I must say it: the position of the right hon. Member for South Down lacks logic, and in this it reflects the reality of a public opinion which has not yet found its balance, and which has not yet matured to the point at which legislation can be said to express its inmost convictions. At various times, and in various guises, the right hon. Gentleman has presented himself as speaking from the depth of public opinion, and frequently when he has adopted that pose he has subsequently been found to be mistaken.

For my part, at this stage of the public debate about these issues, I can only say yes to the compulsory licensing of the procurement and possession of embryos—but I cannot follow the right hon. Member for South Down in his limitation of the circumstances in which such licences may be given. I shall therefore vote against the Bill.

1.4 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I shall first inform the House that the Government, as a Government, are neutral on the policy of the Bill, and it is my duty to explain briefly the reason for that, although I am sure that all hon. Members who have given a thought to the matter will have found the reason to be apparent.

In the debate, it has been obvious that many hon. Members on both sides of the House are speaking with passionate intensity about matters on which they have strong feelings. There are deep issues of moral conscience involved in the Bill, and differing hon. Members of all political persuasions are coming to different views.

The present Government, like I am sure the Opposition Front Bench, are composed of people with a wide range of views on the issues posed by the Bill. Not only would it be impossible for the Government to claim that they had come to a collective and disciplined moral judgment on the matter; it would also be quite wrong to do so. At the end of the debate, I expect that Ministers in the present Government will probably be found in both Division Lobbies. It is obvious from the debate that many members of my party will be found in both Division Lobbies voting against each other. On this occasion, Ministers are behaving as Members of Parliament representing their constituents and answerable to them, but they are also exercising their own judgment of the issues, and that is how the House will divide at the end of the debate.

The Government did not stand wholly aside from the preparation of the Bill once the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) decided that he would bring this issue before the House, having won his place in the ballot. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will not object

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

when I say that I thought it right that he should be offered some drafting assistance and certainly discussions to add to the discussions and drafting assistance that he had already had from outside, and also that he should have access to medical opinion inside the Department, the reason being that it seemed right that the right hon. Gentleman should present the issue in ways which could not be clouded by unnecessary arguments about the technicalities of drafting or obscurities about the medical basis on which he was acting.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I express my gratitude to the Minister for making that statement. It was my wish that the facts that he has disclosed should be known, but I did not think it proper to disclose them myself.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. It has helped to focus the attention of the House on the issues which Parliament has to determine.

During today's debate, from time to time hon. Members have expressed a certain dissatisfaction that the Government are not giving a firmer lead, although it has to be said that those expressing that desire have asked for leads in opposite directions from the Government at various times.

I believe that the Government can claim that they have given a lead to the country in helping the debate on these great issues to its present stage. The Warnock committee was set up more than two years ago to address itself not only to this issue of research on the embryo but to a wide range of related issues arising out of recent medical advances in dealing with infertility. I believe that the Government were well ahead of public opinion and that the public should be grateful that this work was done in advance of the right hon. Gentleman's Bill.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced that we were setting up the Warnock committee, no petitions were being presented to the House. At that time there were no in-depth exposés on the television, and there was no press pressure. The Government anticipated that a huge collection of moral and legal issues were piling up, and my right hon. Friend thought it right to bring together the widest possible range of people not to determine this matter, because it can be determined only by Parliament, but to give their considerable time and effort to it and to present a reasoned agenda within which the debate could take place.

No one has attacked the members of the Warnock committee, and I believe that it would be wrong to do so. The collection of people on the Warnock committee not only shared one thing in common, which was distinction in some field or other, but represented a wide range of expertise, opinion and religious conviction, which is why they were not able to come to complete unanimity on this issue. However, they published an extremely reasoned report.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) and others wondered why no Government Bill had been forthcoming since the Warnock committee reported last July. I should have thought that today's debate was in part an answer to that. As the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) said, we are not short of representations on Warnock, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) pointed out, the debate is still in full flood.

One of my hon. Friends said that if my right hon. Friend and I were to approach the Leader of the House and say that we had put together a simple Bill on the recommendations of the Warnock committee and that we thought it was time to present it to the House for the decision of the House, he would beg leave to doubt our judgment.

The Government owe the House a full response in due course to all the recommendations of the Warnock committee. Most of us appreciate that in due course Parliament will have to address itself to a major Bill covering a large number of these issues. However, I do not believe that any hon. Member should be amazed that such a Bill is not yet forthcoming. I cannot tell the House when such a Bill will be introduced. Therefore, on the one point which the right hon. Member for South Down has identified we have to decide whether it is right at this time to change the law. Also, we have to address ourselves to the question: what consequences would follow from such a decision being taken?

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): My right hon. and learned Friend has told the House that he cannot say when such a Bill is likely to see the light of day. That affects our view of the Bill. The problem is that events are moving so rapidly that we cannot afford to wait for too long.

Mr. Clarke: Because of the complexity of the subject, I can only say that a Bill will be introduced in due course. If such a Bill, commanding a general consensus, could have been introduced by now, the Government, as would have been wished by every hon. Member, would have done so. I can only repeat that the complexities that have been highlighted by the debate, even though the right hon. Gentleman has chosen only one specific narrow point from the committee's recommendations, demonstrates that nobody should underestimate the difficulty of the task upon which we have embarked in order to produce a Bill for the House to consider.

I am not arguing that the existence of the Warnock report and of all the work that went into its production excludes the right hon. Gentleman from presenting his Bill in an effort to change the law now, if that is the view of the House. However, the House must bear in mind that the report of the Warnock committee is in the background. The Government, having asked the Warnock committee to make recommendations, and knowing that diverse views have been put forward by sincere people about the consequences of the proposed changes, must hesitate before saying that a hole should be knocked through the central recommendation of Warnock relating to embryo research and that all further research should be made illegal by means of the introduction of this Bill.

Mr. McQuarrie: When my right hon. and learned Friend replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon), he said that a Bill would be brought forward in due course. Is he prepared to say whether a Bill will be introduced during the lifetime of this Parliament, or are the representations so complex that it is impossible for him to say when it will be introduced?

Mr. Clarke: Our aim is to introduce such a Bill during the lifetime of this Parliament and, indeed, to introduce it as soon as is feasible, but it is not possible for me to say when such a Bill will be introduced. The Government cannot put themselves under timetable constraints. If this

narrow point is to be addressed, I believe, having followed the thread of the argument so far, that first we must consider the nature of the being which the Bill seeks to protect, namely, the embryo which is described in the title to the Bill as the unborn child. It is argument about the nature of that being that is causing passion in the debate and leading to different judgments about whether research should be allowed to continue.

All those who have addressed themselves, however briefly, to the religious issues have backed away on this occasion from making judgments as to when the soul enters the personality or when it can be said for certain that human life commences. Some hon. Members obviously feel stronger certainty on that matter than others.

I have endeavoured to take the best medical advice that is available to me, but even the best medical advice occasionally varies. The process of birth appears to be continuous. It is a continuum, in the middle of which one can make no artificial break, all the way through from conception to emergence from the womb.

The sperm, whether or not it has fertilised an ovum, is a living cell. If it does not fertilise an ovum, it dies. The ovum, before it is fertilised, is a living cell, and if it is not fertilised it dies. The sperm and the egg, already alive in advance of fertilisation, combine and the ovum is fertilised. All one can say with certainty is that that fertilisation has brought into existence a genetically novel kind of cell. That cell has the potential, if it gets through the next stage of successfully implanting in the womb, of being a human being. A cell that will become a human being—an embryo or conceptus—will do so within 14 days. If it is not implanted within 14 days, it will never have a birth.

The majority of embryos do not implant. No one knows exactly how many. It is one of the things that no one knows how to research, so no one has researched it. The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said that the figure was as small as one in 1,000. A modest estimate would be that 60 per cent. of embryos do not implant. In those cases the woman never knows that she has conceived. No one ever knows of the existence of the embryo. It passes from the body and dies. That is the nature of the being — some implanting, some not — which the House is debating.

I find the certainties——

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment, because my hon. Friend is one of those who have been expressing no doubt at all that that is a human being.

I find some of the certainties rather difficult to follow. There is no doubt in the Bill. The embryo is described as an unborn child. Others have said that it is a human being. People have talked of the civil liberties of the embryo which may or may not be implanted in the first 14 days. That leads to the sombre thought that we are members of the minority of the human race, because the vast majority of the human race never got past the first hurdle. They were never implanted in the womb. They passed away and we know not where they have gone.

Mr. Nicholls: A few moments ago my right hon. and learned Friend described a process which he said started with conception and ended wth the emergence of a child from the womb. He talked about the sperm and the ovum having a life. It is clear from those two statements that even if those essential ingredients had life, they did not have human life until they were fused. The moment that my right hon. and learned Friend talks about a time span between conception and birth, surely it is completely bogus to try to draw some particular significance from the fact that sometimes they take, in the sense of implantation, and sometimes they do not. The relevant point is that my right hon. and learned Friend has described a point which starts with conception.

Mr. Clarke: Obviously, the potential for life is there. One has a potential human being. One must ask whether it is a human being and whether it is deserving of the respect that the Bill says. I have made it clear that I cannot regard that as a human being and as an unborn child requiring the protection of the law.

I find it easy to understand why the Synod divided on a narrow basis. The Committee for Social Responsibility went one way yesterday by a not overwhelming majority and the Synod of the Church of England went the other way. It is an extremely difficult problem.

Let me explain how the majority of the Warnock committee came to their decision and chose 14 days. That may or may not be the correct decision. That must be decided. The majority of the Warnock committee came to the same conclusion as I did, which I think everybody shares, that the embryo cannot be treated as another piece of human tissue. All kinds of cell samples can be taken from the human body. The embryo, or conceptus, call it what one may, is a fairly unique piece of tissue and needs to be treated with some respect.

The committee thought that experiments should be licensed as long as no embryo was kept alive for more than 14 days in vitro. The basis for the 14-day limit was that it related to the stage of implantation which I have just described, and to the stage at which it is still uncertain whether an embryo will divide into one or more individuals, and thus to the stage before true individual development has begun. Up to 14 days, that embryo could be one person, two people or even more.

Mr. Mikardo: The Minister referred to the Synod's proceedings yesterday. Is it not significant that after that narrow vote the Synod said, "Let us hold back, because we are going to have a more considered debate in July."? Is that not evidence that a bit more thought and research are needed before the House is ready to legislate?

Mr. Clarke: I think that the Synod has shown more care in its approach to the issue and a more restrained approach to a timetable than some hon. Members wish Parliament to take. The hon. Gentleman has therefore made a perfectly valid point.

I come to the last basis upon which the Warnock committee chose 14 days. Fourteen days is the stage before the rudiments of the nervous system have been laid down. In answer to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), I would say that that means that, as far as anyone can tell, pain does not enter into these experiments. The size and appearance of the embryo are relevant matters, though not decisive. From this Dispatch Box I can only describe, on the basis of the best information that I have, the nature of the entity which the Bill addresses and to which it is said we should give the protection of the law.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister suggesting that the embryo may feel pain after 14 days?

Mr. Clarke: I shall not answer that, because the hon. Gentleman is moving on to the question of the abortion Acts and his views on that——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I asked a straight question.

Mr. Clarke: I shall not be led into a debate on "The Silent Scream" and so on. I agree with the hon. Gentleman when he points out that, given the view that Parliament and the law take about abortion, the Bill has an astonishingly different attitude towards the sanctity of human life.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that to a large extent an embryo is a human being? As one of the dissenters on the Warnock committee said, an embryo is not just a collection of cells. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is a living body within a human being, because that is what many of us on this side believe it to be?

Mr. Clarke: I have tried to address myself to that point. My hon. Friend has come to his conclusion, and I shall come to mine.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the question is not when does life begin, but what type of respect should we accord to the living thing at each stage of its development?

Mr. Clarke: I quite agree. No one is arguing that an embryo of up to 14 days should be treated with total disrespect or purely as the object of scientific curiosity. People on both sides of the argument are asking for regulated research

However, I do not want to speak for too long, so I shall turn to the subject of research, which it is said is threatened. After all, that is the other major issue. The House must first decide whether the being that we are protecting is an unborn child, demanding the protection which the right hon. Member for South Down seeks. Secondly, it must ask itself what research and possible beneficial consequences for society as a whole will be forgone if we agree with the right hon. Gentleman and decide to end research in this area.

I do not want to go into too much detail, as it would make my speech too long, but those who support the Bill must face the fact that they are probably stopping beneficial research. With respect to the right hon. Member for South Down, he did not retreat from that. The right hon. Gentleman sometimes shocks me with his intellectual rigour, but he certainly does not duck arguments. At one point he seemed to say that there might be beneficial research. He went on to conclude, "Nevertheless, respect for human life leads me to the view that we should not explore in that way."

Some hon. Members have tried to duck that issue. It is no good citing Professor Lejeune of Paris and saying that, in his opinion, there is no worthwhile research to be done in this area. Indeed, Professor Lejeune is not the only one who could be cited. It is no good picking and choosing through the medical establishment, finding those who conveniently say, from the point of view of one's argument, that there is not a worrying problem here when it comes to the question of medical research.

There is a body of medical opinion which takes the opposite view, and it, too, comprises respectable and eminent people. Only last night I met the president of the Royal College of Obstetricians, a reasonable and eminent man, and it was clear from what he told me that he does not take the view that no worthwhile gains are to be made by medical research in this area.

I respect the conclusion of the right hon. Member for South Down. He is prepared to face the prospect—not the certainty, but the possibility—that there might be some worthwhile breakthrough by research in this sphere, but he says that his instinctive feelings about the embryo and the unborn child lead him in the opposite direction.

It is evading the issue to try to produce arguments to the effect that there is no worthwhile medical research in this area. If one wants to ban medical research, one must face that and say that one has good moral reasons for doing so.

Mr. Tracey: Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that there are no other possibilities for this research? Apart from Professor Lejeune, Mr. Brinkworth of the Down's syndrome centre, Dr. McLean, and a list of signatories to a letter to *The Times* two days ago have pointed out that human gametes could also be used for the same type of research. In other words, there are alternatives.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that there are alternatives. Research normally involves exploring alternative avenues of the widest possible range in the hope of achieving a worthwhile result. The effect of the Bill would be to rule out one route—a substantial route in the opinion of many medical and scientific people—by which one might come to conclusions. I agree that by alternative routes one might come to those conclusions, but it is a drastic step to rule out an area of research which people wish to follow.

Sir Bernard Braine: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that most of us are concerned about the direction in which research is going? What comment has he to make about that member of the Warnock committee who, apparently quite legitimately and within the law, has in the past been experimenting on live aborted foetuses? Is that the direction in which we should be going?

Mr. Clarke: The choice—of course, if the Second Reading is not approved there will not be a choice—is between regulation of the research and a criminal ban.

As for experiments of foetal material, as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) said, that has been authorised in this country following the Peel report. That has been accepted for some time, but if people wish to challenge it, they can.

What the Bill proposes is infinitely more rigorous than the practice that has been permitted for some time, following the Peel report, in relation to research with foetal material taken from a foetus at a much later stage.

Sir Bernard Braine *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) holds strong views on this and similar matters.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way, because hon. Members who wish to intervene are in danger of making me talk other hon. Members out of the debate.

I shall not go further over the three main areas of research that are affected, because other hon. Members have spoken about them. There was doubt about whether

research into in vitro fertilisation would be stopped by the Bill. At present, it is not a particularly successful technique. Only one in 10 implantations by IVF leads to a birth.

The right hon. Member for South Down said that his Bill would not exclude experimentation for the purpose of improving the technique. In a sense, he is right. If a new technique were used with the consent of the woman concerned—her consent would be needed—it would be possible to keep trying out methods by which one might achieve a better rate of implantation. The secretary of the Medical Research Council, in his letter to *The Times* a few days ago, said firmly that he did not think that either doctors or mothers would be likely to agree to such experiments. However, the right hon. Gentleman is clear that any experiment aimed at improving implantation rates that involved experiments on the embryo without implantation would be ruled out by his Bill. That is one of the areas which people might like to explore with regard to improving IVF.

The choice which the House faces now, or later if the matter is not resolved today, is between regulation and criminal law and a ban; whether it is all banned, or somehow it is regulated in a way yet to be determined. This is a purely personal opinion, which is not shared by many of my hon. Friends in or out of the Government. I urge the House to be extremely cautious about rushing into using the criminal law in particular in this narrow area. The criminal law is a difficult and uncertain weapon in such areas.

One thing on which I am sure everyone will agree on reflection is that it is no good saying that the moral law, approved of even by the majority of the population, should automatically become the criminal law of the country. All sorts of moral dangers and evils do not go into the criminal law. I do not want to be flippant, but I recollect that not one of the seven deadly sins, which include lechery, gluttony and avarice, is against the criminal law in the United Kingdom. Each deadly sin can be indulged in without criminal penalty.

The law is happiest when it confines itself to dealing with physical assault on the person of another citizen or dishonest appropriation of the property of another individual. Once the law goes into areas of moral uncertainty, it gets into difficulty. Laws that have been based on the moral judgment even of the majority of the population have sometimes proved difficult and uncertain areas. There are the laws of homosexuality and pornography, and I could cite others. Those are areas where, even if one wishes to legislate, one is entering an area which can become a legal quagmire as one seeks to get it right. This area may not be different.

No one is saying that in the end there will not need to be a criminal law restricting research in that area. If Warnock were implemented, and if Warnock's advice were accepted that licensing should restrict research up to 14 days, the implication is that it should be a criminal offence to experiment after that. I am not denying that most people eventually advocate the criminal law being there as a back-up sanction at some stage to make sure that the scientific community pays heed to the strong moral feelings of the majority of the population, but this is a difficult and uncertain area in which to get that law right. I have made it clear that I feel that the Bill is precipitate: it comes too soon and has not yet been adequately debated and thought through. It is extreme and fundamentalist in its consequences for a great deal of medical and scientific research. I shall vote against it, but members of the Government who are able to be here will exercise their free vote. It is the judgment of the House as a whole that will prevail in the end.

1.33 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Like many other hon. Members who have spoken, I am highly conscious of the fact that this is potentially a highly emotive Bill for two main reasons. One is the absolutist moral view adopted by many of those who passionately oppose all embryo experimentation in principle, and the other is the fear of the unknown, the bizarre and the unnatural that is sometimes conjured up by ignorance and prejudice concerning the recent rapid advances in the biotechnology of human fertility.

I pay tribute to the careful and measured speech of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). On the first count, in no way did he seek to inflame such passions, although on the other count his moral determinism has an inner certainty that at least some of the rest of us lack. However, I concede the sincerity and conviction with which those views were propounded.

Like the Minister, I speak as an individual rather than as a Front Bench spokesman. This is in no way a party political matter. However, I insist that, for all those for whom the moral a priori does not carry an automatic override, the balance of argument is tilted heavily against the Bill on two grounds. Before considering them, I should like to dispose of two obstacles which seem frequently to encumber dispassionate debate.

The first is the dread that scientists are somehow running amok and that, unless they are reined in by immediate legislation, science fiction nightmares such as human-hamster hybrids, carbon copy cloning by nuclear transplantation or wanton torture of living foetuses in the laboratory might see the light of day. Apart from the fact that cloning and inter-species constructs are pure research myths which can never happen, I must make it clear like the Minister, that those who oppose the Bill do not regard simply leaving matters as they are as the alternative. I and, I believe, many others of my persuasion believe firmly that Parliament must establish a framework for rigorous control and scrutiny of all such research, including a licensing authority such as Warnock suggested.

We should like legislation to go much further than the Bill. We should like a comprehensive package of legislation that embraces embryo experimentation, surrogacy, legitimacy—which has hardly been discussed today — and the other main issues that Warnock considered. I agree with the Minister that the Bill is precipitate. We—I mean those who share my views—do not believe that it should be allowed to pre-empt that wider legislative package.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) and for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said, there has been little time for the public and Parliament seriously to consider what anyone who is listening to the debate must realise are contentious matters. We are a little disappointed that the Government have been unable to outline their intentions, but we are adamant that the system of monitoring and control must be tight, detailed and open.

The licensing authority must have a lay chairman and sufficient lay members to ensure that it is not controlled by the scientists. Each researcher, each research

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

characteristics of the human embryo and the human womb that are characteristic of humans and not of any other animal.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is the point. If the experimenter were not setting out to achieve a human response, his research would be pointless. The question is whether such experiments are necessary. I do not wish to cite the cases that have already been drawn to the attention of the House, such as Down's syndrome. Suffice it to say that there is a belief within the medical profession that there are alternative forms of research, and the right hon. Member for South Down pointed out that it was within the intelligence of the human being to find other ways to extract this information. It may take time, but they will be found.

To secure the right to experiment, the onus is on the experimenter, within his own argument, to prove that the embryo is essential as against an alternative basis for research; but where is that proof? It has not surfaced today. We are told that the truth is in advanced implantation technology and the repairing of the genetic defects. The experimenter says that he must research to find a way to repair genetic defects. Genetic defects are at the heart of the argument.

Where are we going? If we take the rectification of genetic defects to its logical conclusion, one day we shall live in a society in which medical developments applied to in vitro fertilisation will be so advanced that facial appearance, physical strength, skin colouring, IQ and intelligence will all have become the subject of laboratory experiment, so much so that one will be able to book an embryological configuration — tall, dark, handsome, short, intelligent, athletic, shrewd or perhaps even a Frankenstein monster if that is what one wants. One would sign a form and book what one wanted.

Ms Clare Short: Only if we allow it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall come to that.

I perceive a society where perfection in procreation is such that one simply cannot afford natural childbirth. The in vitro conditioning of the embryo will be an essential prerequisite for the individual to be able to compete on equal terms in society, to look good, to be bright or athletic. The natural process will entail the risk of a fallibility that society may scorn as a sort of super-race is forged.

There may be those who say that we could prevent that by controlling it. How would they set out to contain the argument of the scientist who, after another 10, 15 or 20 years, says that the scientists have fully exploited the potential of research on an embryo of up to 15 days and that they see great new horizons and advances if only the time limit is extended? He will ask for another 15 days so that the scientists can give us even more scientific advances. In such circumstances, my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood might be returning to the House in a decade or so to argue for a few more days. At what stage do we say no, particularly when we know that we cannot control the scientists in the way that some hon. Members believe that we can? The problem is that we know that controls will not work. If they do not work, what is there to insulate society against the excesses of scientists?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Before calling the next hon. Member, I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is in operation. To assist right hon. and hon. Members, I shall use some sign language when they have about half a minute left.

11.37 am

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): I am mindful of Mr. Speaker's request that we should limit our speeches, so I shall be as brief as possible.

I am concerned about the number of interviews in the media, both yesterday and today, with couples who have either had a child by in vitro fertilisation or who want to have one by that method, and who have been mistakenly led to believe that somehow the Bill will prevent them from having such an opportunity in the future. That view has been supported by a number of hon. Members today. It is mistaken. As the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) made clear in a lucid presentation of the Bill, it will ensure that the infertile couple will be able to benefit from such treatment. It will ensure that research and experimentation designed to enable a particular couple to have a child are allowed to continue.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as I understand the problem of the time limit. He said that some couples thought that the Bill would prevent the birth of a child by such a method. Does he accept that Dr. Steptoe and Dr. Edwards have stated categorically that had the Bill been enacted before they began their research in vitro fertilisation would not have been possible?

Sir Gerard Vaughan: I shall be coming to that point.

The Bill will make it illegal to carry out experimentation on human embryos simply for the sake of experimentation. It will make it illegal to breed and produce embryos simply for the sake of experimentation. It will stop the incidents and the possibilities, to which I have referred before, of cloning and cross-species experimentation. I believe that all hon. Members would wish such experimentation to be made illegal and unlawful.

The argument against the Bill which the House must consider carefully is that in some way it will damage research. It is said that it will prevent valuable research from producing improvements for society which override moral and other issues. I have been looking carefully at what research has been done and at proposals for future research. My conclusion is to support those experts who say that to date the benefits have been very marginal. Of course, it cannot be said that there could not be some research in the future which would be of benefit. But these experts—and notable among them is Professor Lejeune — say that it is very unlikely and that, when one considers congenital conditions, the most profitable lines of research all lie in the chemical and vitamin field, many of them dealing with the mothers and not with the embryo.

I hope that the Bill will be given a Second Reading and go into Committee. If there are such serious objections from researchers, I hope that they will come forward with detailed statements of the research that they envisage. That is not evident at the moment, and a Committee stage will give us an opportunity to look again at these matters. Meanwhile, I am made extremely worried by the dogmatic statements of some scientific people that there will be a restriction on research. At this stage I do not believe it.

It is unarguable that at the point of fertilisation something occurs which is not present in the sperm or the unfertilised ovum. What occurs is the potential for human life — not for life in general, but life for a specific person. That fertilised ovum carries the structure for a specific human being — the height, the colour, the colour of his or her eyes and all the other details of a specific person. I do not think that there can be any argument against that. The fact that the embryo at that stage does not bear a human form seems to me to beg the issue and to be quite irrelevant. It carries the potential and, just as the child is to the adult human, so the embryo must be to the child.

I ask the House to look carefully at this aspect and to support, as I do for example, the Royal College of Nursing when it says that human rights are applicable to the embryo at that stage. I cannot agree, for example, with the doctor interviewed last night who said that the mass at that early stage was not the embryo but the substance which later will become the placenta. I agree that 90 per cent. of it is, but 10 per cent. is the embryo. I cannot agree either with those who say that many embryos die, anyway. That is not the point. Perhaps it would be desirable if they did not die, but we are discussing embryos which are born with the purpose of being deliberately killed, to destroy them for experimental purposes.

When the House comes to weigh these considerations, I believe that it will take the view that we are a civilised society, that civilised societies are judged by the way that they treat other human beings, and that this is an area where the moral issues, the potential life issues, firmly outweigh considerations of possible speculative research in the future.

I hope that the House will support the Bill and let it go into Committee. I hope, too, that from the Bill will come the wish of such people as Professor Ramsay, who hopes that we in this country will give a lead to the rest of the world in setting moral and ethical standards in these matters.

11.45 am

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I, too, commend the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) for the manner in which he presented his Bill, which is in contrast to some of the arguments that are to be heard both in and out of the House.

The petitions that we have all received and presented to the House rightly demonstrate a deep emotional concern about the sanctity of life, and that belief is not exclusive to one side of the argument. All right hon. and hon. Members will share that view and deep feeling about what life is and should be. Those who oppose the Bill are not only equally concerned but believe that it is not possible to take the same exclusive view of what life is.

Also, many supporters of the Bill and some of its opponents have deep religious beliefs. But I suspect that there would be immense problems if the House attempted to legislate solely from a theological standpoint. I doubt whether it was ever possible to draw definitive and watertight definitions determining ethical and moral positions. It is certainly vividly impossible to do so today, given the advancement of medical science.

Some years ago there was an urgent debate on the definition of death because of the development of transplant surgery and concern about control over the taking of organs. This Bill and the related issues of the Warnock report are a mirror image of that debate, as they hinge upon a definition of life. The fact of the debate and conflicting specialist opinion demonstrate that there is neither consensus nor clarity over that definition. The right hon. Member for South Down said that the question of what was life was unanswerable, and I accept his opinion.

I oppose the Bill because I believe that there is a difference between the potentiality of life and the actuality of life. Both are aspects of life but, if we are to be sensitive and helpful to those who feel desperately unhappy and deprived because they are unable to have children, we need to accept a hierarchy of values put on those different aspects of life.

I share the right hon. Gentleman's repugnance about some of the issues raised by in vitro fertilisation and other aspects of different methods of conception. I read the Warnock report with the same repugnance. But I believe that if the preparation of legislation and deliberation upon it was determined by the amount of repugnance that we felt, we would hardly be assisted in the way that we drafted legislation.

Unlike the right hon. Member for South Down, my feelings went the other way thereafter. The more that I studied the key question involved, the more that I believed that the Bill as drafted was unhelpful. It is particularly unhelpful to those who suffer from infertility, and the potential evil that it seeks to inhibit is by no means the threat that it is represented to be.

Aside from the key issue of research on embryos, I find it astounding that a Bill can come before the House in 1985 which forces a woman requiring assistance to conceive through IVF to have to get the approval of the Secretary of State. That is intolerable.

It is fortunate for the right hon. Member for South Down that the explanatory memorandum is not part of the Bill. If the first paragraph were accurate, it would outlaw the intrauterine device as a method of contraception which, despite many fears about it, is still widely used.

The fourth specific question is whether the right hon. Gentleman assumes that defective eggs have to be reimplanted into the woman. If not, what is to happen to them? Dr. Steptoe told me that he would refuse to do it, whatever the law was, and he wanted to know what he should do thereafter with those embryos.

The crux of the debate is whether in vitro fertilisation is compatible with the exclusive view of the sanctity of the embryo that the Bill requires. I do not believe that it is compatible. As I said during an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), I asked Dr. Steptoe and Dr. Edwards whether the development of IVF would have been possible had the restrictions in the Bill been in force some years ago. They said categorically that it would not have been possible. Therefore, I believe that it is not consistent to support IVF but to ban research on embryos.

Perhaps more to the point, IVF is far from perfect. Successful implantation rates have improved but are still little more than 10 per cent. The Bill is likely to impede the potential development of IVF which would improve that implantation rate. Paradoxically for the life lobby with which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is concerned, further research would reduce the production of spare embryos and the need for further research and would also reduce the demands for abortion because of the improved understanding of the nature of the child that is conceived.

[Mr. Pawsey]

in getting through the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) touched on that aspect. Any Bill's chance would be in inverse proportion to its complexity and length.

The right hon. Member for South Down is to be applauded for tackling the central issue — the most important issue — of the Warnock report and for confining himself to that area. A Bill on the Warnock report would be too large for a private Member to introduce with any hope of success. I hope that this Bill will receive the Second Reading that it deserves.

The Bill charts clearly a fundamental course of great significance and provides a sound foundation for further legislation should that be thought to be necessary in future.

The embryo is human and that is why experimentation should not take place. Paradoxically, I recognise that that same reason—the uniqueness of the human embryo—is why some hon. Members argue that experimentation is necessary and even desirable. It seems that their case is that the use of small human beings or, as the Bill calls them, unborn children will enable science to discover the reasons for and, more importantly, the answers to some abnormalities in human beings. Their case is that there is no alternative. That assertion is, to say the least, open to argument.

There are distinguished scientists on both sides of the argument, but Professor Lejeune believes that more orthodox scientific methods will discover the reasons for and answers to such conditions as Down's syndrome and that, therefore, it is unnecessary for unborn children to be used in laboratory experiments.

My objection to experiments on human beings is not so much that science will make such experiments unnecessary but that there are moral and ethical objections. I believe that such experiments are unacceptable. The prospect of producing human embryos for laboratory experiments is repugnant.

The Helsinki declaration of the World Health Organisation said:

> "In research on man, the interest of science and society should never take precedence over considerations related to the wellbeing of the subject."

That puts the matter in a nutshell.

I do not support the argument that life suddenly commences at 14 days and that what is right on the 14th day is wrong on the 15th day. In logic, surely new life starts at fertilisation. If that is so, how can a civilised state legalise or legitimise experiments on human life, for whatever reason? The end, no matter how good or well intended, cannot justify these means. Again, which hon. Member believes that experiments will cease at 14 days? That is unenforceable. Even now, it is being suggested that the time limit should be extended and that 14 days is too restrictive.

Someone once said that war is too important to be left to the generals. I believe that life is too important to be left to the scientists and researchers. I shall vote for the Bill.

2 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell): I think that we are all agreed that the line has to be drawn somewhere in experimentation on the embryo. The Minister made great play of the probability that 60 per cent. of fertilised embryos do not implant, but it is not so long since the probability of the child not growing up to reach childbearing age was considerably higher than 60 per cent. We cannot say that the stage of fertilisation is not incomparably the stage at which there is the biggest leap in probability of being born, growing up and reproducing. This is obviously a significant stage.

The subject is fraught with moral considerations, and properly so. I take the view that it is wrong to experiment on human embryos, and I shall vote for the Bill. However, I recognise the impact on research, and medical research and clinical treatments in particular, and it is about that that I shall speak.

Genetics, embryology and developmental biology are moving extremely fast. Every week, in *Nature*, there are articles reporting scientific advances, and there is one this week. The experiments are being done not on humans, apes, monkeys, frogs or mice but on fruitflies. We seem to be getting near to identifying the string of bases in DNA which controls the development of the embryo. That string in the DNA molecule is found in all vertebrates, including human beings. As the work progresses, and as we come to understand how the molecular structure of DNA controls the development of the embryo, all the methods of clinical research and treatment will change drastically. There is no question of the Bill holding up any of the directions of this fundamental scientific and medical research.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) acknowledged that the Bill diverts the current course of clinical research in the short term, but it is a very short term. Such is the pace of development—I commend a recent review article in *The New Scientist* of 10 January, if hon. Members wish to look at the work on the fundamentals of developmental biology—that the basic control mechanisms on the growth of the embryo are likely to be cracked in the next five years. To sell the pass on the fundamental issue of experimentation on the human embryo when we are dealing with such a short time scale in the development of scientific knowledge would be, to say the least, a pity.

Where can we go? I hope that, in passing the Bill, we shall not reflect the strongly anti-science element that there was in the speeches of many hon. Members on both sides of the House. However, if, in the pursuit of their science, scientists neglect the basic moral considerations that clearly move the majority of people, they will be building up the misunderstanding, the misrepresentation and the undervaluation of science that has done so much damage to our society. To give way to any appearance of undervaluing the unique dignity of each human being would be gravely to damage the support of scientific research. That is being gravely damaged at the moment, most of all by the restrictions on the science budget by the present Government. Only yesterday we had the announcement of another 900 jobs cut in the staff of a research council. It is vital that we allow science to proceed. I do not believe that the Bill will block it in any way, and I hope that the House will give it a Second Reading.

2.5 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am very glad to be called immediately after the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), who brings to these issues his own experience in and knowledge of scientific matters and helps to illustrate the obvious point that there are

people in scientific disciplines on both sides of the argument just as there are laymen on both sides of it and that it is futile to start counting heads or challenging the reputation of one against the other.

For the most part, the debate has followed the pattern of debates in the House on those issues which cut across party lines. It has been a debate of some quality and one in which arguments have been presented seriously and conscientiously. We should get away from and dispense with the charges and counter-charges about motive and who has what reason for taking which point of view.

It is not part of my case in favour of the Bill to question the motives of the scientists and doctors who carry out work in the disciplines which may be in some way restricted by the Bill, some of whom approve of the Bill and others of whom are opposed to it. Their motive is the advancement of humanity and the advancement of knowledge, and they pursue those objectives with a determination and single-mindedness which from time to time inevitably brings them up against the test of what the law should tolerate and where the boundaries should be drawn. But I do not quesion or challenge the motives of their work, for which I have the highest regard.

It does not follow from saying that that everything which anyone working in any of these fields might feel should be done should be sanctioned. Our experience over the years is that there will always come a point where the researcher wants to do something which society thinks should not be done, and the argument is about where those boundary lines should fall.

Equally, it should be no part of the case of those who oppose the Bill similarly to question the motives of those who are in favour of it and strongly believe that it should be on the statute book. To have the Bill described, as I heard it described by someone amongst the medical opposition to it, as an evil Bill is an illustration of precisely the way in which we should not debate the matter. I do not question the motives of those who feel that the Bill might unduly restrict the work that they do, and I do not expect them to question the motives of those who want to see it on the statute book.

To assume, as some have in this argument, that those of us who support the Bill are all strangers to the problem of infertility in marriage suggests that some of them do not know the individuals with whom they are dealing.

When considering this matter we have to come up against the fundamental question and how we answer it as individuals, and I cannot speak to the generality of the Bill without first saying how I view the issue. The fundamental question has been posed by many right hon. and hon. Members, including the Minister: what is the nature of the being about whom we are talking—the embryo or the fertilised ovum? That is sufficiently clearly the starting point of distinct human life that it deserves protection in law and sufficiently clearly the starting point of distinct human life that it deserves that the approach of medicine to it should be that of seeking to assist its survival and full development. To reverse those assumptions so that the protection of the individual life is secondary to the benefits that experiment with that life might bring to others is to throw the basis of law and medicine into reverse.

Those considerations are not just mine. Presumably they were the considerations which led the majority of the members of the Warnock committee to believe that a line had to be set somewhere and to set that line at 14 days. They would not tolerate experiments on the embryo after those 14 days. My view is that the 14-day limit is insufficient to give the degree of protection that clear and distinct human life ought to have. That view is shared by many hon. Members and by many millions of people outside the House. Although that is my fundamental presumption, it is not necessarily the fundamental presumption of all those who support the Bill and who will vote for it.

I join the Minister in saying that the setting up of the Warnock committee and the conclusions that it reached have been of considerable value, even though I disagree profoundly with one of the committee's conclusions. The evidence that it took was extremely valuable. Clearly it has helped us to discuss the issue with greater knowledge. Of course, the report could not resolve the issue; that was impossible. However, the views of the members of the Warnock committee are set out in its report. It has provided the material with which to reach the decisions that Parliament ultimately will have to take.

I wish to examine some of the anxieties about the Bill expressed during the debate. The reasons for supporting the Bill have been stated clearly by many right hon. and hon. Members, but the first difficulty that has been raised is whether the Bill will prevent the in vitro fertilisation process from being used to help couples to have children. If that had been the objective of the Bill, it would have been a very different Bill. It might have been easier to draft a Bill that wholly prevented experiment on the developing foetus if no allowance had to be made for the maintenance of the IVF technique which has clearly brought the blessing of parenthood to many who otherwise would not have enjoyed it. The Bill does not seek to take away those benefits. That is why it is drafted as it is. The Bill does not restrict the process of fertilising embryos outside the womb and storing them for the specific purpose of enabling couples to have children. The sponsors of the Bill are firmly of the view that they do not wish that process to be discontinued.

As for the restriction of the IVF process by the Bill, its purpose is to prevent the embryos so produced from being diverted to any other purpose. The procedures which may seem to be difficult and irksome for those who are involved in carrying out this work are there for a purpose. If those procedures were absent, there would be no control over the use to which the embryos could be put. It is then that wider possibilities open up for the use of embryos for experimental purposes, for trading in embryos and for the wide transfer of embryos between those who are involved in different types of research.

There would be no restriction upon the way in which the IVF process is carried on and the various permissions that have to be obtained if it were not that the primary objective of the Bill is to confine the handling of embryos to the proper purpose of enabling couples to have children. That is why consent must be given.

However we set out to prevent the experimentation which the Bill's most fervent opponents seek to pursue, we cannot avoid the fact that somebody must have the power to prevent the IVF process from being carried out. If nobody has that power, nobody has the ability to regulate its misuse. The point has been made that for that power to be in the hands of the Secretary of State may not be altogether to the good. However, upon this issue, above all others, we have to ensure that power ultimately resides in Parliament.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

There are attractions in setting up a separate body which has no direct line of authority and responsibility to Parliament. It may appear that thus is entrusted to a body of experts, perhaps associated with some layman, decisions in that area. But that is to pass the value judgments away from the Chamber altogether and away from the people who ultimately have to take responsibility for them. We have all seen from our various political points of view that, although it is possible and although Governments are ready to set up bodies that are at a distance from ministerial supervision, when such bodies exist Parliament is pushed out of the picture and can no longer establish its authority on the issues involved. Judgments on those issues must be made by Parliament.

The Bill is so drafted that the Secretary of State is required to give his consent and not to make choices between various people to whom the technique of IVF may be made available. It is no part of the purpose or drafting of the Bill to give the Secretary of State any rights of choice as to who should benefit from the process. That would be absurd and wrong. His responsibilities relate to how the process is carried out and whether it is carried out according to the directions in the Bill. No one wants the Secretary of State to be involved in the essentially personal decisions made between the couple and the doctor about whether to use this technique.

Nor does the Bill in any way preclude a reapplication for the use of the techniques after the expiry of the initial six months. The Bill is drafted as it is because if there were no time limitation there would be no limitation other than a natural one on the indefinite storage of embryos and the possibilities which that opens up. Once one goes beyond six months, nine months or a year, one of the participants might, in some tragic circumstance, have died. Where would we go from there when we have the storage and possession of embryos created by persons no longer living?

Mr. Peter Bruinvels *rose——*

Mr. Beith: I prefer not to give way at this stage because there are some key points that I wish to make. If time permits, I shall give way later.

Even the recommendations of the Warnock committee would require law and policing. Those who criticise the law and the policing which is provided for in the Bill need to recognise that they would be engaged in exactly the same difficult test of finding procedures, laws and policing in order to implement a recommendation which limits experiments to 14 days. Hon. Members need not be as concerned about that area as they initially were.

The second and perhaps even greater worry which niggles in the minds of some hon. Members, and indeed must concern all of us, is whether the Bill would prevent essential research into diseases and handicaps such as Down's syndrome, spina bifida, congenital defects and many of the other things that we find so worrying. However, I do not go the way of one hon. Member who said in an intervention that society does not want handicapped children. He chose his words rather carelessly when he said that. Society has shown how much it can give handicapped children and that in its care of them individuals and the community are made that much greater. However, that is not the issue I want to deal with. If we are to consider whether the Bill will prevent essential research, we must use our language less loosely.

No distinction has been drawn during the debate between research and experimentation. They are not the same thing. Not all research is experimentation in the sense that it involves manipulation of or the ultimate destruction of human life in some form. Much research is observation and much observation can be carried out with no threat to the well-being of whoever is being observed. Much scientific research which is carried out on human beings, children or adults, is in the nature of the observation of procedures which are designed to benefit the human being concerned.

I say that no distinction has been drawn between research and experimentation. Equally no distinction has been drawn between experimentation and improvement of the procedures by which a doctor seeks to preserve, sustain or enhance the life of the individual whom he is treating. Again, there is a distinction there.

I do not think that it is the object of those who support the Bill to prevent the medical practitioner from doing what he has always sought to do, which is to use whatever procedures he thinks necessary to enhance, preserve or maintain the life of the individual form of human being that he is dealing with. Therefore, when we talk about what research could be limited by the Bill, we must draw our net a little narrower. However, having done so, we must then consider the value and extent of available research on the embryo. That is a disputed issue. I do not seek to contend that no valuable research could be undertaken on an embryo of less than 14 days. However, there are those who argue that. But there is a great deal of dispute about whether much of value can be obtained within that period.

Most of those involved are bound to concede that much more of research value could probably be obtained after 14 days, when the foetus has a spine, nervous system and other features upon which research can be carried out, than before then. But the entire Warnock committee rejected the idea of experimenting after 14 days, and no hon. Member today has sought to advance the cause of experimentation after 14 days. It is at least in dispute whether there is extensive research to be done in that area. There is certainly dispute about whether there is no alternative to such research and I am certainly not satisfied that there is no alternative.

I concede, as the right hon. Member for South Down did, that there might be some research to which there is no alternative that might bring value to other humans if it was carried out on an embryo of less than 14 days. The most compelling argument in favour of that was put by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) in his two intervations.

There is a very powerful case for research to deal with the problems of congenital defects and some of the major handicaps that children suffer from birth. If it is viewed in isolation, it is so powerful that it sweeps away almost any barrier that we might seek to erect to almost any procedure. That is the problem about it. When we consider the difficulties faced by a handicapped child or by a child whose period on this earth may be but a few years because of the extent of its congenital abnormality, all barriers are swept away, and in that moment of looking at, and crying over, the anguish of that child and his family there must

be few things that most hon. Members would not contemplate doing if it would for one moment ease that child's lot.

Yet we cannot view that case in isolation, because we are always considering what barriers must be put up and what can be done to one human being in order to benefit others. Those barriers will crumble if we view the plight of those who suffer from some of those handicaps in isolation. I have already argued that the case that the only way to tackle such problems is by research on an embryo of less than 14 days is not proved. But when we consider that we might have to move further and further towards experiments on human life, it is clear that we must then set one value against another. There is no harder task for any individual, let alone the House, to carry out. But I believe that the law cannot be based on the principle that we experiment on one human in order to benefit others. That is not a principle upon which we can safely or reasonably found the law.

Would it not be better to await a Government Bill that would represent a comprehensive package of all the issues involved? I say to those who have just come into the Chamber, but who did not hear the Minister speaking earlier, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gave neither promise nor prospect of a Government Bill within any defined time scale. There is no sign that a Government Bill will be introduced. As the Minister quite properly conceded, any such Bill would be some comprehensive package. It would embrace all the other issues raised by Warnock as well as those that have arisen since, including surrogacy, paternity, legitimacy and possibly even abortion. It would be a Bill so great—in view of the great number of differences of view on the various issues with which it would have to deal—that it would face many problems in its progress through Parliament. Hon. Members who think that they can safely put aside the matter because it will be dealt with in a Government Bill are basing their judgment on an illusion.

If we do not legislate now, we shall create a presumption in favour of widening what research is now done. That is why we cannot wait and why the Bill should receive a Second Reading.

2.26 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): In a speech of singular force, the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) identified the issues that are before the House. He did that with the lucidity and restrained eloquence which is so much his hallmark. However, the question is not whether he was eloquent and lucid, but whether his conclusions were right. That is the issue before us.

The right hon. Gentleman made a fundamentally important concession and he asked the House to make a fundamentally important assumption. He said that in the sphere of serious medical disorders, some useful and beneficial progress would or could be obtained from experimentation on human embryos. That was the concession he made. He went on to say that there was another consideration—the sense of moral outrage that many people felt. Those are the two counterbalancing considerations that hon. Members must take into account.

I believe, as does my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, that the evidence favours voting against Second Reading—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] We must understand the advantages that will flow from continued experimentation, because unless we understand them we cannot form the moral judgments that are required. My right hon. and learned Friend identified them in broad terms: progress in the treatment of infertility; progress in the treatment of miscarriage; greater understanding of chromosome abnormalities; greater understanding of genetic disorders; and advancement in methods of contraception. Those are all of vital importance to mankind, and anybody who does not appreciate that cannot understand what we are discussing today. Therefore, the benefits that may accrue from continued experimentation are real and tangible.

Against that one must set the moral outrage that many people feel, and on that issue there are two important points to bear in mind.

First, those of us who argue against the Bill do not call for unfettered or unlicensed experimentation. We adopt, approve and support the apparatus of supervisory control and licensing contemplated by Warnock. We have never asked for and we do not want unlicensed or unsupervised experimentation.

Secondly, I support the remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister about the nature of the being with which we are dealing. I must tell the right hon. Member for South Down that to call this the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill is misleading——

Mr. Ian Campbell (Dumbarton) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 233, Noes 56.

Division No. 108] **[2.29 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Clarke, Thomas
Alexander, Richard	Clegg, Sir Walter
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Alton, David	Coombs, Simon
Amess, David	Cope, John
Ancram, Michael	Cowans, Harry
Anderson, Donald	Craigen, J. M.
Ashdown, Paddy	Cranborne, Viscount
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Dewar, Donald
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Dixon, Donald
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Douglas, Dick
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Baldry, Tony	Dover, Den
Beggs, Roy	Duffy, A. E. P.
Beith, A. J.	Dunn, Robert
Bendall, Vivian	Durant, Tony
Benyon, William	Eggar, Tim
Bevan, David Gilroy	Ewing, Harry
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Eyre, Sir Reginald
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Fallon, Michael
Blackburn, John	Favell, Anthony
Body, Richard	Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Bottomley, Peter	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes	Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Franks, Cecil
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Bright, Graham	Freeman, Roger
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Galley, Roy
Bruinvels, Peter	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Burt, Alistair	Glyn, Dr Alan
Butcher, John	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Butterfill, John	Grant, Sir Anthony
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Greenway, Harry
Cash, William	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Chapman, Sydney	Ground, Patrick
Chope, Christopher	Gummer, John Selwyn
Churchill, W. S.	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Hancock, Mr. Michael

Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCartney, Hugh
McCrea, Rev William
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robertson, George
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Shenwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tinn, James
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
White, James
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Christopher Murphy and
Mr. Ian Campbell.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adley, Robert
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Buchan, Norman
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crouch, David
Dobson, Frank
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Fatchett, Derek
Flannery, Martin
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hicks, Robert
Jackson, Robert
Leighton, Ronald
Madden, Max
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pavitt, Laurie
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rooker, J. W.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Straw, Jack
Thurnham, Peter
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Mikardo and
Mr. Douglas Hogg.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 66.

Division No. 109] **[2.40 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Cranborne, Viscount
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Ewing, Harry
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Godman, Dr Norman
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry

Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lambie, David
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCartney, Hugh
McCrea, Rev William
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Normanton, Tom
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robertson, George
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tinn, James
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
White, James
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Campbell and
Mr. Christopher Murphy.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adley, Robert
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchan, Norman
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crouch, David
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Fatchett, Derek
Flannery, Martin
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hicks, Robert
Jackson, Robert
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leighton, Ronald
Madden, Max
Mates, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Parris, Matthew
Pavitt, Laurie
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rooker, J. W.
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Straw, Jack
Thurnham, Peter
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Mikardo and
Mr. Douglas Hogg.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Private Members' Bills

CHARTER TRUSTEES BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bill).

NORTHERN IRELAND (TERMINATION OF JURISDICTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 February.

STANDING CHARGES (ABOLITION BILL)

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 July.

SPORTS FIELDS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[25 January]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 19 April.

EDUCATION (SCHOOL BUDGETS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[8 February]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): *Debate to be resumed*—What day? No day named.

Port of Liverpool

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

2.52 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I would have preferred not to come to the House once again to initiate an Adjournment debate about Liverpool. I have asked for this debate because Liverpool's position has been deteriorating since the mid-1970s and there is no sign that the downward spiral of industry and jobs in the area is bottoming out.

I want to deal with the problems of the port of Liverpool. The House will be aware of how that port has declined. It has been reorganised so that it no longer holds its former important position in the economy of Merseyside and its hinterland.

I worked on the docks for about 28 years. Therefore, I consider that I have sufficient knowledge and understanding to comment on the effects of the changes on those employed directly not only in the docks industry and the port transport industry, but elsewhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) knows about the impact that the changes have had on all Liverpool constituencies. Firms such as Tate and Lyle, based upon the shipping industry in the port, J. Bibby and Co. Ltd., the oil, fat, cattle feed and other industries have been severely affected by the decline of the port of Liverpool.

When I first started working for the then Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, there were 15,000 or 16,000 registered dock workers and 9,000 ancillary workers in the ports of Liverpool and Birkenhead. Cammell Laird, Grayson Rollo Clover and Harland and Wolff employed another 20,000 people. Today, the port of Liverpool employs only 2,000 registered dock workers, and demands are still being made for that number to be reduced.

Cammell Laird, which used to be a thriving shipyard, has been in decline—I accept that there has been a general decline in shipbuilding in the United Kingdom—and there was a sorry lack of investment in that yard at the time when Third-world countries and others were emerging as shipbuilding nations.

The port and the related industries have been in decline, and that has had direct effects on the local economy. A once thriving port is now almost exclusively located in the north end of the city. Virtually all the seven miles of docks have been closed. All that is left is a small container port with some bulk cargo handling berths.

It will be argued that many of the changes that have taken place were necessary. No one suggests that all seven miles of docks could have been retained, but the introduction of new technology and changes in work practices have been painful processes. Thousands of jobs have been lost and those still working in the port are determined that it should remain as a port offering employment in Liverpool.

The port has gone through a stable period—probably its most stable period for a long time. When dramatic changes occur in the lives of working people, we expect resistance. That is justified, particularly when no alternative to the dole queue is offered to those who are spewed out of the industry.

When the Government amended the Harbours Act 1964, they dealt a further blow to the port of Liverpool.

Other ports have been allowed to expand their facilities, and that is bound to have an effect because there is a limit to the amount of trade handled by United Kingdom ports. Liverpool may not be affected immediately, but Ipswich certainly will be affected and other areas will suffer when some ports are extended.

At one time, Liverpool was second in the league table of imports and exports at major ports. Liverpool is now sixth in that league table, with imports of 5 million tonnes.

The decline of the port is central to the decline of the whole Merseyside area. There have been dramatic effects on the port, on associated industries and beyond that. In my constituency alone, 10,000 jobs were wiped out at a stroke when Dunlop and British Leyland went. That is the situation in every constituency in the city of Liverpool.

The House should be aware that people in that part of the country feel that enough is enough. A Government who claim that these matters should be left to the free market economy should be looking at the consequences that that policy is having in places such as Liverpool. Liverpool is not an isolated case. The northern region and parts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have the same problems, but the Government show no urgency to intervene.

The latest blow to Liverpool, which is one of the reasons for this Adjournment debate, is the recent decision by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company to leave Liverpool and go to Heysham. While this may not destroy countless jobs, the psychological blow to the port of Liverpool will be serious. What is startling about that decision is that there appears to be no economic or other reason for it. Yesterday, at a meeting of shareholders of the Isle of Man, the dissenters to this decision formed themselves into a committee to join the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in opposing the move. That group of shareholders is showing a sensible attitude to the situation because there is no reason why this facility should be taken away from Merseyside.

If there were the infrastructure on the route to Heysham, the decision might be justified, although it would leave unused the infrastructure and communications that already exist in Merseyside. In a letter that I have had from the Library, which I asked to look into the effects of this move, I was told:

"I contacted the Department of Transport about the possibility of extending the M6".

A demand had been made by Lancaster before the decision. It says that the proposal for the extension

"would almost certainly have been rejected but for the coming of the new ferry traffic which makes it a possibility. The matter is now under consideration and some submission will be made to the Minister in the near future."

In other circumstances I would welcome more infrastructure, for which the Labour party is always asking, and public expenditure in areas such as Lancaster and the north, but it is clear that the Department of Transport is now considering the question on the basis of the traffic that will be generated by the movement of this facility from Liverpool to Heysham.

There is no economic sense in duplicating this service, in particular as the Government have set their face against public expenditure and have said in so many ways that they are opposed to public expenditure. They constantly argue that there should be further limitations on public expenditure, but they will have to provide the infrastructure to facilitate the traffic that will be generated by the move to Heysham.

The same applies to the railways, which were discontinued long ago. We should like, for purely social reasons, to see the railways being reinstated. Although the British Railways Board has not yet said that it will be reinstating the railway to Heysham, that will be considered. All those things do not add up, when the facilities on Merseyside exist and have existed for the past 154 years. The ferry has served the Isle of Man through two wars in this century in every kind of weather, and the service has been maintained for the betterment of the people of the Isle of Man. I am glad to hear voices being raised among the public in the Isle of Man in opposition to this move.

Although the Minister will make it clear that he has no direct responsibility for the Isle of Man company's decision, I claim that he has a responsibility and so do other Departments of this Government for the terrible state of affairs on Merseyside. That being so, the Government ought to weigh up the situation carefully and consider what they will do about the future of the port if they allow companies to make decisions of this kind without taking into account the additional costs of providing at Heysham the infrastructure that exists in Liverpool.

This is supposed to be the Government of small business. I can tell the Minister that many small businesses on Merseyside will be affected by this decision, right down to the individual cab driver who, having been made redundant on two or three occasions, decided to go it alone, which is what the Government wanted. He, too, will find himself in difficulty when this trade goes.

It has been argued for several years, and certainly since the garden festival, that the city should be encouraging tourism. That, too, will be affected by this decision, and the 150,000 people who travel through Liverpool using the railways, buses and other services will no longer do that.

Far more important, however, is that the people of Merseyside are sick to death of reading in their local press of closures day by day. When I left Liverpool this morning, the *Daily Post* was telling us that a further 1,500 jobs were to go. Some are going in my constituency because Guinness is moving away. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Riverside another Guinness facility is moving away. Cammell Laird has declared another 450 redundancies.

That is happening in the city day after day, and no one can be surprised if in the end the existing conflict there goes on to the streets of Merseyside and especially of Liverpool.

I ask the Minister to give careful consideration to the matters that I have raised. I know that my hon. Friend wants to intervene, because he has a direct involvement in those companies which have been affected by this decision. I hope that the Minister will not read glibly from his brief and say that nothing can be done. The Government wring their hands and shed tears for Merseyside. We have had buckets full of tears. We have had tankers full of sympathy. We want action. We want the Government to intervene and to spell out the logic of this move. If it happens, it will be a further blow to Merseyside and one that we shall resist as long as we can.

3.9 pm

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) on initiating this very important debate. As he said, he has spent most of his working life

[Mr. Robert Parry]

as a seaman or as a dock worker in the port of Liverpool, and he knows more about the situation there than anyone in the House. Like me, my hon. Friend was born in the dockland area, so we know personally the effect which various closures over recent years have had on the port of Liverpool.

My hon. Friend pointed out that we met the Minister at very short notice only last Tuesday to discuss the serious problem of the withdrawal of the Isle of Man crossing from Liverpool. Since then—on Tuesday of this week—we have learnt that we are to lose several hundred other jobs in the Liverpool and Merseyside area. Guinness is to lose 300 jobs. This is the second Guinness plant in my Liverpool constituency that is to close. And more than 400 jobs are to go at Cammell Laird. Since the Government came to power 100,000 jobs have disappeared from the Merseyside special development area. Therefore, the Minister will not be surprised to hear that both I and those of my hon. Friends who represent Liverpool constituencies will fight tooth and nail to prevent further job losses.

The headquarters of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company are based in my constituency. Sailings from the Liverpool pierhead at Riverside have gone on for 154 years. Surely to God the Government do not intend the great port of Liverpool and the Merseyside region to become an industrial wasteland. A year or two ago I raised a similar point with the Minister when he was at the Northen Ireland Office. I tried then to save the Liverpool to Belfast ferry. Although we did not save the crossing from Liverpool to Belfast by the P and O line, we managed to find another operator. Therefore, I beg the Minister seriously to consider what he can do. We cannot afford any more kicks in the teeth and these savage psychological blows.

3.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) has raised an issue of national as well as local interest. I am sure that the whole nation shares the concern of Ministers over the difficulties faced by Liverpool and the recent difficulties to which the hon. Member has referred. They are certainly not of its making.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the future of the port of Liverpool. In reply, perhaps I should first comment on the port's recent history. The port of Liverpool, like all ports over the past two decades, has needed to make major changes in its working practices as well as its facilities because of changing technology and patterns of trade. The hon. Gentleman is only too well aware of the change in the pattern of our trade from across the Atlantic to across the Channel and the North sea to the European ports. Inevitably that has meant a growth of trade though the east coast ports of this country and a loss of trade through the west coast ports. That is not something for which the Government are responsible. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be the first to recognise that it is one of those events over which no party has any control.

The growth of containerisation has meant a change from the old labour-intensive methods of cargo handling to which the hon. Gentleman referred, to more rapid mechanised systems. So the port has had to make a massive reduction in its work force: from over 13,000 in 1966 to about one tenth of that at present—1,350. The hon. Gentleman spoke of that with feeling and with personal knowledge. However, in 1966 the port handled over 30 million tonnes, whereas by 1983 that volume had fallen to some 11 million tonnes. Nonetheless, Liverpool is still one of the larger ports in the country. The hon. Gentleman said that it was the sixth largest. It is a going concern and is run by a commercial company which is seeking to attract new customers by offering a fast, reliable service in both container and other traffic.

The hon. Gentleman referred to section 9 of the Harbours Act 1964. May I assure him that there are wider considerations. Those considerations have been discussed in this House on another occasion. However, since 1981 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company's performance has shown steady improvement by achieving, with Government support, the reduction in manpower that it deemed necessary, and having £30 million of debt to the Government written off.

In 1983 the company returned a profit of £6·5 million. The company's chairman has said that this recovery was fragile and that the company would need to take further measures to make its future position more secure. So, although the six-month statement for the first half of 1984 showed the company to be still making profitable progress, two dock strikes in the second half of that year wiped that profit out. However, the underlying trend for the company's performance is firmly towards recovery. By proving that the port can provide the rapid, efficient service that modern shipowners such as the Atlantic Container Line require, the company—both management and dockers, have made the port as attractive as possible to potential customers.

There can be no denying the damage which industrial disputes do to the image of any port. Southampton is one which stands glaringly in one's mind, but there have been unfortunate lapses, to which I have already referred, in the case of Liverpool, which inevitably make a port less attractive to customers and it is on customers that the prosperity of the port of Liverpool rests.

The company has been successful in attracting new customers who are willing not only to use the port's existing facilities but also to invest their own funds to the tune of over £40 million in 1985 and onwards in new facilities on the dock estates. I know that the hon. Member for Garston welcomes that particular development.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State opened one such facility last November when he visited the port—the new bulk feedstuffs terminal built by Continental Grain. As my right hon. Friend said then, such support by the privae sector companies is essential to the future success of the harbour company and is dependent above all on the stability and continuity of services supplied by the port. It is unfortunate that within one week this year two companies the South African European Container Services and the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, announced that they intended to transfer their operations to other ports. But SAECS management in particular has stressed that it has been very impressed by the service that it has received at the port of Liverpool which has been efficiently and competitively priced. It is because of other criteria, such as geographical position, that the company judged the move to be necessary.

The hon. Members for Garston and for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) have referred to the proposed merger of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and the

Manx Line. I saw them earlier in the week and we discussed what we could do and the role that they thought that I might be able helpfully to play. The two lines have decided to transfer their principal ferry services to Heysham. The hon. Gentlemens' concern about the effect of those proposals on the port and city of Liverpool are well understood. I have already written to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry with responsibility for corporate and consumer affairs to ensure that the aspects of the merger that were raised with me when we met only a couple of days ago are brought to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading.

I have also written to the chairman of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to obtain an assessment of the effect that the loss of the business might have on the company's plans for the future. I have been informed that the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has already made representations to the Manx Government and is still in negotiation with the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company.

Hon. Members have referred to the undoubted advantages in Liverpool of good rail and road connections with the rest of the country and have raised the question of additional infrastructure costs in Heysham. The rail connections to Heysham harbour are still in place. The re-establishment of passenger services to the harbour station is a commercial matter between the British Rail Board and Sealink UK Limited.

Mr. Loyden: How was the decision to go to Heysham taken without the knowledge that the motorway and the rail services would be there? Have the Government made any promises on that? For a company to make a decision to move without having such assurances about rail and road services would create a lot of doubt in mind about the confidence that one should have in such a company.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman will know that I do not have any control over the company's commercial decision as to the best way in which it can serve its customers who go to the Isle of Man. It is only right for the management of that company to make that decision in the light of how it judges it can best serve its customers.

I have been asked whether any assurances have been given to the company to the effect that there will be rail connections made, or new Government investment in roads to Heysham. The rail connections are a commercial matter for British Rail and the company. I do not know precisely what stage those discussions have reached and whether the company wishes to make a financial contribution on the scale that British Rail would require to make it worth while. No undertaking has been given by the Government with respect to the building of roads, and the company's decision is thus not based on assurances that further extensions will be provided to the road network. Indeed, the existing road appears to be of an adequate standard for present traffic flows and has spare capacity.

The Isle of Man Steam Packet company has purchased a through Ro/Ro vessel and intends to charter another from Sealink. That is its commercial judgment of what is needed. These vessels have a freight capacity requiring a Ro/Ro berth. The present facilities on the landing stage at Liverpool allow only cars and light vehicles to be loaded. As hon. Members know, a Ro/Ro ramp is available in Liverpool, but it is within the enclosed dock. It is a matter of the geography, water depth and so on, which imply certain constraints on timing—something that may be a material factor in the company's decision. Heysham has the advantage of being nearer. It is of course true that Heysham has full Ro/Ro facilities in an open harbour, and claims to have superior terminal facilities for passengers. But it is for the company to decide on the best way in which to serve its customers and the Isle of Man.

I must emphasise that if the Director General of Fair Trading and others are satisfied with the proposals for this merger, the decision to transfer the principal Isle of Man ferry services to Heysham is a commercial decision that has ultimately to be taken by the Isle of Man Steam Packet company. I very much sympathise with the point that has been made, but I think that hon. Members will realise that there is a limit on how far it is right and proper to intervene in an important service to the Isle of Man. I am sure that representations have already been made to the Isle of Man Government as to their view about the decision as to which Great Britain mainland port these services should arrive at.

I come to the future of the port of Liverpool. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company is bent on attracting new custom, a large part of which will come through the new free port. The free ports were designated in August last year. The site——

The Question having been proposed after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-two minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 18 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Coal Industry Dispute

2. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the coal strike.

3. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the miners' strike.

6. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current situation in the coalmining industry.

9. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current situation in the mining industry.

10. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the latest position in the coal industry dispute.

11. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the dispute in the mining industry.

12. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current situation in the mining industry.

13. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on the current dispute in the coal industry.

19. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the mining industry.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): Since I last made a statement to the House, more pits have returned to normal working, more pits have started to produce coal, and so far during the first few weeks of 1985 more than 17,000 miners have returned to work. Movements of coal and coal stocks at the power stations have remained at a very high level. Sixty-one coal faces have, unfortunately, been lost since the start of the dispute, including 38 working faces.

During the past week Mr. Norman Willis, on behalf of the TUC, has held a series of talks with the chairman of the National Coal Board. As a result of those talks a document was prepared which dealt with a number of crucial matters in connection with the dispute. The National Coal Board stated that it was willing to accept this. The document outlined the duty of the NCB to manage the industry efficiently, it recognised the responsibilities and rights of the unions in representing their members' interests, it outlined a plan to prepare a revised "Plan for Coal" within six months, it set out the need for urgent talks to create the early establishment of the modified procedures agreed with NACODS, and it stipulated that any future closures for any reason would thereafter take place under the modified colliery review procedures, and that all parties would be committed to give full weight to the view of the independent review body.

Unfortunately, this statement was not acceptable to the National Union of Mineworkers, and Mr. Willis outlined to the Coal Board changes that it would seek in such a statement. In the view of the board those changes would have meant that the document failed to meet the main issue of the dispute, and I regret that only yesterday Mr. Scargill, as president of the NUM, made it clear that he would never agree to any closures.

The Government naturally regret that the latest efforts have failed to bring an end to the dispute, particularly as there is on offer a substantial investment programme, good pay for miners, a closure procedure better than has ever been previously available, generous early retirement provisions and substantial resources to bring new enterprises and businesses to mining communities. The Government continue to hope that the damaging industrial action which has taken place without a ballot will swiftly be ended.

Mr. Adley: My right hon. Friend says that the document is not acceptable to the National Union of Mineworkers. Is it not more accurate to say that it is not acceptable to Mr. Scargill? Is it not a tragedy for the miners that he has been unwilling or unable to see the immense benefits that the latest offer gives to the members of his union?

I welcome the efforts of Mr. Willis and his meeting with the Prime Minister, but will my right hon. Friend agree that from now on the less Mr. Scargill is involved in the negotiations, the greater the chance of a negotiated settlement?

Mr. Walker: The past year, during which hundreds of millions of pounds of capital investment has not taken place, markets have been lost and pit faces destroyed, has been a tragedy for the industry. That is why the offer—probably the best since nationalisation — should be accepted quickly.

Mr. Nellist: How does the Secretary of State define "uneconomic"? Does he hold to the definition that he gave to Members of Parliament in July last year, that it was intended to close 12 per cent. of capacity in the industry to save £275 million? If that is the definition, how does he explain his toytown economics of the past 11 months in which he has spent £5,500 million in trying to save the country £275 million?

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman's economics include the belief that when any militant leader decides to use mob methods he should be given whatever he demands, that would be the most lunatic form of economics that any country could pursue. May I say how pleased I am that last week the Coventry pit returned to normal working.

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

establishment and each research project should be licensed in advance and subject to inspection. Such information should be made public, as should the purpose and result of each embryo experiment. In that context, I do not believe that anyone can say that research will be allowed to run rampant.

If the 14-day limit, which has figured strongly in the debate, were finally adopted, any idea that it might be tampered with or surreptitiously increased to satisfy the scientists should be blocked by the time limit being enshrined in primary legislation. It could then be extended only with the explicit agreement of the House.

Another obstacle which undermines dispassionate assessment of this issue is the emotive canard that the subjects of these experiments are, in terms, human beings. It has been said many times with great sincerity and passion that human life begins at fertilisation, and I wholly understand that view. Since it is also said that all experiments on human beings other than for their own welfare are morally wrong, all experiments on human embryos should be automatically prohibited. However, hon. Members should respect the argument that there are several different, alternative and equally sustainable views on when human life starts and a human being exists.

The proponents of the Bill believe that that is at the moment of fertilisation. That is well understood and has frequently been stated in history. Others, equally seriously, believe — I was glad that the Minister emphasised this view, and I wish to endorse it—that the mere existence of a fertilised egg does not in itself entail the necessary and sufficient conditions for development to humanness. It will need, for example, a sympathetic womb.

There are many other views. I conclude that this is a moral issue not susceptible in the last analysis of rational determination. The right hon. Member for South Down had the grace to make that clear. It is emotive and prejudicial to talk of experiments on human beings in this context.

Moreover, the proper moral question is not at what point life begins, but at what point in the development of an embryo we attribute to it the protection due to a human being. [AN HON. MEMBER: "At conception."] That is one view, but other views can perfectly reasonably and properly be held. That attribution is made by human reason or conscience, not by scientific determination. Although I fully recognise the sincerity of all those who hold a different view, I believe that the Warnock conclusion is reasonable. It is not the only one, but it is reasonable. That conclusion is to afford full protection to an embryo at the point at which, in a meaningful way, it has achieved status as an individual. Individuation as a process is not complete until about 14 days after fertilisation.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there should be a presumption in favour of human life?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman misses the point. Those who oppose the Bill have no doubts about that proposition. The issue is not whether we agree that there is human life, or even at what point human life begins, but at what point we attribute to a growing embryo the protection that is fully and rightly given to a human being.

With those two major caveats, I shall deal with the central implications of the Bill. We reject them on two grounds. First, experiments on embryos, carefully regulated as we would require them to be, hold great potential for remedying infertility and genetic disorders. No one will make certain predictions about the result of research which is carried out precisely to find out what can be done for the welfare of all.

It is estimated that one in eight couples in Britain—1 million people—are infertile. Infertility strikes at the essence of what is culturally defined as femaleness. Any research that holds the prospect of reducing the blight on the lives of so many people should be welcomed and certainly not blocked. Moreover, such work may reduce the incidence of miscarriage, as half the foetuses which abort spontaneously have major chromosomal irregularities, which may be preventable by further research.

The gains from research that the Bill would block could go further still. Research could help to remedy genetic disease, which affects as many as one in every 50 children. There are also distressing birth defects, such as haemophilia, muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis. They might—I would not put it higher than that—at last become remediable, but only if human embryos are studied, because those conditions are unique to human beings. Similarly, many other serious birth defects, such as deafness, cataracts and heart problems, which are known to be caused by environmental factors such as radiation, alcohol, nicotine and addictive drugs, can be systematically studied only in vitro, since all too few women, I fear, are likely to subject themselves to the kind of scrutiny that such clinical trials would entail.

Mr. Thurnham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those of us who believe in the dignity of life are opposed to the Bill because society clearly does not want handicapped children? There are many thousands of handicapped children still in care who have been advertised for months on end as wanting parents. My wife and I have adopted a handicapped foster child who had been advertised for 18 months as wanting parents.

Mr. Meacher: I do not think that there is any dispute in any part of the House that the answer to the problem is to try to prevent handicap in the first place. I understand the distressing and human points that the hon. Gentleman has raised. Under the Bill, human embryo research would be prevented, which would perhaps stand a better chance than research through any alternative means.

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): We may be able to prevent such research from taking place in Britain, but can we prevent it in other countries? Would it not be hypocritical to prevent research here and to accept the results of research carried out in other countries that would benefit our citizens?

Mr. Meacher: That is an interesting argument that the hon. Gentleman may wish to make in his own way to the promoter of the Bill.

I think that there are other compelling reasons, apart from infertility and genetic disorder, why all further research should not be blocked. One is to improve the test-tube baby technique, which has a low success rate. I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) who said that only about one in 10

embryos transferred to the womb produce a baby. Further research on human embryos is surely needed to improve that rate, since animal analogues offer no alternative model.

Another object of further research would be to achieve better understanding of, and hopefully a remedy for, male infertility, which is the cause of about half the childless marriages. I think it was my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) who made that point.

Further research into infertility may lead to more effective forms of contraception. Many women produce antibodies against sperm, which prevent fertilisation. The Medical Research Council believes that a contraceptive vaccine could be developed, after a study of embryo culture, which might be more effective and cheaper than current forms of contraception.

The other major area of misgiving for opponents of the Bill concerns the procedures that it would implement. Under the Bill, permission would be required from the Secretary of State for IVF treatment. What expertise, clinical or social, does the Secretary of State have on which to base decisions whether women should or should not undergo treatment?

The Bill requires a woman requesting treatment to be named. There has never before been a legal requirement that doctors should breach medical confidentiality, and I do not believe that there should be now.

What should be done with embryos found to be abnormal after fertilisation? It can hardly be right, under the Bill, to replace an embryo which might threaten the life of the mother or develop into a grossly abnormal child. Indeed, there are other significant gaps in that area in regard to which crucial questions remain unanswered. What happens if a woman becomes pregnant quickly and there are spare or "extra" embryos, as they have been called? What do doctors do when the four or six months expire and there are still spare embryos?

Furthermore, no mention is made in the Bill about whether any treatment of the embryo can be attempted prior to implantation. That is a significant omission since as many as one third of embryos fertilised in vitro have chromosomal abnormalities.

The Bill is objected to on wider grounds. Some people fear that if the right hon. Member for South Down wins the argument about embryo experimentation, he will establish the principle that the foetus should be protected from interference from the moment of fertilisation. We all take different views about that—and perhaps it is right—but it would call into question post-coital forms of contraception and, whether deliberately or not, the whole question of abortion. The explanatory memorandum states:

"The provisions of the Bill do not involve any issue concerning abortion, surrogacy or legitimacy."

Many people will wonder just how disingenuous that is as a declaration. For many people, that in itself might be the reason for rejecting the Bill.

I unreservedly respect the motives of those who promulgate the Bill, but I still firmly believe that the wiser course is to reject it, partly because it is premature and pre-empts the wider Warnock package, which is surely needed, and partly because the framework that it proposes is pitted with questionable or unclear procedures. Above all, we should reject it because it puts an unqualified block on research, the scientific case for which is compelling and the potential benefits of which are enormous, especially in remedying infertility. The Bill would also undermine the prospect and the fundamental human right of infertile couples to have children.

For all those reasons, which together are conclusive—to me at least—we should reject the Bill. I believe that legislation in this sphere is needed, but this is not the Bill for it.

1.51 pm

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I hope that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will forgive me if I comment first on the speech made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health. I wish to make three points about his speech. First, I was pleased to hear him say that Government assistance would be made available to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). I am sure that that will be of help in formulating developments in the Bill. Secondly, the gist of my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks was that the embryo does not suffer pain under 14 days because it does not have a nervous system. That suggests that the embryo will suffer pain after 14 days, which has implications elsewhere. Thirdly, I should like clarification. I was not sure when a Government Bill might be introduced. Was my right hon. and learned Friend saying that it might be introduced in the lifetime of this Parliament or that even that was in doubt?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am not too sure about the timetable for a Bill, either. The Government will present their considered reactions to the Warnock report as soon as possible and present a Bill in due course, again as soon as possible. Our aim is to make as much progress as we reasonably can in a huge and complex matter.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend.

We often debate matters affecting the quality of life, but today's debate is about life itself. The concept of experimenting on the unborn child was unthinkable just a few years ago. It was unthinkable on ethical, moral and certainly technical grounds then. But science has advanced at a speed which has left church and religious leaders, educationists and philosophers struggling behind. The Bill seeks to remedy that.

The Bill seeks to provide a safeguard a breathing space and to give protection to a particularly defenceless section of humanity. That is worth stressing since the embryo is certainly human. It is not abstract tissue. It is a living, growing, developing human being, requiring only time and nourishment to develop into a mature adult.

The title of the Bill includes the words "Unborn Children". The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was right to stress that the title is unambiguous. The Bill prohibits the making, keeping or use of a human embryo

"for any purpose other than enabling a child to be borne by a particular woman".

Substantial safeguards are built into the Bill. For the first time, a legal framework is being forged to protect what was thought until recently to be inviolate. The Bill's title describes briefly and succinctly what the legislation is about, and it should not be changed.

The Bill may not go as far as some would like. For example, it does not tackle the other issues raised by the Warnock report. However, a private Member's Bill that sought to deal with those issues would have great difficulty

views are close to those of the right hon. Gentleman by saying that last week Coventry and Bolsover collieries returned to normal working.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the majority of people in this country are fed up to the teeth with hearing about what Mr. Scargill says or believes? Is it not a fact that with 46 per cent. of the miners back at work the battle is already over, and the rest of the miners should go back to work, too, because that is where the future lies?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. The longer the dispute continues, the more damage is done to productive coal faces and to prospective markets. As I said in my statement, the Government hope that the dispute will quickly be ended.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that, on a day such as today, it would be regarded as more than a little insecure for a Minister to mislead the House? I have been trying since 14 January to ascertain the size of coal stocks, distributed and undistributed, for the end of the year 1984, and have been unable to get any further than 31 October. Perhaps the Secretary of State should now have the guts to tell the nation just what the coal stocks are so that he cannot be accused of misleading anyone.

Will the Secretary of State also take into account the fact that it would be a good idea if, instead of waiting——

Hon. Members: Too long.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: Rather than waiting for the Chairman of the Select Committee to tell the nation the real truth about the loss of £2,000 million to the Central Electricity Generating Board, ought not the Secretary of State to admit that the strike has cost more than £100 apiece for every man, woman and child in the country?

Mr. Walker: I can confirm that the strike has been costly and a great tragedy, but it has been most costly to the coal industry, to coal miners and to miners' families. As to stocks, I know that when the January figures are published, the hon. Gentleman will be delighted at how very little they have fallen. I originally gave an assurance that there would be no power cuts in 1985, and I am glad to say that I can now give an assurance that there will be none until well into 1986.

Mr. Skinner: We have had some.

Mr. Walker: It is time that the hon. Gentleman listened to the 90 per cent. of NUM members who are at work in the Bolsover pit.

Mr. Skinner: It does not matter to me if they all go back—I am not giving in.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Will the Secretary of State care to comment on an article in *The Times* this morning which suggests that he has taken over the role of negotiator for the NCB? On a local matter, will he consider the claim by local people in Fife for assistance from the EEC to restore work in the Seafield and Frances collieries?

Mr. Walker: Yes, several forms of help from the EEC are being examined actively by the Coal Board.

Mr. Orme: Will the Secretary of State confirm that Mr. Willis stated during the weekend that the document was not a joint document but was prepared basically by the NCB? Will the Secretary of State ask the Prime Minister to facilitate direct negotiations between the NUM and the Coal Board so that a negotiated, honourable settlement that is acceptable to the NUM and NCB can be arrived at?

Mr. Walker: I think the right hon. Gentleman knows —I made it clear in my statement—that this was not a document prepared by the TUC. I never claimed that. I have claimed, and I am sure that Mr. Willis agrees, that the document was prepared after considerable detailed negotiations and talks with Mr. Willis in an attempt to create conditions in which a settlement could take place. That was the basis of the document, which I think was good. I very much regret that it was not accepted.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of national electric power was supplied by coal-burning, oil-burning and nuclear power stations over the past 12 months; and how this compares with the previous 12 months.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): The last 12 months for which figures are available cover the period December 1983 to November 1984. During that period, on a fuel used basis, the electricity boards in the United Kingdom produced 53 per cent. of electricity from coal, 29 per cent. from oil and 16 per cent. from nuclear. The respective percentages in the previous 12-month period were 75 per cent., 8 per cent. and 15 per cent.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful to the Minister for his reply. Will he now care to estimate the cost to the electricity supply industry of those changed percentages?

Mr. Goodlad: We shall have to wait until the strike ends before the total costs can be assessed.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that the figures that he has given demonstrate the flexibility of the electricity supply industry in meeting our worst winter since 1947? With regard to cost, does he agree that coal now released from pit heads becomes a positive cash flow to the NCB and that therefore the costs are not as high as some have led us to believe?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes, Sir.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister confirm that the promotion of the idea of uneconomic pits is linked with a pro-nuclear bias which, if it succeeds, will mean longer dole queues and a commitment to a nuclear future because, if pits are closed, the Government will be able to argue that there is no alternative?

Mr. Goodlad: No. The Government, like their predecessors who enjoyed the support of the hon. Lady, expect the electricity supply industry to pay due regard in its planning to the need for diversity in and security of supply, including an appropriate nuclear component. I hope that its commitment to the future of coal is beyond doubt.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Do not the figures show that ther is a good argument for more electricity from nuclear power? Is not French electricity among the cheapest in Europe precisely because more than half of it comes from

nuclear power? Furthermore, would not more electricity from nuclear power help us to solve the problem of sulphur dioxide emissions and the resulting acid rain?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes.

Mr. Eadie: Further to the Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on the question of cost, is he not falling into the bad habit of denying matters that have been widely publicised in the press—namely, that there have been additional costs of £2 billion? Is that denial similar to the earlier denial of his right hon. Friend, who tried to suggest that the document produced by the National Coal Board was a negotiating document, which it is not? The national executive of the NUM was told that the words of the document were set in concrete and could not be amended. How in the name of God can that be a negotiating document?

Mr. Goodlad: Like the hon. Gentleman, I am keen to avoid all bad habits. I repeat, we shall wait until the end of the dispute to assess the costs of the oil burn.

Coal Imports

7. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the amount of coal imported into the United Kingdom during January.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): The information is not yet available.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Minister agree that it is patently clear from the answers given this afternoon that the Government are prepared to absorb the high cost of imported coal and all other elements that contribute towards the cost of the dispute because, as the Institute of Directors said at the weekend—it has been far more forthcoming than the Government — before the Government can carry out their economic and other policies, it is necessary to crush the trade union movement?

Mr. Hunt: When the Government came to office the United Kingdom was a net importer of 2 million tonnes of coal a year. By 1983 the position had been reversed, and the nation had become a net exporter of 2 million tonnes. Sadly, that position has now been reversed because of the dispute, and again the country is a net importer. That is yet another example of the enormous damage that the dispute has done.

Mr. Hannam: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Central Electricity Generating Board has not imported any coal during the dispute? Is that not a further tribute to the flexibility that is built into our electricity generating system?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The CEGB has not imported any foreign coal since the strike began, because it has not needed to do so. The best way for our great coal industry to proceed and to preserve markets is to return to full production at competitive prices.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Minister aware that much of the imported coal that is being sold for heating domestic appliances will not burn in them and that that therefore adds considerably to the problems of old-age pensioners, especially those in my area? Will he undertake to look at the calorific value of that coal to ensure that it does the job that it is supposed to do?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, deliberate disruption of supply has caused and inevitably leads to hardship for many customers. I pay tribute to the coal distributive trades for having done their best to care for those who need looking after in our society. That is yet another example of the damage caused by the dispute.

Mr. Woodall: Will the Minister confirm the statement that he gave in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden)? Is he aware of the grave concern that is being expressed by many domestic consumers about the quality of the coal that is now being delivered to them by distributors? Is he further aware that that coal is nothing but muck, that it spits, causes a great deal of hardship and anxiety, and is not worth the money that is being paid for it, which is almost twice as much as the price for domestically produced coal?

Mr. Hunt: For many consumers it is better to have this dirty coal than to have no coal. This country produces very good quality coal, and it is about time that we returned to full production.

Mr. Marlow: Is any restriction imposed on either the private or public sectors with regard to the importation of coal?

Mr. Hunt: I shall look into that question as soon as possible.

Mr. Rowlands: Has the Minister read reports of the evidence that the CEGB has most recently produced for the Sizewell inquiry about forecasts for future international coal prices, which show that they might virtually double within the next five years? If so, does it not cast doubt on the so-called criteria for uneconomic pits and revalue our coal reserves? Does it not also suggest that we should treat premature pit closures with caution?

Mr. Hunt: I reiterate the words of the chairman of the NCB to the annual conference of IACM, when even at that stage he stressed that there is tremendous potential for increasing the future markets available to the coal industry. Those great markets for exports exist, but we can hardly take advantage of them when we are not producing coal.

Energy Efficiency Office

8. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress of his Energy Efficiency Office.

17. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many firms are known to be participating in energy efficiency schemes following contact with the Energy Efficiency Office.

Mr. Peter Walker: The office continues to provide valuable support in my campaign. It has stimulated an upsurge of interest in energy efficiency measures. From the early morning briefings alone, contacts have been made with 13,000 senior executives, of whom the great majority have gone on to take action to improve their energy efficiency.

Mr. Chapman: Does my right hon. Friend have any more precise estimates of the total energy waste in

different classifications of energy building? Can he confirm that inefficient energy use in buildings can add up to no less than £1 per sq ft in such buildings?

Mr. Walker: I can confirm that, and I am pleased to say that the various parts of the building industry and the architects are co-operating with us to a great extent to try to see that much more is done in this sphere.

Mr. Speller: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the number of contacts made, but in future does he expect to produce a realistic number of positive responses from people engaged in energy efficiency operations? Has he any idea of the amount of savings to be made in respect of CEGB sites?

Mr. Walker: We think that many savings can be made in almost every sphere. In total, we believe that savings of £7 billion can be achieved in this country. The returns that we are receiving following our major demonstration schemes and the briefing of senior executives are very encouraging.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Secretary of State aware that just before Christmas 300 men in my constituency, who produced insulation to reduce the cost of energy, lost their jobs? Is not this office just a big con and a cover for the Government to pretend that they are doing something, when they are really throwing men on the dole? Would not that money be better spent on buying insulation for old folks' homes, thereby keeping men in jobs to produce the stuff?

Mr. Walker: The leaders of the insulation industry have expressed their considerable gratitude and enthusiasm for all that we are doing.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Secretary of State agree that the Budget changes last year, which imposed VAT on double glazing and other insulation, have proved to be a disincentive to industry and to the private sector to put insulation measures into effect, and that this is completely contrary to the policies of his Department?

Mr. Walker: It is true that VAT measures have an adverse effect on a whole range of spending, but that spending is spread widely throughout the economy. I can only say that total activity which is now taking place within these industries has substantially increased compared with a year ago.

Coal Industry Dispute

15. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many miners have returned to work since January 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand from the National Coal Board that, since 1 January, nearly 18,000 ex-strikers have returned to work.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating all those 18,000 courageous miners who have gone back to work? Is this not an example of miners voting with their feet, showing without doubt that they wish to work because they want to keep the industry secure?

Mr. Hunt: Since the last negotiations broke down, more than 34,000 miners have returned to work, thereby showing that they want the NUM president to move. When will he begin to listen?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the move in sterling made all pits more economic?

Mr. Hunt: The economics of a particular pit are a matter for consideration by the NCB on a whole range of issues. One of the important ingredients in the offer now before the NUM is the introduction of a modified colliery review procedure which will enable all those considerations to be taken into account.

North Sea Oil Production

16. **Mr. Malone** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to control the production of North sea oil.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Malone: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Leader of the Opposition gave the clearest indication recently that the Labour party was intent on pursuing a policy to control depletion of oil in the North sea? As the oil companies assume at present that they will be investing between £50 billion and £60 billion in production facilities over the next 15 or 16 years, does my right hon. Friend agree that a policy of controlling depletion could scupper those plans and damage investment, especially in the north-east of Scotland?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I was surprised to read the recent remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, because they showed ignorance of the characteristics of our industry, and of the best interests of the economy. I agree with my hon. Friend, not least because he is my constituency neighbour.

Mr. Rowlands: Given that the Government have decided against the Sleipner contract and that there will be a need for condensate gas in the near future, will there not have to be some kind of balance between oil and gas production in the North sea?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not notice what was said last week about Sleipner. The tremendous increase in our reserves is almost as great as that of the Sleipner deal itself. In those circumstances, I hope that the hon. Gentleman shares my confidence that the industry has a very bright future indeed.

Homes Insulation Scheme

18. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with the funding allocated for 1985-86 towards the homes insulation programme.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Rost: As the funding for the homes insulation programme is being cut from £31·5 million this year to £21 million next year, with an additional £7 million held back in reserve, what does my hon. Friend propose to do to ensure that those people who apply for home grants are not disappointed?

Mr. Hunt: The 1985-86 allocation of £31 million for England is in line with the estimated spend in the current financial year. The 25 per cent. reserve referred to by my hon. Friend is designed to ensure that funds allocated to the scheme can be sent where they are needed and therefore are fully spent.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

New Parliamentary Buildings

33. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Lord Privy Seal when the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) consideration of the plans for phase 1 of the new parliamentary building will be completed.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The New Building Sub-Committee is now considering the preliminary sketch plans report. I expect the Services Committee to have approved the final sketch plans before the summer recess.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many hon. Members who, like myself, are sufficiently recently arrived in this place to remember what it was like to enjoy normal working conditions in other occupations, believe that the improvement in facilities would greatly contribute to improving the efficiency of hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: My advice to my hon. Friend is to make the most of his memories. Even so, the plans for phase 1 are up to schedule.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Leader of the House disabuse those of his hon. Friends who believe that when the GLC is abolished they will get office space across the river? Will he tell them that that office space, and more, will be needed for the quangos and joint bodies that will be set up to replace the GLC?

Mr. Biffen: I must confess that if the House is to acquire outbuildings around Westminster, it would have all the disadvantages of a split-site comprehensive. Therefore, I am happy for once to agree with the hon. Gentleman that the GLC buildings across the river do not come into our thinking.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is there not a danger that the proliferation of parliamentary buildings will denude the Chamber and detract from the corporate life of the House of Commons?

Mr. Biffen: On an afternoon when the Chamber is likely to be pretty lively, I agree with my hon. Friend.

Statutory Instruments (Prayers)

34. **Mr. Beith** asked the Lord Privy Seal whether it is his policy to provide time for debate on the Floor of the House on all prayers against statutory instruments for which such a debate is actively sought by hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: I seek to meet the wishes of hon. Members whenever possible, but it would not be practicable to find time to debate every prayer on the Floor of the House without major repercussions on other business.

Mr. Beith: Why is that so, given that if a prayer is taken in Committee upstairs, the House has no right to vote on it, even when the Government suffered an adverse vote in the Committee?

Mr. Biffen: I can remember that occurring once since I have been Leader of the House. However, the hon. Member makes a fair point that could be considered.

Parliamentary Papers (Delivery)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Lord Privy Seal what steps he is taking to ensure that hon. Members receive their Votes within the walk area on time and not by post the following day.

Mr. Biffen: A small number of hon. Members have had their Votes delivered by post since Christmas due to an unprecedented degree of sickness among the delivery staff in the Vote Office.

Two extra staff have been employed since January in an attempt to ensure that the Votes are delivered on time.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I thank my right hon. Friend for that helpful response. Does he agree that, in the outside world to which my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) referred, temporary staff would have been engaged on a day-to-day basis to do this work, as I understand they used to be? Will my right hon. Friend consider whether that can be done rather than increase the permanent establishment?

Mr. Biffen: I shall have my hon. Friend's point examined.

Mr. Mikardo: Will the Leader of the House ask his Committee to look into the problem of communications with hon. Members in the House? Is it not nonsense that, when nearly every other establishment of this size has radio paging or a similar system, hon. Members still sometimes receive notices of meetings hours after the meetings have finished and green cards from constituents hours after the constituents have gone home?

Mr. Biffen: Radio paging has been considered recently by the relevant Sub-Committee of the Services Committee. But I take note of the hon. Gentleman's question, which goes very much wider than the original question, and I shall refer it to the Services Committee.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Why in this modern day and age does there need to be such a service in any event? If hon. Members who live within walking distance of the House, as I do, cannot be here on time, what precious benefit is there in keeping this archaic system going?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is politically long enough in the tooth to know that the withdrawal of any service, however meritorious, and can be sustained; gives rise to such an outcry that no one will lightly undertake it.

Mr. Rogers: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be far better if hon. Members came into the House to collect their Votes rather than have them delivered to their banks and private law offices? When will Conservative Members recognise that being a Member of Parliament should be a full-time job?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is making the same point, only less elegantly, as that made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). This service is widely appreciated in the House, and I have some sympathy for my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), who wants matters improved.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I do not wish to strike a discordant note, but surely the best way is to deliver the Votes direct to hon. Members' offices in the House or, if they work outside the House, to their addresses outside.

More importantly, will my right hon. Friend check on the speed of deliveries? I was informed that I had been selected to serve on the Committee which was to consider the Local Government (Access to Information) Bill eight days after my appointment. There is something wrong with communications in the House.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend's second point goes very much wider than the original question, but I shall consider his first one.

Mr. Skinner: If the delivering of the Votes had to abide by the same kind of philosophy as that espoused by the Prime Minister and her colleagues, especially the Secretary of State for Energy, about whether a service was making a profit, would not this one come under the category of an uneconomic unit of production and have to close down? If that philosophy can apply to coal mines, why should it not apply to this service as well?

Mr. Biffen: Delivering the Votes is a non-economic activity. Therefore, it is a call upon the resources which have to be created by the productive sector of the economy, which ought to include the coal industry.

CIVIL SERVICE

Unions (Ministerial Meetings)

36. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met Civil Service unions; and what subjects were discussed.

38. **Mr. Parry** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Civil Service unions.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I last met the Civil Service unions on 4 December 1984 to discuss the Government's decisions on the 1984 report of the Top Salaries Review Body. The unions also took the opportunity to discuss with me some recent changes in travel and subsistence provisions.

Mr. Davis: Is it not surprising that the Minister did not take the opportunity to discuss the problem of low pay and low morale in the Civil Service? Will he take this opportunity to deny the reports in last week's newspapers that if a civil servant engages in industrial action it will affect his promotion prospects?

Mr. Hayhoe: I did not discuss low pay and the other matter that the hon. Gentleman raised because it was not on the agenda for the meeting, nor was it raised by the representatives of the Civil Service unions.

As for the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers, I can deny that any new proposals are being brought forward. There is no general ban upon and no bar to the promotion of civil servants who may take part in industrial action, but, of course, this may be taken into account by those concerned as one of the factors that will determine their decision.

Mr. Parry: Have there been any recent discussions or consultations with the Civil Service unions concerning the use of computers in passport offices? If so, what has been the reaction of the unions?

Mr. Hayhoe: That question ought to be addressed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is now responsible for the Passport Office.

Dr. Mawhinney: Did my hon. Friend raise with the Civil Service unions the increased effectiveness of Customs and Excise staff in preventing the illegal importation of drugs into this country and express to them the appreciation of the House? Do not these increased seizures justify and vindicate the Government's decision to use Customs and Excise staff more flexibly?

Mr. Hayhoe: That matter was not discussed, but I am willing to follow my hon. Friend's invitation to pay tribute, which I hope I can do on behalf of all hon. Members, to the splendid work done by Customs and Excise staff over drugs seizures.

Sir Anthony Grant: Did my hon. Friend discuss with the Civil Service unions those civil servants who were dismissed for breaking the rules of confidence of the Civil Service, such as my constituent, Mr. Robin Page, who was dismissed by a previous Labour Government for exposing the way in which Labour Ministers were misleading the House?

Mr. Hayhoe: That matter was not discussed, but it puts into better perspective some of the hypocritical comments that we have heard from Opposition Members.

Dr. McDonald: Will the Minister ensure that discussions with the Civil Service unions continue in order to draw up a new code of ethics to ensure civil liberties for civil servants? Will he also consider adopting as his model the American code of ethics, which asks civil servants to expose corruption wherever it occurs and to put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to the country above loyalty to persons, party or Government Departments?

Mr. Hayhoe: The rules and guidance for civil servants remain as they have been for many years under successive Governments. Those rules certainly forbid breaches of trust, such as we have seen recently. If there is any need to reinforce those rules to make them clear to existing civil servants and future recruits, that will be done.

Recruits (Quality)

37. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he is satisfied with the level and quality of new recruits into the non-industrial sectors of the Civil Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Generally, recruitment to the non-industrial grades of the Civil Service is going well, but we are experiencing continuing difficulty in recruiting the numbers and quality that we need in some specialist areas, particularly where there is a national shortage of people with the relevant qualifications.

Mr. Chapman: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that new recruits are adequately informed about the need to respect the confidential nature of much of their work and about the correct procedures to take if, rightly or wrongly, they feel that they are being asked to mislead the public?

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes, I can assure my hon. Friend that proper guidance on all those matters is available.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is it surprising that there is difficulty in attracting the right calibre of person when the demoralisation of the Civil Service is so obvious, when opportunities for advancement are few, and when it is clear that the Government do not think highly of civil servants? Will the hon. Gentleman take the earliest

opportunity to make it clear that he respects and admires the qualities of civil servants who have contributed so much to our past and to our future?

Mr. Hayhoe: Again, I am happy to accept the right hon. Gentleman's invitation and pay tribute, as I have done many times before, to the overwhelming majority of civil servants who behave with loyalty and the highest integrity. As a country, we should be proud of them. That is perhaps why one lapse from those high standards excites a great deal of criticism and comment.

Mr. Stokes: Is my hon. Friend aware that Britain has one of the best Civil Services in the world, but that those who have the great responsibility for choosing new members must surely ensure that loyalty and trust are the first things to look for and that character counts as much as brains?

Mr. Hayhoe: All those matters must be taken into account; and we must follow the time-honoured arrangements, which are that ability, qualifications and the rightness for the job must be the qualities looked for by the Civil Service Commission in appointing new members to the Civil Service.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Is the Minister aware that his tribute to the work of the Civil Service will be much appreciated, but will he ask his colleagues, in particular the Prime Minister as head of the Civil Service and other senior colleagues, to make similar remarks about the Civil Service? Is he further aware that there is grave anxiety about the calibre of recruits to the Civil Service and the future of the Civil Service if morale stays at rock bottom as a result of constant attacks upon it by senior Ministers and the present policies on pay and cutbacks?

Mr. Hayhoe: Constant attacks are not being made. Rather, constant tributes are being paid to the civil servants who carry out their work with great dedication.

Unions (Ministerial Meetings)

39. **Mr. Soley** asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he next plans to meet the Civil Service trade unions; and if staffing matters will be discussed.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have at present no plans to meet the Civil Service trade unions, but my right hon. and noble Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has agreed to meet representatives of the Society of Civil and Public Servants on Monday 25 February to hear their views on the extension of unified grading in the Civil Service.

Mr. Soley: When the Minister does meet them, will he take the opportunity to clarify his answer a few moments ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and explain what he means when he says that industrial action will be taken into account in promotion? Does that not mean that the Government are trying to act yet again as judge, jury and prosecution? Surely it means that if a person has been involved in industrial action, that will be taken into account and used against him when considering promotion prospects.

Mr. Hayhoe: I should be happy to discuss such matters with the representatives of the Civil Service unions, if they so wish. But I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's clarification or interpretation of my earlier remarks stands up.

Equal Opportunities

40. **Mr. Janner** asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will now institute measures for sex monitoring in the Civil Service in accordance with the recommendations made in the revised draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Hayhoe: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring recommendations of the code are already in hand.

Mr. Janner: I thank the Minister for that reply. May I seek his assurance that now that the EOC's code has been laid before Parliament, the Civil Service will lead the effort to achieve equal opportunities for women in employment?

Mr. Hayhoe: We shall certainly be following the code's conditions and seeking to implement the code to the best of our ability.

Questions to Ministers

3.30 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for raising this point of order today, but this is a very important issue. Last week I tried to table two questions: one to the Attorney-General, and one to the Secretary of State. They were both refused. The first question to the Attorney-General asked what his recommendations——

Mr. Speaker: I must stop the hon. Gentleman, because he knows the rule. It is not in order to rehearse in the Chamber questions that have been turned down by the Table Office. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise that matter, he should tell the Table Office and get in touch with me, and I shall then look into it.

Guinness Bottling Plant, Liverpool

3.31 pm

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): I beg to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision by the Guinness company to close its bottling plant in Liverpool."

In view of the high level of unemployment, particularly in constituencies such as mine, I believe that there should be a debate on the loss of several hundred jobs on Merseyside. The company's decision means that 200 jobs will be lost in the Toxteth area of my constituency. Several jobs will be lost in the Speke constituency, which is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), and 70 jobs will be lost at Runcorn. This is the second Guinness factory to close in my constituency in the last couple of years. As my constituency—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should listen with care to what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Parry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As my constituency has the highest level of male unemployment in the United Kingdom, approaching 40 per cent., I submit that the Guinness closure is a serious matter. In the past week or so we have also been hit by news of the withdrawal of the Liverpool to Isle of Man crossing, and by news that the Cammell Laird plant is to shed more than 400 jobs. Thus, in the course of a week or so we have received news that more than 700 jobs are to be lost. Incidentally, those job losses will mean that 100,000 jobs will have been lost on Merseyside in the last five years under this Government. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am asking you, to accept my application.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed closure of the Guinness plant in Liverpool."

The hon. Gentleman knows well that the only decision for me is whether to give this matter precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I have listened to what he has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Severe Weather Payments

3.33 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the allocation of exceptionally severe weather payments"

The matter is specific, because it concerns the way in which the exceptionally severe weather payment is operated. It is urgent, because old people in my constituency and elsewhere in Britain who should qualify, but do not do so, are suffering now as a result of the scheme's operation. Indeed, two old people in my constituency, one in South Chard and the other in Seavington, have died from hypothermia in recent weeks. If a method cannot be found to alter the way in which the scheme is operated, there will be more suffering, and possibly even more deaths.

My area of the south-west of England has been among the worst affected by the recent cold spell — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may consider this to be a joke, but I assure them that it is not. Needless to say, the weather is no respecter of DHSS boundaries. The whole of my constituency has suffered equally from the cold, yet not all of my constituents are entitled to severe weather payments.

About half of my constituency falls within the Bournemouth DHSS area. The entitlement of those who live in that area to severe weather payments depends on what has happened 40 miles away to the south, at the Bournemouth weather station. The other half of my constituency falls within the Bristol DHSS area. The entitlement of the people in that half is measured by what has happened 40 miles away to the north, at the Bristol weather station. As a result those who live in one half of my constituency are entitled to payment, while those who live in the other half are not.

We have the ludicrous situation that one old person can get the allowance, while another old person living 100 yd distant cannot get it. What logic is there in that? Thanks to inadequate housing, insufficient insulation and the astronomical price of coal, many old people are now having to pay £15 a week for the heat they require to keep alive.

The exceptional weather payment offers such people the only means of coping, yet many are denied help because of the ludicrous bureaucracy of the present situation. There are more tragic deaths from cold waiting to happen unless the Government can be persuaded— *[Interruption.]*—to alter——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Standing Order No. 10 application procedure is a cherished Back-Bench opportunity to raise important matters. I must be able to hear what the hon. Member is saying.

Mr. Ashdown: Many tragic deaths resulting from the cold will happen unless the Government can be persuaded to alter the regulations to cope with the realities of the situation, rather than taking refuge behind the "Mad Hatter" regulations of the DHSS. We need urgently to debate this matter if the lives of many old people are not to be further endangered.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the allocation of exceptionally severe weather payments following the death recently of two of his constituents from hypothermia."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member said, but I regret that I must give him the same answer as I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry). I do not consider that the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

Trade Union and Employment Acts (Repeal)

Mr. Ron Lewis, supported by Mr. Harry Ewing, Mr. Roy Hughes, Mr. Ken Eastham, Mr. Robert Parry, Mr. Ted Garrett, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Don Dixon and Mr. Sydney Bidwell, presented a Bill to repeal the Employment Acts 1980 and 1982 and the Trade Union Act 1984: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 88.]

INSURANCE (FEES) BILL

Ordered,

That the Insurance (Fees) Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Sinking of the General Belgrano

3.38 pm

Mr. Speaker: Before we enter upon this important debate, I quote some wise words from "Erskine May":

"Good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary language. Parliamentary language is never more desirable than when a Member is canvassing the opinions and conduct of his opponents in debate."

Today's debate raises very important issues on which hon. Members feel strongly. I hope that they can be fully discussed within our long-established rules governing orderly debate.

I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I propose to apply the 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 8.50 pm.

3.39 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move,

That this House recognises that the sinking of the General Belgrano was a necessary and legitimate action in the Falklands Campaign; and agrees that the protection of our Armed Forces must be the prime consideration in determining how far matters involving national security and the conduct of military operations can be disclosed.

The House will understand that I must make a lengthy and detailed speech on what is an important issue involving the rights of Parliament and the duties of Ministers, our national security, and the relationship between Ministers, their colleagues, and civil servants.

It may be helpful if I summarise at once the ground that I intend to cover and the approach that I intend to adopt. I intend to outline the background that led to the decision to sink the Belgrano. I shall set out rather more fully the events that surrounded the decision itself.

I was not involved in the decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting. Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces had any contact, directly or indirectly, with the Law Officers or their officials in that context. In general, with one exception, we were not consulted about the case or the papers submitted to the court. The Attorney-General has set out the position to the House in the clearest language. I have nothing to add to his statement.

My only involvement in the conduct of the case came many months later, when it was necessary to consider requests from Mr. Ponting's lawyers that classified documents belonging to my Department should be disclosed to the court. I was consulted over the disclosure of one of those documents—the one now known as the "Crown Jewels". After consultation with senior colleagues and the Government's security advisers, it was decided to provide that document under special conditions.

The disclosure of a number of internal Ministry of Defence documents to the court creates a most unusual situation. Advice to Ministers on policy matters is disclosed to this House only in carefully defined areas, such as the outcome of studies related to efficiency. It is a wholly necessary position carefully to restrict such disclosures.

If civil servants are to have confidence that they can put their views fully and honestly to Ministers, if the concept that advice given to one Government is not made available to another is to be maintained, and if the proper accountability of Ministers—and not civil servants—to Parliament is to be preserved, we must maintain that position. Failure to do so would change fundamentally the position of the Civil Service. Particularly, it would rapidly lead to the politicisation of the Civil Service, which very few would want. *[Interruption.]*

The essence of the debate centres on the allegations made by a civil servant about the behaviour of Ministers. Mr. Ponting has made the most serious allegations—many of them repeated yesterday—about my conduct in discharging my responsibilities as the Secretary of State for Defence. Most extreme and unfounded allegations have been made about the Prime Minister and about my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. *[Interruption.]* In those quite deplorable circumstances, the Government have decided—exceptionally—to reveal the advice given to Ministers by officials. I have no option but to quote from the advice that Mr. Ponting gave me. When I do so I shall make available the full text of his advice to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and place copies in the Library of the House.

I further intend to enable members of the Foreign Affairs Committee to have access to the document known as the "Crown Jewels", under appropriate security arrangements, and I propose to discuss with the Chairman of that Committee how best that can be done.

The House will want to judge Mr. Ponting's claims in the light of the advice that he gave to Ministers at the time. I shall deal specifically with the events associated with the letter written on behalf of the shadow Cabinet by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), the letter that I received in March from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), the preparation, in the light of those letters, of the document known as the "Crown Jewels", and the subsequent handling of the questions of the hon. Member for Linlithgow. I shall refer in particular to the suggestion that has been made, quite wrongly, that Ministers misled the House in May in answer to parliamentary questions.

I shall want to deal also with the events that occurred later, when the Foreign Affairs Committee requested a note of all changes in the rules of engagement issued to Her Majesty's forces in the South Atlantic in the Falklands campaign. Our response to that request, which has become known as the "Stanley Memorandum"—although the request and the reply were approved personally by me—is that specific subject of the Opposition amendment today. It is that memorandum which, until yesterday, Mr. Ponting appeared to argue had finally persuaded him to leak documents and breach the trust of a civil servant to Ministers. For him, that memorandum was apparently the straw that broke the camel's back. On that basis the Opposition have been persuaded, I presume, to draft their rather narrow amendment. We shall see whether the House believes that it was any better served by Mr. Ponting than I was.

When I first became personally involved in this matter I had no first hand knowledge of the events that had taken place in the South Atlantic in 1982, save as a member of the Cabinet involved in general policy discussions, or as a result of media coverage. I recall that the decision to send the task force was given all-party support by the House in 1982. However, the House will also remember that the hon. Member for Linlithgow never agreed with that judgment. Some would regard that independence of mind on his part as an act of personal courage. No one would

question his right to reach such a view, however much one disagreed with it, and no one could disagree with it more profoundly that I did, and still do.

The views of the hon. Member for Linlithgow were clear from the outset. On 7 April 1982 he told the House:

"Some of us believe that the fleet should turn round and come back to Portsmouth and Rosyth as soon as possible."—[*Official Report*, 7 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 1037.]

On 19 April the hon. Gentleman told the House:

"Is it not an illusion to think that the Americans will be less than evenhanded".—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1982; Vol. 22, c. 25.]

On 13 May the hon. Gentleman told the House:

"The Argentines have a very tough marine corps of at least 6,000 officers and men who are highly regarded by professional marines in this country. The conscripts will fight as if they are fighting in a holy war. There will be massive casualties; that fact should be faced."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1982; Vol. 23, c. 983.]

On 8 June the hon. Gentleman suggested that Britain was "slithering into a British Vietnam in the South Atlantic."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1982; Vol. 25, c. 32.]

By 21 December 1982 the hon. Gentleman was telling the House:

"The sinking of the Belgrano, when the right hon. Lady knew what she did about peace proposals, was an evil decision of an order that it would not have occurred to me to attribute to any other . . . politician of any party since I have been in the House".—[*Official Report*, 21 December 1982; Vol. 34, c. 901.]

During my earlier days as Secretary of State for Defence, from the beginning of 1983, it was the hon. Gentleman alone who pursued a campaign based upon that hostility and with changing centres of attack. The Government's position was clear. Towards the end of April 1982 the first elements of the task force were moving towards the Falkland Islands. As they moved southwards from Ascension Island, they were vulnerable to attack. While an exclusion zone had been established around the Falkland Islands to avoid Argentina consolidating her illegal occupation, measures to defend our own forces had overriding priority.

On 23 April the Government issued a warning to the Argentine Government which was conveyed to them by the Swiss. I shall read it in full. It was as follows:

"In announcing the establishment of a maritime Exclusion zone around the Falkland Islands, Her Majesty's Government made it clear that this measure was without prejudice to the right of the United Kingdom to take whatever additional measures may be needed in the exercise of its right of self-defence under article 51 of the United Nations Charter. In this connection, Her Majesty's Government now wishes to make clear that any approach on the part of Argentine warships, including submarines, naval auxiliaries, or military aircraft which could amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of British Forces in the South Atlantic will encounter the appropriate response. All Argentine aircraft including civil aircraft engaging in surveillance of these British Forces will be regarded as hostile and are liable to be dealt with accordingly."

That was the end of the warning.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): From that time on, why were the rules of engagement changed at all if they were so clear?

Mr. Heseltine: The rules of engagement govern the orders and discipline within which the British Fleet operates. The warning that I have read was given to the Argentines.

At the end of April the task force was close to the Falkland Islands. It had limited defences against attack, particularly from the air. It was operating 8,000 miles away from home against forces operating close to their own mainland. Argentina could bring to bear both land-based aircraft and those on the aircraft carrier the 25th of May, which greatly increased the reach and flexibility of the Argentine air threat. Argentine ships could move quickly from the safe haven of areas close to the Argentine coast to positions where they could threaten our forces. The Royal Navy had no such easy options.

The first hostilities around the Falkland Islands took place on 1 May. That day Vulcan and Sea Harrier aircraft attacked Argentine positions on Stanley airfield to enforce the total exclusion zone. The task force itself came under attack for the first time from the Argentine air force and some Argentine aircraft were shot down. There was no doubt in Argentina about what was happening. Argentine radio on 1 May claimed that they had attacked the task force.

On 2 May there were clear and unequivocal indications that the task force was under further threat from a strong and co-ordinated pincer movement by the major units of the Argentine navy, including the cruiser General Belgrano and the aircraft carrier. The Prime Minister and her War Cabinet were advised of the threat in the light of the best military and intelligence assessments and were advised by the Chief of the Defence Staff that the rules of engagement should be changed to permit attacks on Argentine warships outside the exclusion zone.

No Prime Minister could have hesitated in the face of that advice. The rules of engagement were changed, not only to cope with the threat from the Belgrano but to cope with that from other Argentine warships on the high seas. Argentina had been clearly warned on 23 April that a threat to interfere with the mission of British forces would encounter the appropriate response.

On 4 May, Sir John Nott described to the House the circumstances of the attack on the Belgrano, saying that she had been detected at 8 pm on 2 May when the group of ships of which she was a part was closing on elements of our task force. Both the Falkland campaign White Paper and Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse's official dispatch also referred to detection on 2 May. We know that, in fact, she was sighted on 1 May. I will explain how the Prime Minister and I came to address this error in March of this year. The Prime Minister in her letter to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has fully explained the background to Sir John Nott's statement on 4 May.

Interest in these and other questions was heightened by the publication of a book on the sinking of the General Belgrano by Messrs Gavshon and Rice. From the time of publication in March 1984 a range of detail was available that raised a host of issues and questions. Two particular issues emerged: first, the date on which the Belgrano was detected; secondly, the course of the Belgrano and the orders under which she was operating from the time when she was first picked up by HMS Conqueror to that when she was sunk.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli wrote on behalf of the shadow Cabinet to the Prime Minister on 6 March 1984. His letter focused mainly on the issue of when the Belgrano had first been located and sighted, but also asked about the ship's course when it was sunk. His letter was referred to Mr. Ponting as the head of the appropriate division for advice and for a draft reply. I personally gave no guidance to Mr. Ponting about the advice that he should provide. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces went further and asked that the option of

[Mr. Heseltine]

admitting for the first time that the Belgrano was sighted on 1 May and not 2 May should be addressed. Mr. Ponting submitted his advice through my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and it reached my office on 21 March. I intend to quote from Mr. Ponting's advice and also from the manuscript note written on that advice by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. I will, as I have said, make these documents available.

Mr. Ponting wrote:

"You asked for a draft reply to send to No. 10 for the Prime Minister to send to Denzil Davies and the Shadow Cabinet. Minister (AF) asked me to prepare a draft admitting for the first time that the Belgrano was sighted on 1st May and not 2nd May, this is draft 2 attached. I have however prepared an alternative reply, draft 1, which maintains the existing public line. There are no operational or intelligence reasons for withholding the 1st May date and the choice between the drafts is therefore essentially political".

Mr. Ponting went on to set out the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative course, but left the issue to me. He said in his advice that the choice was "essentially political". My right hon. Friend added a manuscript note making it clear that it was he who had sought drafts on both bases in referring the matter to me.

It is plain beyond doubt that my right hon. Friend was determined that I, not he, should be able to make a proper judgment about how the Prime Minister should be advised to reply to the shadow Cabinet. It is also clear that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was the first person whose name is associated with a policy of more, not less, disclosure. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces did not seek to take the decision, and merely ensured that I had the options in front of me.

In practice, I did not put either of Mr. Ponting's alternative drafts to the Prime Minister. The explanation is simple. On 19 March the hon. Member for Linlithgow wrote me a letter asking nine questions. In one respect the hon. Gentleman repeated the question about the date of the detection of the Belgrano, as had the letter from the right hon. Member for Llanelli. But the hon. Gentleman went on to ask a number of other questions concerning the course followed by the Belgrano, the details of the attack on her, and others relating to the Argentine aircraft carrier.

I decided that, as a result of the events that I have described, I could not properly discharge my duty to Parliament unless I had before me an account of events in the South Atlantic in a detail that no one until that time had considered necessary. Mr. Ponting was asked to prepare that document—the document known as the "Crown Jewels".

I must now read to the House the instructions that were sent to Mr. Ponting about what was required. The House will remember that the central issue of this debate is whether Ministers sought to cover up the events that we are discussing. My private secretary, Richard Mottram, wrote to Mr. Ponting on 22 March. I quote two passages of his minute:

"The Secretary of State wishes to know the substance of what happened at the beginning of May 1982 in relation to the Belgrano and the Argentine aircraft carrier in order to judge how much of this can properly be made public without security implications. For the purpose of considering the substance, he would be grateful for a detailed chronology of the events leading up to the sinking of the Belgrano. This should cover the answers to the questions raised by Mr. Dalyell in his latest letter together with those to the following questions."

Having listed a range of other questions that might be worth exploring, Richard Mottram went on:

"This list of questions"—

that is, his list of questions—

"is simply those which occur to me and is not meant to be exhaustive. What the Secretary of State is seeking is a comprehensive account of events which covers all the information and not just that which underpins the main defensive line we have used hitherto. I would be happy to have this in log form with the relevant documents enclosed — given the possible sensitivity of some of the information involved there would be no need of course to copy it widely within the Department.

Additionally, I should be grateful for a draft reply to Mr. Dalyell's latest letter together with advice on whether the line proposed to be taken with Dalyell affects the line proposed to be taken with Denzil Davies."

Mr. Ponting's reply—*[Interruption.]* The House is fully aware that it would be inconceivable if the Civil Service were not to ensure that, if the Prime Minister is answering specialist questions, what she says is consistent with the advice from the specialist Department concerned. Mr. Ponting's reply to the minute is the document which is publicly known as the "Crown Jewels". It consists of Mr. Ponting's advice, an unclassified draft reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Linlithgow and a log, and supporting documentation, dealing with highly sensitive operational and intelligence aspects of the sinking of the Belgrano. The document is classified "Top Secret. Codeword". That classification would have been applied by Mr. Ponting, reflecting the classification of some of its source material.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): What is the difference between determining the line and telling the truth?

Mr. Heseltine: "Determining the line" is simply the language that is commonly used in the Civil Service to describe the advice that Ministers are given for public disclosure. The hon. Gentleman will remember those words from his experience as a Minister in the Labour Government.

I should like to deal first with the conclusions which Mr. Ponting reached. He concluded that, on the basis of the information in the "Crown Jewels", the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and his supporters could be refuted, but, because of the classification of the material, it was not possible to use it in public to refute detailed allegations.

As to what should be said to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, Mr. Ponting's advice was that the draft reply was simple because, whatever general line was taken, these issues related to detailed operational and intelligence information. He therefore submitted a draft reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, which read as follows:

"Thank you for your letter of 19th March.

As I expect you know the Prime Minister has, in a letter to Denzil Davies, confirmed that the Belgrano was sighted on 1st May. However, the other questions you have raised in your letter all concern detailed operational and intelligence matters on which I am not prepared to comment."

Those are not my words, but Mr. Ponting's. They represent Mr. Ponting's considered advice to me on 29 March as to how I should reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow. That advice presented me with difficult problems in carrying out my responsibilities to Parliament for the defence interests of the country and my responsibility to Parliament to provide it with as much information as is compatible with that security.

Mr. Ponting's role in the "Crown Jewels" is clear. He informed me that the long running arguments of the hon. Member for Linlithgow did not stand, that an effective negation of his case was incompatible with national security and that the hon. Gentleman should be sent a six-line reply closing down that line of inquiry. I could simply have accepted Mr. Ponting's advice that day and sent a reply on the basis that he proposed, but I refused to accept his advice.

I was scheduled to leave for a NATO meeting the following Monday, so there was therefore great urgency. I called a series of meetings on Friday 30 March and Sunday 1 April. Their purpose was to address how far information could be disclosed in answer to the right hon. Member for Llanelli and the hon. Member for Linlithgow without security implications. We had before us Mr. Ponting's advice, which leaned towards disclosure on when the Belgrano was sighted, but which was categorically opposed to answering the questions asked by the hon. Member for Linlithgow, on grounds of operational and intelligence security.

The first meeting ended inconclusively. I decided that I would report matters to the Prime Minister. However, after the meeting broke up, I discussed further the form of my advice to the Prime Minister with my permanent secretary, Sir Clive Whitmore. My private secretary was also present. The conclusion that was reached was recorded and I am making available a copy of that record. My problem was to define as responsibly as I could the line up to which I could reveal information to Parliament, but beyond which I could not go without damaging national security.

The conclusion that I reached provisionally was that it might well now be possible to reveal that the Conqueror first detected the Belgrano group on 30 April 1982, and first sighted the Belgrano itself on 1 May, but that the Government should not allow themselves to be driven beyond that point, whatever the pressures. Those conclusions were made known to Mr. Ponting at that time. He never queried them. They are totally inconsistent with Mr. Ponting's account in *The Observer* yesterday.

Mr. Dalyell: If this is the line that the Secretary of State is taking in relation to Mr. Ponting, as counsel said in court, he was not counsel for Mr. Dalyell but counsel for Mr. Ponting. Nevertheless, if this is the line, does the Secretary of State not think that he ought to have gone to court No. 2 at the Old Bailey himself, rather than send Richard Mottram, and submitted himself to examination by counsel?

Mr. Heseltine: I think the hon. Gentleman will understand on reflection that, as I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General have made clear, I had no part to play in the conduct of the case against Mr. Ponting. With the sole exception of the question arising out of the release of the "Crown Jewels" on security grounds, if it had been considered necessary or desirable by those conducting the case to have called me to the court, I should, of course, have been prepared to go. They did not ask me to go or consult me about whether they should ask me to go, and I was not called. I believe that that is a complete answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

I reported my preliminary conclusions that Friday afternoon to the Prime Minister, but I was still not wholly satisfied. I was determined to talk to the head of the appropriate intelligence agency and other intelligence experts outside the Ministry of Defence, in addition to my own advisers on these matters. That I did on the afternoon of Sunday 1 April. That meeting addressed in full the intelligence background to the action taken by the Government on 2 May 1982 and what might be said in response to the claims which were being made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow, Messrs. Gavshon and Rice and others about the interception of Argentine orders to its fleet. The House will appreciate that the information then appearing in the British press and in the books that I have mentioned was largely the product of Argentine sources, which were anxious, no doubt, to probe the scale of our understanding of their activities.

It was obvious that once the Government had confirmed that the Belgrano had reversed course at 9 am on 2 May and had headed for a number of hours in a westerly direction, the focus of attention would be on the intelligence assessment which led to the decision to sink the ship and upon allegations about Argentine orders to recall the fleet to port, and whether these had any connection with the so-called Peruvian peace initiative.

It is possible to answer a question on a matter of fact which is not of itself classified, but if that single answer then becomes, as one would anticipate that it might, a precedent for a series of similar questions, that series could lead rapidly into matters that are classified. As events have shown, the disclosure of information about the movements of the Belgrano has led precisely to detailed questions, the answers to which would breach national security. The advice put to me by the Government's intelligence authorities at the time was that it would not be possible safely to comment on these matters. They gave me their reasons, which were compelling, and Mr. Ponting was present. I concluded, therefore, that the preliminary judgment that I had reached on Friday 30 March should stand—that we should not enter into a debate with the hon. Member for Linlithgow about events at the beginning of May 1982. That judgment reflected Mr. Ponting's advice.

It has now been alleged that that decision was to do with political embarrassment. I deny that allegation utterly. At that time I recommended that we should face political embarrassment involved in correcting the date when the Belgrano had been detected. I concluded that to maintain the statement made originally to the House by Sir John Nott was no longer right. I therefore advised the Prime Minister, who immediately and without qualification agreed.

Consequently, the Prime Minister replied to the right hon. Member for Llanelli on 4 April essentially on the basis of the advice that I had given the previous Friday. I had a further brief word with my right hon. Friend on Monday 2 April, at which my right hon. Friend the Minister for State for the Armed Forces was present. That was the only occasion on which he discussed these matters with the Prime Minister. He did so at my invitation and in my presence. The Prime Minister's reply was in much fuller terms than Mr. Ponting had originally recommended and along the lines that I had suggested.

The dispatch by the Prime Minister of her letter to the right hon. Member for Llanelli opened the way for me to deal with the original nine questions of the hon. Member for Linlithgow in his letter to me of 19 March. I was about to do that when the hon. Gentleman wrote to the Prime

Mr. Proctor: When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister meets leaders of the TUC to discuss these matters, will she impress upon them the need for the leadership of the NUM to live in the real world, by accepting the code of practice on picketing, the widely accepted provision for balloting, and the necessity for the closure of uneconomic resources?

Mr. Walker: As my hon. Friend knows, that is the view of many of us, and was demonstrated by what happened in the one third of Britain's coalfields that did have a ballot. If the NUM's normal procedures on having a ballot and on peaceful picketing had operated throughout the dispute, it would have ended a long time ago.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State resist some of the more outlandish views put to him by his right hon. and hon. Friends, and recognise that it is time for conciliation and a constructive settlement of the dispute, which we all desire? Is he aware that any desire on his part or on the part of his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to have Mr. Scargill's head will be decidedly misplaced and will reverberate against a settlement, so we should be constructive and conciliatory, and not vindictive?

Mr. Walker: I have no desire to have Mr. Scargill's head or any other part of his anatomy. A great deal of patience and effort was put into the talks that took place last week, and anybody who studies the statement that was prepared will recognise that it is a constructive and objective statement, which should have been the basis for a settlement.

Mr. Dormand: Does the Secretary of State accept last week's figures from the Department of Trade and Industry, which show that the cost of importing oil and coal has risen by 42 per cent. to £10 billion in 1984, the highest figure ever recorded? Does he further accept the Central Statistical Office's figure of £3·5 billion for the cost of the strike until January? If he does, what possible justification can there be for his boasting of the miserly £10 million that has been given for new jobs in coal mining areas? This dispute is about jobs.

Mr. Walker: I have repeated constantly that the £10 million for the new enterprise company is all that is required at the commencement of its activity. The NCB and I have made it clear that the NCB will review that ceiling when it becomes necessary and there are more applications. If the figures that the hon. Gentleman gave were published, obviously they are accurate, but no one regrets more than I do that this form of industrial action without a ballot has resulted in us importing coal instead of producing our own.

Mr. Strang: Is the Secretary of State aware that his description of the NCB's document would be contradicted by not only the NUM but NACODS? Will he comment on the fact that both Mr. McNestry and Mr. Sampey, the NACODS leaders, stated at the weekend that the Coal Board document involved breaching the NACODS-NCB agreement?

Mr. Walker: The Coal Board has made it clear to NACODS that it is keeping to the sanctity of that agreement. NACODS was concerned with the item that said that normal colliery review procedures would continue until the new modified procedure had been put into place. I am certain that if it were left to NACODS, the Government and the Coal Board, the new procedure would come into place virtually immediately. However, one could not have a situation in which, if the NUM decided to veto the details of such an organisation, there would be no procedures in place whatsoever.

Mr. Parry: Now that the strike is in its 50th week, will the Secretary of State urge his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to have an early meeting with TUC leaders to see whether an agreement can be reached with honour, whereby the gallant miners, who have defended their jobs and communities for nearly a year will not be brutally crushed into submission?

Mr. Walker: Certainly, there is no desire to see miners who have been prevented from having a ballot being in any way humiliated as a result of what has occurred during this period. The Prime Minister has agreed to meet the TUC tomorrow at 11.30 am, and will listen to what it has to say.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Is not the evidence clear that, since we have been talking about cost, the personal cost is not so much to some of those who are on strike but to those who supply them, such as the small shopkeepers and so on and those who supply the industry? Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is very much in the interests of those people that the terms that are now on the table are taken up?

Mr. Walker: There is no doubt that jobs have been lost in many parts of the country, especially by firms supplying the coal industry and those connected with mining communities. One deeply regrets that, and I am sure that those firms join the Government in wishing that there had been a ballot at the outset, which would almost certainly have resulted in there being no dispute.

Mr. Barron: Does the Minister accept that there is a contradiction between his statement that NACODS is happy with its agreement and the NACODS statement several times last week that it is not happy about it because it is not happy at what the NUM is being asked to accept? Will the Minister now be honest enough to admit that the NCB is trying to lay down preconditions which will undermine any agreement with NACODS?

Mr. Walker: The statement prepared following the talks between Mr. Willis and the NCB carries a clause which makes it clear that the procedures agreed with NACODS should be implemented with the greatest possible speed. It is certainly the hope of the Government, the NCB and NACODS that that should happen. I only hope that that is also the object of the NUM.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a negotiated settlement is essential if an orderly return to work is to be achieved and anarchy avoided in the future? Will he clear up a matter that concerns many people about the latest NCB document? Does it represent an agenda for discussion or a final take-it-or-leave-it offer?

Mr. Walker: Mr. Willis's objective in seeking such a document was to ensure that the crunch issue of the dispute was agreed and settled. There will, of course, be other items and issues that both sides will wish to discuss.

Mrs. Currie: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that the miners of south Derbyshire, who have worked normally throughout the strike, have just voted by 78·4 per cent. to give their local leaders the power to defy the national executive if necessary? Does that not show that most

mineworkers want the right to go to work in peace and a free and democratic union to look after their interests, not one that wishes to play revolutionary political games?

Mr. Walker: The dispute has undoubtedly done considerable damage to NUM unity both locally and nationally. I am sure that many members of the union regret that.

Mr. Rost: Instead of the inquiry demanded by Mr. Scargill, will my right hon. Friend prepare a White Paper acknowledging that because the nationalised monopoly has failed the economy, the consumer and the miners, it is now time for the Government to put privatisation of the coal industry at the top of their priorities?

Mr. Walker: No. It has been perfectly clear throughout the dispute that the Government's intention has been to ensure that the industry in its present form has a stable and prosperous future. I am sure that that is the first priority.

Mr. Foot: Is the right hon. Gentleman really implying that he understands the NACODS agreement better than the NACODS leaders understand it? Why does he not use his influence to get the NACODS agreement properly understood by the NCB?

Mr. Walker: There is no misunderstanding about the agreement. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will use his influence to ensure that the NUM agrees speedily to the details of the NACODS agreement.

Mr. Gregory: If the learned judge was correct in his comment the other day that six pickets was the maximum permitted, will my right hon. Friend have discussions with his colleagues to ensure that that is implemented wherever possible in the coalfields so that the dispute can be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Walker: The judgment related to certain pits and certain local conditions. It will be necessary to examine the national implications of that judgment.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Why has the Prime Minister now agreed to meet the TUC to discuss a dispute that has been running for 11 months? Have circumstances changed to alter her view and that of other Ministers that the Government should not be involved in negotiations relating to the dispute? If the Prime Minister has anything to contribute towards a settlement, why did she not become involved at a much earlier stage?

Mr. Walker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has, rightly, always agreed to see the TUC or any major trade union leader if they request her to do so, and she has done so on this occasion.

Sir John Wells: Can my right hon. Friend make any specific statement about future proposals for the Kent coalfield, which is in a somewhat different position from the monolithic coalfields in the rest of the country?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. The future of any individual pit or coalfield is a matter for negotiation at regional level.

Mr. Mason: Has the Secretary of State carried out the promise that he made to me on 28 January that he would convey to the chairman of the NCB the request that the future of those miners arrested on the picket line and since then completely acquitted—there are now 1,190 of them —should not be imperilled when the strike is over, or, in other words, that there should be an amnesty for those men? What was the NCB's reply?

Mr. Walker: Yes, I have conveyed that point. I have not yet received a detailed reply from the NCB. When I do, I shall certainly let the right hon. Gentleman have it.

Mr. Powley: In view of the substantial number of miners who have gone back to work of their own free will, will my right hon. Friend consider discussing with the NCB the possibility of the board making a statement to the effect that those miners who choose to stay on strike after a predetermined date — say, in three weeks' time — should be told that their services are no longer required in the industry?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Secretary of State aware of the statement made by Mr. Willis on breakfast television this morning that the gap between the two parties is now very small? Will he request his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when she meets the TUC, to consider the miners and the miners' wishes? If the Prime Minister is to bridge that gap—which she certainly has the authority to do—she should base her judgment not on revenge on personalities but on the needs and wishes of the miners, who want a fair and honourable settlement.

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. There has been no stage in the dispute when the offer available has not been to the advantage of the miners and their families and communities.

Mr. Spencer: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the words of Mr. Jack Jones, the leader of the Leicestershire NUM, today? He said that the economy of pits has always been a subject that he has discussed both locally and at regional level. If that is good enough for Leicestershire, is it not good enough at national level.

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. Not only that, but Mr. Lawrence Daly has put in writing that when he occupied a vital post in the NUM he accepted the essential nature of the need to close uneconomic pits. With the Coal Industry Act 1977, the last Labour Government also made provision for the eradication of uneconomic pits.

Mr. Benn: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Government's decision to abandon the requirement that the NUM should sign a document before talks could begin is welcome, as is the Prime Minister's final realisation that she must meet the TUC in order to bring the dispute to an end? However, is he also aware that despite his regular statements in the House over the past six or eight months to the effect that the strike was crumbling, the Government have not succeeded in getting a majority of NUM members to return to work? Those who have returned have done so because they have been starved into submission. Like the majority of the British people, as revealed in the polls, NACODS and BACM—many senior managers—do not regard the Government's handling of the dispute as in any way creditable.

Mr. Walker: The Government's handling of the dispute cannot be compared with that of the right hon. Gentleman's which, from the beginning, has been full of wholly wrong predictions. Last November, there were 94 pits where no one was present. Today, there are nine. I can make clear the impact of that change upon those whose

[Mr. Steel]

sunk as a political act to prevent the conclusion of the Peruvian peace proposals. That is a very serious charge. Because wrong information was originally given to the House and bits of correct information dribbled out in subsequent months, credence has been given to the hon. Gentleman's charges and great damage has been done to the interests of the Government and of this country, especially in its relations with South America. Far from damage limitation, I believe that the Government have been guilty of causing damage in that respect.

The second reason is a parliamentary reason. I have always been a keen supporter of the Select Committee system. Looking back over the many years of the Falklands saga, I believe that if a Select Committee had considered the matter dispassionately some years ago a solution might have been found. The appointment of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is most important, but it will be hobbled in its opportunities to work properly if Ministers refuse to produce the information that it requests. There is a well known tradition and precedent, that security information is sidelined when it comes before a Select Committee, so I see no reason why, as late as July 1984, the full information was still not volunteered to the Select Committee. The Secretary of State now says that he will talk to the Chairman of the Select Committee with a view to producing the information, but what is so different in the quality of that information as between July 1984 and February 1985? I believe that there is a very good parliamentary reason for concluding that the Government were wrong to continue to act as they did.

Mr. Heseltine: I went into this at some length and I quoted the request. We were asked for a non-classified response to be published. That is the point. Had we been asked for a classified account or one that could be sidelined, we would have provided it, as we subsequently did. The record is clear. We were asked for a non-classified document.

Mr. Steel: My experience of Select Committees is that a sidelined document is not a classified document. The Secretary of State should have responded with the quality of information sought by the Select Committee, removing security and intelligence matters from it.

Mr. Spearing: It is important to have the record straight. The request was made and inquiry was made of the Clerk, who said that the Committee would have preferred it to be non-classified, but that in no way excluded the possibility to which the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has referred.

Mr. Steel: I was not aware of that as my party is not represented on that Select Committee. Nevertheless, I have every confidance in it and I believe that its importance and its requests should have been more seriously heeded by Ministers.

Third, I believe that Ministers were wrong because the result of their attempt to conceal information from the House was that information on movements of the fleet, signals and so on — some from naval sources — was dragged into screaming headlines month after month. Far from the issue being disposed of once and for all last year, it has continued to be a running sore, not just in our political system but in our military system. There is a clear analogy with the way in which the Government treated GCHQ. Until the Government started acting against it, GCHQ was a relatively secret headquarters. All that the Government achieved by blunderbussing away at union rights there was to advertise the place to the whole world. There is a clear analogy between their clumsy treatment of that issue and their clumsy treatment of this issue.

For those three reasons, I believe that Ministers acted incorrectly in misleading Parliament. I draw an important distinction. If the House had been given correct information from the beginning, it would have been quite fair for the Secretary of State to say at the Dispatch Box that at a certain point the Government must draw the line and that the House must accept that they cannot answer further on military and security matters. That would have been an honourable position. However, when the House has been given wrong information from the beginning, it is not honourable to hide behind a smokescreen of military operations and security. That is the difference. The House should not accept the use of such camouflage.

There are some lessons to be learnt from this escapade. First, national security simply cannot be what a Minister says it is. There must be some other way of judging what national security is. I do not wish to embarrass the Leader of the official Opposition, but I understood that the Leader of the official Opposition was always consulted on security matters. I very much hope that the poison penfriend correspondence of the last week or so will not endanger that tradition. Under the normal conventions of the House, the Leader of the official Opposition, at any rate, is entitled to be shown the full information, which he has not so far seen.

Second—we have argued on security matters before, and I am not making a new point—there is a case for a small committee of senior Privy Councillors representing the different parts of the House to overview security matters. That would give the House some confidence that national security is not the same as avoiding the political embarrassment of a Minister.

Third, after this case, we must surely see the last of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. It is not good enough for the Government to say that others have tried to change the law before, that there have been White Papers, Green Papers and Bills, but that the matter is terribly difficult. There should be, in this country, a public right to information with certain specific and limited exempt categories such as national security. I hope that the Government will learn that lesson and comment on that point tonight.

6.3 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): In a short speech, I wish to refer briefly to four of the personalities involved in the matters under discussion. First—to get him out of the way—I take the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I heard the hon. Gentleman on the radio this morning—when does one not?—saying that there would be no slanging from him today. I hope that that will turn out to be the case, but if it does, it will be a departure from form. This debate falls not long after yet another of the hon. Gentleman's vicious personal attacks on the Prime Minister.

I did the hon. Gentleman the courtesy of warning him that I would find it necessary to speak about him today.

When he made a personal attack on me on 8 June 1984, he showed me no similar courtesy. Nor, after that episode, did he make any apology to me.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Onslow: The hon. Gentleman need not apologise. I do not expect it from him.

Mr. Dalyell: On 12 or 13 May the hon. Gentleman had called me a political aerosol. That was my reason.

Mr. Onslow: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman remembers what he said to me on 8 June. If not, I will remind him. He said, having referred to me as having answered the Adjournment debate on 12 May 1983 on the sinking of the Belgrano:

> "He must be responsible for the whole cacophony of statements to the House that are turning out to be untrue. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman must have known while he spoke from the Dispatch Box that they were untrue."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1984; Vol. 61, c. 609.]

That was a more serious charge than the—I confess—somewhat dismissive comparison that I made with reference to the hon. Gentleman. I do not insist on an apology, because I do not expect one. In what he has done in this affair, the hon. Gentleman carries no credibility and does not deserve a great deal of attention.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has made it clear to the House what an obsessive campaign the hon. Member for Linlithgow has pursued on the sinking of the Belgrano. For once, perhaps, I may pray in aid Mr. Ponting, who made it clear that in his opinion —as in the opinion of a great many others—the whole idea of a link between the Peruvian peace proposals and the sinking of the Belgrano was totally ludicrous. I trust that the hon. Gentleman read the report of that part of the trial, and I trust also that in future he will stick to some harmless cause such as proving that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays. Inside and outside the House, the hon. Gentleman is generally recognised as being as daft as a brush.

The Leader of the Opposition would like to be taken somewhat more seriously. I hope that he will be kind enough to listen to me for a moment, because I wish to refer to his prepared and rehearsed response during Prime Minister's Question Time the other day. He said—and meant, in saying it, to be offensive—that he did not believe my right hon. Friend. Such words are, of course, in order, but I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman understands precisely how offensive they were. If the right hon. Gentleman were to say to the House that he confidently expected to be the next Prime Minister, most of us would say that we did not believe him, but there would be no offence. It would be a simple difference of opinion. There would be nothing unparliamentary or unusual there. However, let us suppose that I said that I believed that the right hon. Gentleman had been a party to the conspiracy to unseat the Labour Chief Whip from his constituency. The right hon. Gentleman would, I am sure, hotly deny it. If I were then to say to him, with no evidence one way or the other, that I simply did not believe him, he might think that I was being offensive. That comparison may help the right hon. Gentleman to understand how damned offensive he was the other day. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had every right to be angry. Either the right hon. Gentleman did not understand, or he did not care. In either case, he is clearly unfit for his office, which is taking him further and further out of his depth.

Thirdly, I wish to refer to a split, or dual, personality —to the leader of the Liberal party, and to the leader of the Social Democratic party, who is still with us. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) made a curious speech, in which he made some superficial and uninformed references to GCHQ. To suggest that the Government, by their actions against the unions, went out of their way to advertise the existence of GCHQ begs the question of what the unions themselves thought they were doing when they went on strike. The right hon. Gentleman is no great expert on such matters. He was the wrong chap to make the alliance speech.

If hon. Members study the Order Paper, they may also agree with me that the alliance has not been clever in framing its amendment. The alliance simply wishes to tag the official Opposition's amendment on to the Government's motion. That is a classic example of alliance politics, always trying to have everything both ways. It is a beautiful example of boneless wonderism, but no doubt the two right hon. Gentlemen consider that they have been very clever.

Of course the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) could have found words of his own. On 13 February he wrote an offensive letter to the Prime Minister. It did not attract much attention, but it is still on the record. Not for the first time, he accused my right hon. Friend of a systematic attempt to mislead the House. Despite my right hon. Friend's replies to the accusations, the right hon. Gentleman, like the hon. Member for Linlithgow, simply goes on repeating the same old dirt.

The right hon. Gentleman was Foreign Secretary for two years or so. It may be that he would not be included in any shortlist of great Foreign Secretaries, but that may be simply because he did not have very much to do. However, there was one matter which must have created a little work for him — attempting to achieve a settlement in Rhodesia. I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman would say of his conduct of those affairs that there was never an occasion on which he concealed or withheld a single fact from the House. Is he prepared to say that he never did that, even for good, understandable and entirely patriotic reasons? I doubt it very much. If he admits that there are times when concealment and the withholding of information are in the national interest, why does he prate so much about systematic attempts to conceal? He is too disingenuous by far, and the country is beginning to rumble him.

I should like now——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Come on, Scargill next.

Mr. Onslow: That comment is typical of the hon. Gentleman.

I should like now to consider Mr. Ponting. I imagine that the whole House, even the leader of the Liberal party, probably agrees that the Civil Service is better off without Mr. Ponting. A lot of his fellow civil servants think that he is no loss to them. Right hon. and hon. Members who have read today's *Daily Telegraph* will have seen that the general secretary of the Ministry of Defence Staff Association, Mr. John Wilks, has said some things in fairly clear terms about Mr. Ponting's conduct.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): He would, wouldn't he?

Mr. Onslow: The hon. Gentleman has no knowledge of these matters, but he might be a great friend of Mandy Rice-Davies for all I know. He said:

"it is the duty of MPs to control ministers,"

and added:

"It is not a duty of civil servants, however senior, because they are not elected by anyone. They are employed and paid to do the job defined by Ministers and Parliament. They are, and they should be, very much at the 'beck and call' of Ministers. The kind of reasoning which places the civil servant above his civil master is the kind of reasoning which is swiftly leading to the destruction of our system of democratic elected government."

Mr. Ponting should take those words to heart.

It is not wholly unknown for people who join the Civil Service to change their views as they go through their career. There is more than one hon. Member who was formerly a civil servant and who must have taken a view about his position as a servant of government which led him to come here. Perhaps I can bore the House for a moment with my own experience. At the time of Suez, it became clear to me that there would be times during my Civil Service career when I might well find myself unable conscientiously to put forward the point of view of the Government of the day. It was a fairly short step from that to recognise that the right thing to do was to leave the Civil Service. I was fortunate enough to get here.

Perhaps Mr. Ponting also has ambitions to get here, but the Labour party has spurned him and the SDP has so far said nothing—it might be open to offer——

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): He is a member of the SDP.

Mr. Onslow: Is he? The point here is that Mr. Ponting should have thought these things through much earlier in his career. If he had done so, he should have been able to see that he too might have a crisis of conscience. In that case, he need never have undergone the conflict to which he now claims he had to submit himself. He is not a great loss. A man of greater intellectual honesty would not have brought any of this upon himself. The most important legacy he leaves us is the task of considering, not how to reform section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, but the essential feature of the conduct of government—how to re-establish the mutual trust and confidence between Ministers and their advisers, which Ponting has deliberately and arrogantly done so much to destroy.

6.13 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It was perfectly fair for the Secretary of State to outline my opposition to the Falklands war. It is quite true that, on 2 April, I contacted my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) about his being cornered by Brian Widlake on "The World at One" into saying that the Labour party would use force in certain circumstances. It is true that, on 3 April, I interrupted the Prime Minister during her speech to ask her who she imagined our friends were in Latin America on this issue. It is true that, on 4 April, I made a long and well-reported speech in Scotland to my constituency party in which I said that this was the most ill-conceived expedition to leave these shores since the Duke of Buckingham went to La Rochelle. It is also true that I went to see the Prime Minister on 21 April to express deep concern about air cover in the light of what happened to the Prince of Wales and the Repulse.

It is also true that I did not in early May get concerned with criticisms about the Belgrano. It so happened that, on 4 May, I had tabled the following question to the Prime Minister:

"if she will make a statement on the Falkland Islands."

The Prime Minister replied:

"My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and for Defence will be making full statements after questions on recent diplomatic and military developments respectively."

I then asked:

"When the Prime Minister referred to political control, did she herself, personally and explicitly, authorise the firing of the torpedoes at the General Belgrano?"

The right hon. Lady answered:

"I assure the hon. Gentleman that the task force is and was under full political control."—[*Official Report*, 4 May 1982; Vol. 23, c. 16.]

A lot of this is about crisis management. The truth is that I did not start asking questions about the Belgrano until early July, and I did so because there was a report in *The Scotsman* to the effect that, when he was asked a question that flowed exactly from what John Nott had told the House — why he had sunk the Belgrano — the submarine commander said that he had not sunk the Belgrano off his own bat, that he was a first-time submarine commander and that he did it on orders from Northwood.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Quite right, too.

Mr. Dalyell: Right. That is deeply different from the line of the statement that John Nott made in the House. We have checked the tapes, and John Nott's statement came over as the Belgrano was closing on the task force. "Elements of" the task force was added later. In view of what the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) has said, I should like some Government statement on the position of Glamorgan, Arrow and Ardent. That matter ought to be cleared up in the Minister's winding-up speech.

The sinking of the Belgrano was not simply a matter of 368 lives and the escalation of the Falklands war from second to fifth gear. She who ordered the sinking is also she who has her finger on nuclear weapons. As long as she remains our Head of Government, what happens at a moment of possible humiliation and defeat is a matter of lasting importance. We should therefore not have any of the argument, "This all happened three years ago."

The difficulty is that the truth was not told. For more than two years we were told repeatedly that the submarine Conqueror had detected the Belgrano on Sunday 2 May. I knew that that was not true, and I think that it is better to be completely candid with my parliamentary colleagues of all parties. In August 1982, I was told by a member of the family of one of the crew of the Conqueror that I had better delve into what happened. In September 1982, quite voluntarily, I must report to my colleagues, I was given the diaries of a member of the crew — Lieutenant Nahrendra Sethia. I must admit that I was a bit suspicious at first because they were beautifully written and I wondered how it was possible to write such a coherent account, given the circumstances of a submarine. However, I made cross-checks.

I should like to say something bluntly to all my parliamentary colleagues. The House might be wondering why the hon. Member for Linlithgow has been the

receptacle of so much information, only latterly from Mr. Ponting, but from many other sources, including members of the task force. It was not because of the colour of my politics. *[Interruption.]* I received the information because many people felt that the position was not quite right. Members of the Royal Navy said that the sinking of the Belgrano was not cricket.

It became clear to me from cross-checking that the diaries were right and that the Belgrano and her escorts, far from being detected on 2 May, were detected before 1600 hours on Friday 30 April on her passive sonar by the submarine Conqueror. That was later admitted in a letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). After 1600 hours, at periscope depth the Conqueror closed in on the Belgrano and her escorts. Throughout the morning of Saturday 1 May at a distance of 4,000 yd, the Conqueror monitored the Belgrano and her escorts "razzing"; that is, replenishing at sea. Therefore, the submarine had the Belgrano at her mercy. If it is true that the Belgrano had to be sunk because it was an immediate threat to the task force, why was it not done on that Saturday? Why was it postponed? That is the question the Prime Minister must answer.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East) *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: We had Admiral Lord Lewin's word on 30 January 1983 that there had been no communications difficulties.

Mr. Mates: This stake goes to the heart of the hon. Gentleman's point, as it is about political control. The captain of the Conqueror was not authorised to attack Argentine surface ships outside the exclusion zone on that day. For that reason, Admiral Woodward sent him home to Northwood, which sent him to the Chief of the Defence Staff, who asked the War Cabinet—the political control —to have the rules changed.

Mr. Dalyell: The Secretary of State knows that that is an own goal. The Secretary of State emphasised in his opening remarks that the original rules of engagement were to cover everything. Therefore, either the Secretary of State or the hon. Member for Hampshire, East is right.

Mr. Heseltine: I know that the hon. Gentleman takes this matter extremely seriously. The reason why there was no question of the sinking taking place when he described it was that the Government had not been advised by their military advisers to do so.

Mr. Dalyell: The difficulty is that, as one scrapes, all sorts of new creepy-crawlies come to light. The Belgrano was far more of a threat at that time than later. Therefore, why does the Prime Minister say that it was an immediate threat? The narrative is important——

Mr. Heseltine: When the hon. Gentleman says that the Belgrano was far more of a threat at that time than later, to whom does he think the Government should listen— to the hon. Gentleman or to the Chief of the Defence Staff?

Mr. Dalyell: The right hon. Gentleman talks about listening. I suggest that he should listen to our excellent communications centre at GCHQ. That is where the listening must be done.

At a distance of 10,000 yd the Conqueror followed the Belgrano for more than 30 hours. If we are to be told that the Government did not know exactly what was happening, heaven help their political control. At 8.07 —the Secretary of State got it wrong, and we must be accurate — an order went out from Walter Allara, the operational commander on board the carrier on 25 May, to return to Statten Island. That was confirmed by the naval command in Buenos Aires at 1.19 the following morning. Both those orders, like every order, were intercepted and sent back to Ascension Island by AD470 high-frequency Marconi transceiver equipment, through Chile, and through the Americans, who had a satellite in polar orbit.

That brings me to a direct question. *The Observer* of 6 January states:

> "The intercepted Argentine signals were decoded and telexed at the time directly to Navy HQ at Northwood and to Mrs. Thatcher's office at Chequers."

The paper did not get that information from me. There were other sources. Indeed, it would have been odd if there had not been. Therefore, for more than five hours those at Chequers and the Prime Minister knew perfectly well what the orders to those ships were. The question therefore arises: why was the order given at lunchtime on 2 May when the Belgrano was far less of a threat that it had been earlier and when its direction was known? It was because —I disagree with the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) about this — the Prime Minister knew something else that Sunday morning — that the Government of Peru had put forward peace proposals.

Mr. Bowen Wells *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: For the sake of argument, I can concede that reasonable men can have differences of opinion about whether the Peruvian peace proposals would have worked. I believe, on the basis of a great deal of research and from talking to people, that they would have succeeded. Other reasonable people may not believe that. However, what the Prime Minster and the hon. Member for for Woking said in the debate was that no news of the Peruvian peace proposals reached London until three hours after the sinking of the Belgrano. Ever more precisely, in a letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli and to the shadow Cabinet the Prime Minister said that the first sign of the Peruvian peace proposals reached London at 11.15 pm on Sunday evening. That is not true.

Mr. Bowen Wells *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: On 21 October, after some correspondence and, in case there is any misunderstanding, at my own expense on an academic fare, I went to Lima for four days. I sat for 75 minutes in the office of Belaunde Terry, who told me that the Argentine had been extremely close to the British, that he had received great kindness from the British and that Peruvian and American troops were at first proposed. The Peruvians were not acceptable to us and the Americans were not acceptable to the Argentines and, therefore, the troops were to be Canadian, Mexican and West German. The Argentine soldiers were to leave the Falkland Islands, and the task force was to turn back. In that case the Prime Minister would have been deprived of her military victory, which the Falklands issue is all about, as I made plain at an early stage.

I sat in the house of Manuel Ulloa, the Prime Minister of Peru at the time, and the chairman of the development committee of the World Bank. There were no language problems as his daily reading was the *Wall Street Journal*. He said, "What do you take us for? We were negotiators, and as serious people we were in touch with both sides."

[Mr. Dalyell]

I specifically ask about the role of Lord Hugh Thomas. Oscar Mauortua, the head of the President's office, spent two years at Pembroke College, Oxford. There were no language problems there. He said that the whole Government of Peru came to a stop at that time, and added, "I know that your Government knew all about it all that Sunday and probably that Saturday."

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: No, I shall not give way.

It may be that the Peruvian evidence is not sufficient. We should therefore look at the American evidence. In his memoirs, the Prime Minister's admirer, Alexander Haig, said that acceptance was gained in principle from both parties or, pressed by Emery, down to one or two words. We had better be clear about Gavshon. For 30 years he was head of Associated Press in London, and his interest in this subject was aroused because never in all that time had he known so many inconsistencies in British Government explanations.

Mr. Onslow *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: Haig was supported by other senior Americans. If Conservative Members do not like the American evidence, they should consider what happened here. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) is not taking part in the debate, and I am particularly sorry that the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) is not present. It was the right hon. Member for Hertsmere who let the cat of of the bag. When pressed by Emery, he said that he knew all about the Peruvian peace proposals, and added, "Primarily those of President Belaunde." If the right hon. Member for Hertsmere knew, did the Prime Minister not know?

Mr. Onslow *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Member for Woking and I remember brass tacks. The hon. Gentleman let it out of the bag. I asked him about this and he told me that the Foreign Office knew on the Sunday morning. In that case, did not the Prime Minister know? Let us have an explanation.

Mr. Onslow: Now, as then, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that he does not listen to the answers that he is given. It is clear that he flatly refuses to accept my word about anything, and on that basis I am under no obligation to accept his. The hon. Gentleman knows that evidence on this whole matter has been taken by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. Is he content to abide by its judgment, as I shall be?

Mr. Dalyell: Many of these issues cannot be decided tonight. In some ways it would have been wiser to await the report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, but again I ask whether, if the Foreign Office knew, the Prime Minister knew.

Mr. Bowen Wells *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: It would have been much better had the Government come clean on these matters, because, who knows, there may be a diplomatic version of Clive Ponting. Certain people know the truth. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Traitors."] The word "Traitors" is not very sensible in relation to people whose priority is to Parliament rather than to Ministers.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South) *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: People have asked, "Why rake all this up?" The least important reason is that we are spending £3 million a day, and, unless the truth is out, how will the Prime Minister and the Government ever be forced to change policy? There are other considerations.

The Argentines are now far better armed than they were in April 1982. They have the Otamelara and the Meko 360 frigates, powered by Rolls-Royce engines and using David Brown gearboxes, Decca navigation equipment — all made by us. They have the Israeli adapted Nesher 5s which can actually loiter and fight. Therefore, this is not a question of the past—*[Interruption.]* Alfonsin will not start another conflict—*[Interruption.]* That is the answer to the Falklands. Juan McCafferty and Pablo Llewelyn are the leaders of the Scottish and Welsh communities. I agree with our excellent ambassador in Peking, Sir Richard Evans, who said that the legacies of history should be solved by peaceful means. There are differences between Hong Kong and the Falklands. One is that there are 1,000 million Chinese and 3 million front-line soldiers, and one does not send a battle fleet against that.

Legitimate questions have been asked time and again, and we have seen the legacy of untruth. Exactly what is there to hide? What will we be if, as Members of Parliament, we do not insist on getting the truth when we know we are being lied to? If we do nothing, democracy itself is injured, and that is why some of us go on.

6.35 pm

Mr. Mark Robinson (Newport, West): I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate because I believe that we are tackling an issue that is central to the relationship between Ministers and their civil servants. I wonder whether at any stage following a war this House has ever considered in detail an action in that war in such detail as the action that we are again considering today.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) again repeated nearly all the arguments that he has put before the House on previous occasions. It is regrettable that in doing so he should issue an open invitation to civil servants in the Foreign Office to come forward—presumably to him —with further leaked information. If I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, he seemed to indicate that that might happen, and as well as saying that in his speech, I heard him say it last night on television.

The relationship between a civil servant and his Minister is very much under the microscope in this debate. If Mr. Clive Ponting really had his conversion on the road to Damascus at the moment the memorandum was to be presented to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, what on earth was he doing in April when he was playing with that typewriter? If this was a man of great integrity, why for two months did he embark on a process of obvious deception of Ministers for whom he was working and of civil servants with whom he was working? That question needs to be, and should be, answered.

If a Minister cannot trust his senior civil servants— and Mr. Clive Ponting was a senior civil servant—the corollary is that Ministers will start to look for people whom they can trust in senior positions. That is what happens in the United States, and that is why each time there is a change of Administration in that country there is a change in the entire top echelons of the civil service.

I do not believe that any hon. Member of any political party would like to see that situation prevail in the United Kingdom.

There has to be trust between Ministers and their civil servants. If civil servants disagree with their Ministers, procedures are open to them to make their views known. What is astonishing in what we have been told this afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is that Mr. Clive Ponting at no stage seems to have recorded his reservations on, his objections to, or his displeasure with, what was going on. Far from it—he continued to advise Ministers and to put drafts in front of them which it now appears he may have believed were the drafts which the Ministers wanted to see. That can be the only explanation for his behaviour if, at the same time, he was putting contrary information into the hands of the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

We have also had, not quite so vociferously this afternoon following my right hon. Friend's speech, a concerted attack on my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces—we have had it in the media as well. We have been led to believe that my right hon. Friend was personally responsible for everything that is alleged to have been going on. We are told that he has been operating behind the back of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in some kind of collusive arrangement and liaison with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence left me in no doubt where responsibility for the decisions that have been made lies. It lies at his door, and he was at pains to point that out.

My right hon. Friend was also at pains to point out that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces tendered his advice, as he should do as junior Minister, to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his final decision. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence was able to weigh up the value of that advice, of the advice that he received from his civil servants and, in one instance, the value of the changed advice that he received from one particular civil servant.

The other issue that has come up, and the hon. Member for Linlithgow raised it in his speech yet again, is the Peruvian peace initiative. Having had the opportunity to work in the United Nations, in the Secretary-General's office, and to see how these negotiations go on, I find it incredible that this or any Government would conceive it necessary to take a decision to sink a cruiser purely to scupper a peace initiative that was reportedly going on in Peru. If our diplomats are not capable of dealing with such initiatives if our Governments disagree with them, what are they earning salaries for? It is absurd to pretend that negotiations of that nature could in some way bind a Government who were not a party to it. Any settlement of such a dispute can be achieved only if the two or three parties—in this case the two parties—concerned are in agreement with it.

At the time the discussions were going on, we were faced with the decision of what to do about the General Belgrano. I cannot believe, when the advice was that that cruiser was a threat to certain ships within the task force, that the Government would say that they would not listen to such advice because they felt that they should wait another 24 hours or 48 hours, even if it meant a ship being sunk, to see what the outcome of the Peruvian initiative would be. The Government and the War Cabinet had far more important issues on their minds. In the light of that advice, I do not see how any Minister, or the Prime Minister, could have come to the House after the event to defend not sinking the cruiser if there had been some tragedy within the intervening period.

Another issue, which the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has already raised, is that of the Official Secrets Act, which has come under much scrutiny in recent weeks because of this case. It is suggested that the Government should look again at this Act to see whether section 2 should be scrapped and replaced. It is worth recalling that in 1979 the Protection of Official Information Bill failed in its passage through the House of Lords and had to be withdrawn. There is every reason for the Government to look at the Official Secrets Act afresh, because if they do not do so it is likely that in a few years' time we shall be confronted with another situation such as this.

The only sensible way forward would be for all parties to co-operate and try to decide what instrument needs to be put in its place. The confidential relationship between civil servant and Minister has to be protected if we want to continue with the type of Civil Service that we have, of which we are so proud, and which many other countries envy us for having.

6.46 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The point that the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson) has made about reform of the Official Secrets Act is important. It is said that, in the light of the court's decision that Mr. Ponting was not guilty—although one would not have thought so—and the fact that the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General mounted the prosecution, the Government did not say anything about that this afternoon.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), in my time as an Army Minister 20 years ago, when I was in the Northern Ireland Office and then when I was Home Secretary, has chased me and was often a damn nuisance. The way that some Conservative Members who were tittering and giggling about the role of my hon. Friend is a reflection on them. If it had not been for him, this question would not have been discussed. He is an honourable man and some of those hon. Members who giggled are not fit to clean his boots. I could tell the House of the issues on which he has been wrong, but the best thing to tell the House is what he has been right on—and if he has forced civil servants to sit up and answer the question, he has done us all a service.

During the Crimean war, there was a radical, Independent Member of Parliament for Sheffield called John Roebuck. Some 110 years later, when Asa Briggs wrote his book about Victorian people, he reported there were still people in Sheffield who said to their kids when they kicked up rough, "Don't come the old John Roebuck with me." Not many of us will be remembered in 110 years' time for being in the awkward squad. My hon. Friend is in the awkward squad, and when I saw the Secretary of State for Defence giggling about him I felt slightly sick.

All this business started about nine months ago I know one thing, which is the beginning of the answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West. Ponting should not have been charged under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. He should have been dealt with by the administrative procedures of the Civil Service—for the moment I am

[Mr. Merlyn Rees]

begging the question of the House of Commons. If my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) or my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) had been Secretary of State for Defence when this happened, Ponting's feet would not have touched the ground as he left the Department. We should not have dealt with the matter under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. There has been talk as though we were discussing Mata Hari, section 1 or spies, but as the Government said in the case, we are talking about an incident in which no security was involved. Mr. Ponting goes out into the world knowing that he was found not guilty by a jury at the Old Bailey, but found guilty today by the Secretary of State, with no suggestion that the right hon. Gentleman should be cross-questioned.

During the trial, I was asked to appear as an expert witness because I had served on the Franks committee in 1972 and had signed its report, just as I signed the report of the Franks committee about the origins of the war. It recommended that there should be only one narrow band in which anyone was prosecuted under the criminal law, and that the remainder should be dealt with by the due processes of the Civil Service.

I am not prepared to change my mind. I do not say that because I am in opposition. I told those who asked me to bear in mind three matters. First—and here I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow—once the task force had sailed, the lives of service men should not have been put at risk. That is clear in my mind. My father died as a result of the first world war. I was brought up to despise flag-wagging politicians and flag-wagging newspaper proprietors. The right hon. and hon. Members who were shouting earlier in the debate are the ones who never heard a shot fired anywhere. I feel strongly about this matter.

If politicians send service men 10,000 miles from home, those men have to be protected. If my kids had been there, I would have expected the politicians to protect them. Like my hon. Friend, I accept that we do not know the half of it, but I know one thing, because I was on the Franks committee. It was the Argentine navy which "potched" around for those four or five days. No one knew what those ships were doing. They could quite easily have sent signals saying that they were going home, knowing by that time that their signals would be picked up. I would not have trusted the Argentine navy. I told the court that that had to be made absolutely clear, and incidentally I was told that Ponting felt exactly the same.

There is another reason for my view. I played a part in the Cabinet and the OPC in 1977 when my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) and others, including the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), sent a submarine and two frigates to the South Atlantic with rules of engagement. The implication was clear. I knew what I was doing when I agreed. If it had gone wrong and there had been any action, they were there as a deterrent. I am not prepared to change my mind.

I am not involved in the Belgrano incident. I regard the first part of the Government's motion as irrelevant. I had to be clear that there was no security involved, and the man prosecuting on behalf of the Government admitted that no security was involved in any shape or form.

To me, security is of the greatest importance. When I became Home Secretary I realised that the problem with any official secrets legislation is who is to define what is and what is not security. However, there are matters which no parliamentary Committee would drag out of me. That will have to wait until the expiry of the 30-year rule or the 50-year rule. There are some matters on which I took personal decisions which were right, but I would not reveal them to anyone.

Security matters to me, but it did not matter here. There was no breach of security. So why all the fuss about the Select Committee having these documents? Now it can have them. But it could have had them in the first instance. When they get into the Old Bailey, there can be no security about them.

The Ponting case is not a security matter. I have told the House what was recommended by the Franks committee, but there is another reason why I say that. The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) knows it, because I took the opportunity to raise it with him the other day.

On 22 November 1976 when I had been Home Secretary for two months, I announced in the House that the Government intended to legislate to repeal section 2 on the basis of the Franks report. It was my first policy in that office. I had Franks on my mind, and I wanted most of all to repeal section 2. I told the House so, but argued the case that there should be a degree of liberality about Cabinet documents.

Before I made that announcement, the Attorney-General of the day talked to me from that distance that all Attorneys-General talk. Everyone was in favour of my proposal. There had been previous debates. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House were in favour of it and it was not party political. The Attorney-General said to me that, just as the House had decided on a free vote against capital punishment and the Home Secretary had said that he would not be using his prerogative to recommend that anyone should be hanged, on the same basis I should tell the House that, when he looked at the public interest, there should be no prosecutions for anything other than serious breaches of security. Therefore, it is not surprising that I think exactly the same way now.

There is no Law Officer present today, and I understand why. However, Sam Silkin's letter to *The Times* last year was called in aid by the Prime Minister. Sam Silkin said that the Prime Minister asserted that

"'the Law Officers did not seek the view of, or consult with, any other Minister, nor was the view of any other Minister conveyed to them, before they took their decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting'. As a statement of fact I do not question this assertion. Had it been incorrect the Law Officers would certainly have corrected it."

It is unfortunate that the impression has been given during the past 10 days that the Law Officers should not consult Ministers. According to Sam Silkin, this has been the convention for 50 years.

Sam Silkin came to me about two cases. I can remember the details of one because I have been writing about it quite recently. A Ministry of Defence official in Northern Ireland gave some documents to a civil servant. We did not know where they came from. As my mother used to say, "Sins catch you out", and the police found out. That man was not prosecuted. Sam Silkin came to me and asked me what I thought in the public interest. I replied,

"Leave it alone, Sam"—not "play it again, Sam." "It is not worth prosecuting." The outcome would have been exactly the same as the Ponting prosecution.

Then we had the ABC case. I was Home Secretary. I knew nothing about it. The idea that the police tell the Home Secretary about a case is not true. It was not my job as Home Secretary to know what it was about. Sam Silkin came to me in that same diffident way saying that he was considering the case. I asked whether it involved section 2 or section 1. He said that section 1 was involved. I replied that I did not want to know about section 1. I said that if it were section 2 and serious, on the basis of what had been said from the House the case should proceed. It did, and the men got off.

I do not understand what happened last week. It is quite proper for the Law Officers to say that they did not consult. The question is: why did not they consult? No one's views were sought. There was no consultation. Apparently no Private Office minutes went to No. 10 Downing street. Anyone who has been in government knows that a Minister does not breathe in his Department without news of it getting to No. 10. But apparently nothing was done in this case. Ewen Broadbent went to the Director of Public Prosecutions but did not say a word about the views of the Secretary of State. That is fair enough, but it is the first time that that has been done for a very long time.

As *The Times* said last week, what makes the Act work is that, unless great care is taken, everyone will be in court. It is only the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General saying, "Don't be daft. Leave it alone as a matter of political judgment," as *The Times* described it—more correctly, "in the public interest"—that prevents a great many more prosecutions.

So what happened? Apparently the Solicitor-General sat in a room, pulled all the curtains, locked the door and considered the public interest. He would not talk to anyone. He decided to consider the public interest. But did he rely on political osmosis, or did he rely on extra-sensory political perception? In any event he got it wrong.

When I listened to what was said last week, it was a case not of the dog having barked in the night but of the dog not having barked in the night. The Government got it wrong. There should not have been a prosecution. The Government made a mistake. The Prime Minister and the whole bang shoot should have made their view known to the Attorney-General or to the Solicitor-General. The Solicitor-General should not have taken the decision by himself.

I want to ask one question. I have checked with Mr. Speaker that I can raise it. Lord Lewin is being investigated under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. Right hon. and hon. Members on the Conservative Benches shouted today that male Mata Hari had been done and that Ponting should be crucified on the hill of Golgotha. Nobody would dream that the man had got off. I imagine that it was rather like what happened during the French Revolution. Those who shouted at that time had their heads cut off eventually. I have been looking at the Conservative Benches to see who is going to be done. Is it not the joke of the century that Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Lewin, is to be looked at because he has spoken to journalists and broken the Official Secrets Act? Even if one blows in the wind, one breaks section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. So Lord Lewin is going to be done. But the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General will not consider the public interest. They will sit down close together and the answer will be that they will not prosecute.

There is a section of the Official Secrets Act that has not been mentioned by any hon. Member. Do hon. Members know that one can self-authorise oneself if one is a Cabinet Minister? Therefore, the Official Secrets Act is not being broken throughout all the chat on a Thursday afternoon, for when one gets up the line one is self-authorising. I say to the House that Admiral Lewin is also self-authorising. I shall not say what Admiral Lewin would say, because it would be unparliamentary. He is not going to be done, but the Government say that they are looking at it. How crazy can the Government be when they say that one of their trusted advisers, a man whom I greatly respect, is going to be looked at to find out whether he has broken the Official Secrets Act?

The whole Ponting affair was a grave mistake. It was wrong to prosecute. It was badly handled. The Government's attitude to secrecy has been completely revealed. This is no way to stop leaks. I do not enjoy leaks by civil servants. A day or so ago civil servants apparently leaked what had happened in a Cabinet sub-committee. They leaked that, as a result of what a general had said about chemical warfare, the Government had decided to reconsider it. It is indefensible that civil servants should have leaked that information, but I do not want those involved to appear at the Old Bailey on criminal charges. When the Government find out that something like this has happened, they ought to get shot of such persons. They ought to be moved.

I did not have the chance to argue this case in court. They did not ask me about it. There I was, all prepared, and nobody gave me the chance.

Mr. Baldry *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Rees: I have a question to put to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. What a rotten title! I used to be Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Army, and then for the Royal Air Force, which was bad enough. Minister of State for the Armed Forces sounds like Chile or Czechoslovakia. It would be better if we returned to the system whereby somebody was responsible for individual services, for which one had an emotional responsibility. I know that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will be more partial towards the Royal Air Force than towards any of the other services. I understand that, but it is a different matter.

It was announced over the weekend that the Ministry of Defence police are investigating whether Mr. Ponting committed perjury. That has nothing whatever to do with the Ministry of Defence police who are accountable to the Minister. The Metropolitan police are not accountable to the Home Secretary for operational matters. They are completely independent. Who told the Ministry of Defence police to investigate whether Mr. Ponting had perjured himself? It has nothing whatever to do with the Minister or with anybody else. Who told the information department at the Ministry of Defence to assume the sort of role played by Eastern European police forces? The great glory of our police system is that on operational matters they are independent. In Northern Ireland it was not always like that. We had to pull it back from political control.

[Mr. Heseltine]

Minister pursuing issues raised in her letter to the right hon. Member for Llanelli. The hon. Member for Linlithgow wrote a four-page letter which covered the Belgrano's course, our intelligence capability, the motivation behind the decisions and issues concerning the rules of engagement. When referring to the Prime Minister's letter the hon. Gentleman said:

"You stressed that on 2nd May we had indications about the movements of the Argentine fleet which lead to Admiral Woodward's request for a change in the Rules of Engagement. What precisely were those indications? . . . My information is that the Argentine fleet was by that time under orders to return to base and you knew that. Gavshon and Rice in their book set precise times (2007 hours on 1st May and 0119 hours on 2nd May) when those orders were sent by Admiral Allara, and by the Naval Command in Buenos Aires. The text of one of those messages is included in their book."

The hon. Member for Linlithgow, within one day of the Government's response to the shadow Cabinet, was attempting to draw us precisely into those areas of security which we had anticipated he would and on which we knew we would not be able to comment. We could not have had a speedier or clearer vindication of our judgment that the hon. Gentleman would not rest until our security and intelligence protection was stripped away.

In line with the approach that I had previously discussed with the Prime Minister, it was suggested that my right hon. Friend should reply very briefly to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, making it clear that his purpose in asking these questions was to establish his contention that the attack on the Belgrano was related to Peruvian peace proposals—all of the allegations appeared yet again in his letter. In those circumstances, it was not useful to prolong the exchanges. That was what Ministers decided. The Prime Minister replied along those lines on 12 April, but before she did so, Mr. Ponting, as one of the responsible officials, was invited to comment on the approach that she was considering. On 10 April he said that he would not dissent from the suggestion that the Prime Minister should avoid detailed exchanges with the hon. Member for Linlithgow and that a general reply would be sufficient.

The House will realise that, because the hon. Member for Linlithgow had written on 5 April to the Prime Minister and attention was focused on her reply, I had at this stage yet to reply to the nine questions in the hon. Gentleman's earlier letter of 19 March, which had been at the heart of the "Crown Jewels" exercise, during which Mr. Ponting had already submitted to me one draft reply, which I have read to the House.

On the same day that the Prime Minister sent her general reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow — 1 April — Mr. Ponting submitted further advice on the questions put to me on 19 March.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne) *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: The advice that Mr. Ponting gave me was diametrically opposed to that in his earlier draft. Although he told me on 29 March that it was not possible to answer the questions of the hon. Member for Linlithgow because they touched on operational and intelligence matters, on 12 April he told me that the answers were not classified and should therefore be given.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, having read Mr. Ponting's advice, minuted me to point out that it was inconsistent with the line that the Prime Minister had just taken with the agreement of all involved, including Mr. Ponting, in her reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Sheldon *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I shall give way, but not in the middle of a sequence of events which it is important for the House to hear in one piece.

My right hon. Friend the Minister could not have behaved more properly or more speedily. But it would not have made any difference if he had not sent me a minute, because I was already fully aware of the background to these issues and that for no apparent reason Mr. Ponting had changed his advice and now sought to reverse my earlier decision.

Mr. Sheldon: The right hon. Gentleman is making a great deal of the fact that Mr. Ponting was giving advice of a kind that fitted in exactly with what the right hon. Gentleman wished. Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that civil servants do that all the time? When I was on the Fulton committee, I saw that happening all the time. Parliamentary secretaries always provide the sort of information that they know will be required by a Minister. That happens all the time and is not a cause for surprise.

Mr. Heseltine: That is one of the most scurrilous attacks on the Civil Service that I have ever heard. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call the Secretary of State.

Mr. Heseltine: The House has heard me read my private secretary's instructions to Mr. Ponting to provide me with the truth. There was no possible, conceivable pressure on Mr. Ponting to do anything but to tell me the whole story at the time.

As I said, Mr. Ponting, for no apparent reason, had changed his advice and sought to reverse my earlier decision based on that advice. I therefore replied in general terms to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 18 April in line with the decision which the Prime Minister and I had taken on the basis of the advice of our most senior advisers on matters affecting national security, and in conformity with Mr. Ponting's earlier advice and agreement. Mr. Ponting made no protest about my answer, either to me or to his superiors through the established channels of complaint open to members of Her Majesty's Civil Service.

Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Minister ever had a coherent explanation for Mr. Ponting's change of advice, until yesterday. In *The Sunday Times* Mr. Ponting gave his explanation. He stated:

"When the 'Crown Jewels' were actually written, I had four days to do it in. It was very complex and I did not have time for analysis. It was only later that I realised that much of the information was not classified and could be released."

For the House to judge the credibility of this explanation, I shall set out the actual time scale of Mr. Ponting's involvement. Mr. Ponting had been looking into some of these issues since the letter of the right hon. Member for Llanelli was referred to his division at the beginning of March. Certainly he had been the head of the division only since 9 March, but he was an experienced official and could draw on the advice of other experienced officials. He had far more time to analyse these matters than the Ministers who had to account to Parliament and to draw on his advice and the advice of the other experts

concerned. In any case, on 10 April, after about five weeks in the job, he was advising that the Prime Minister should send a general reply, and two days later he proposed that I should do the exact opposite.

We should now move on to the heart of the Opposition's amendment—that my memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee provided a misleading account of changes in the rules of engagement during the Falklands campaign. We should move on, not only because it is specifically referred to in the Opposition's amendment, but because until very recently it was said to have been Mr. Ponting's shock at Ministers' handling of that evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee that forced him to overturn all the instincts, after 14 years in the Civil Service, that told him that loyalty was to Ministers and to the Department. Those words came from *The Observer* yesterday. We should move on if we accept Mr. Ponting's version of events—that is, his version of events until a week ago.

Far from acting in protest against the Foreign Affairs Select Committee memorandum, we were still 11 weeks away from the submission of that memorandum. Far from being driven to near breaking point by ministerial consideration of the handling of parliamentary questions in mid-May, Mr. Ponting began the process of breaking his loyalty to Ministers and to the ethics of Her Majesty's Civil Service on 24 April, when he sent an anonymous letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow. As I have told the House, I had replied to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 18 April in line with the policy advice that Mr. Ponting himself had originated, and which the Prime Minister and I had accepted. For no good reason, Mr. Ponting later tried to persuade me to change that position. He failed. Within days of receiving a copy of my letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, he began the process of feeding ideas and questions to the hon. Member for Linlithgow anonymously.

Mr. Dalyell: The ideas on the rules of engagement came from me, as will be witnessed by the discussions that I had with Professor John Erickson of the University of Edinburgh. As we are on this subject, let me quote a letter from the hon. Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw), Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"]—1 June 1984. It stated:

"Dear Tam, Thank you for your letter of 19 May, to which I am sorry not to have been able to reply sooner. I will certainly keep confidential the letter you were kind enough to send me. I would doubt whether it really alters the situation. That situation will be reflected in the answers to your questions and I regard the letter as more in the nature of an encouragement than a breach of any confidence."

That was the view of a senior member of the Conservative party.

Mr. Heseltine: In no way would I wish to misrepresent the hon. Gentleman. I think I heard him say that the letter he wrote was dated 19 May, but the anonymous letter that he received was on 24 April. I think the hon. Gentleman said that the ideas about the rules of engagement were his. I hope the House will remember that the hon. Gentleman has claimed those ideas for his own, when later I explain certain factual contributions. I shall take the opportunity to remind the House of that precise intervention later in my speech.

Mr. Dalyell: The right hon. Gentleman should get his officials to phone Erickson.

Mr. Heseltine: As I said, within days of receiving a copy of my letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, Mr. Ponting began the process of feeding ideas and questions to the hon. Gentleman anonymously.

On 19 August 1984 the hon. Member for Linlithgow was quoted in *The Observer* as having received three documents, the first of which was dated 24 April and sent to him at the House of Commons in a plain envelope similar to that containing the other papers which he subsequently received in mid-July. When this article appeared in August, there was little that those concerned with security in my Department could be expected to do. No one knew at the time where that anonymous letter had originated.

On the night of Mr. Ponting's acquittal—a week ago today, on Monday 11 February—"News at Ten" carried an interview with Mr. Ponting which was, I believe, a shortened version of one shown earlier that evening on Channel 4. The film showed Mr. Ponting typing a letter. It showed the envelope in which it was sent, addressed to the hon. Member for Linlithgow and postmarked 24 April. I shall place in the Library of the House a copy of the contents of that letter transcribed from the copy shown on the television screen.

I shall now read the contents of that letter—*[Interruption.]* I should alert the House to the fact that the envelope on the screen was clearly dated 24 April. Again, I do not want to misrepresent the hon. Member for Linlithgow. He says that the letter was undated, but the envelope was dated by the post officials, and I think I am right in saying that the hon. Gentleman later admitted that he had the letter on 24 April. I do not think that there is any difference between us on the technical question of when he got the letter, although there may be differences between us about what happened as a consequence.

In reading this letter I must now fulfil my undertaking to remind the House of what the hon. Member for Linlithgow said a few minutes ago—that the ideas about the rules of engagement originated with him. The letter stated:

"Dear Mr. Dalyell, For what I hope will be obvious reasons I cannot give you my name but I can tell that I have full access to exactly what happened to the Belgrano. You have probably seen by now that Michael Heseltine has not covered any of the questions that you posed in your letter in March. This was against the advice of officials but in line with what John Stanley recommended. None of the information is classified and to get answers you should put the questions down as PQs. The answers will be quite interesting. In addition you might like to consider another linked question. Did the change in the Rules of Engagement on 2nd May refer only to the Belgrano or did they go wider? When were the Rules of Engagement changed to allow an attack on the 25 de Mayo? Was this on 2nd May or was it earlier. If so, when?

You are on the right track. Keep going."

It will be seen that this letter was sent on 24 April. If Mr. Ponting is the author, as he claims he is, it is not consistent with his argument that he was driven to leak by my behaviour or by the behaviour of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in May or July. In the news programmes in which it was shown, the impression was created that he was forced to write anonymously because of the exchanges that he had had with the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in May about the handling of parliamentary questions. I shall come to that issue in a moment. The only problem with this version of events is that not even my right hon. Friend can take actions in May which provoke a civil servant to

[Mr. Heseltine]

write anonymously in April. I know that my right hon. Friend is regarded in some quarters as having the most extraordinary powers. He was even accused two weeks ago by the hon. Member for Linlithgow of managing to doctor Admiral Fieldhouse's official dispatch in 1982, while at the time he was serving the Government as a highly successful Minister for Housing and Construction.

Mr. Dalyell: Remember his Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies' connections.

Mr. Heseltine: We have the highest regard for my right hon. Friend, but even we do not think that he has powers of this supernatural quality.

What was the true sequence of events? As I have said, Mr. Ponting appears to have written anonymously to the hon. Member for Linlithgow very soon after he had seen the terms in which I had written to the hon. Member. There was not much time devoted to agonising. As we know, since the full text of the letter became available a week ago, he suggested that the hon. Member for Linlithgow should do two things: first, that he should put down for answer in Parliament the unanswered questions from his letter of 19 March; secondly, that he should ask some new questions about changes in the rules of engagement.

As we now know, the hon. Member for Linlithgow acted on the first suggestion separately from the second. He put down as questions to me some of those left over from his earlier letter. He also asked a related question to the Prime Minister about how many times contact was made and lost between Conqueror and the Belgrano on 1 and 2 May, what were the reasons for the loss of contact on each occasion, and if she would make a statement. At the same time, on 1 May, he wrote me a further letter asking me to answer his questions.

The answers to the parliamentary questions were addressed first and came in the normal way to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. All but one of the questions in the event fell by the wayside because the hon. Member for Linlithgow was suspended from the House. The one that remained was to the Prime Minister. Not surprisingly, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was in touch with No. 10 Downing street about it.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces asked for Mr. Ponting's views on 9 May on the suggestion that the Prime Minister should reply in part:

"It is not our practice to comment on military operational matters or the details of military operations."

Those who regard that phrase as sinister might reflect that Mr. Ponting himself had recommended some six weeks previously that the hon. Member for Linlithgow's questions should not be answered because:

"all concerned detailed operational and intelligence matters on which I am not prepared to comment."

The hon. Member's question, if answered in full, would have gone to the heart of our submarine capability. An answer, if given, would add nothing to the essential story about why and how the Belgrano was sunk. Mr. Ponting put up advice on 9 May saying that the formula suggested by my right hon. Friend could not be sustained and recommended again that I should answer the hon. Member for Linlithgow's questions.

There was no reason to change the approach agreed earlier. It misled no one—certainly the hon. Member for Linlithgow was under no illusions about what it meant. It was not necessary to deploy the sentence to which Mr. Ponting objected. It is ridiculous to suggest that there was no operational sensitivity about disclosing details of Conqueror's sonar stalk of the Belgrano. Therefore, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister answered the question on 17 May, she followed the strategic approach which I had agreed with her, but the sentence to which Mr. Ponting objected was not in the answer. In other words, the real lesson of these events is that I and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces went to some lengths to consult Mr. Ponting and to try to take account of his views. He, meanwhile, was conducting an argument with us, having already started writing anonymously to the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Before we leave the anonymous letter of 24 April, it is worth recalling the second of Mr. Ponting's suggestions. This is the point at which the hon. Member for Linlithgow was telling us that he had originated the process of interrogation. Mr. Ponting offered the hon. Member for Linlithgow some new questions on rules of engagement. When the hon. Gentleman wrote to me again on 27 May, there, as large as life, were Mr. Ponting's anonymous questions repeated word for word. So much for the suggestion that it was the hon. Gentleman who conceived that these were questions that should be asked.

The constitutional novelty that the House is expected to support, if the Opposition have their way, is that the most trusted civil servants, in the most secure parts of our defence establishments, should be free anonymously to draft questions for Opposition Back Benchers to submit to Ministers on which the self-same leaking civil servants may then brief the Ministers on the answers which they consider appropriate. The Opposition may perhaps be beginning to wonder whether they have been any better served by Mr. Ponting than I was. I now come, finally, to the issue of the memorandum that I submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee on rules of engagement.

I say "I submitted" deliberately, because that memorandum has come to be called the "Stanley Memorandum". The memorandum was presented to Ministers by Michael Legge, head of defence secretariat 11, and his minute is known as the "Legge Minute."

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the right hon. Gentleman sure about him?

Mr. Heseltine: If it helps the hon. Gentleman in his characteristic attempts to denigrate everything that is said in the House, I must tell him that Michael Legge is an exemplary and talented civil servant.

I made it clear to the Foreign Affairs Committee, when I gave evidence to it, that it was a memorandum which I approved and which is therefore my responsibility. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces certainly advised me—that is what he is there to do—but I decided to send in the memorandum, and I am wholly responsible for what happened.

So what did happen? The Foreign Affairs Committee was not investigating the sinking of the Belgrano. The terms of reference of its inquiry are clear. They were:

"To examine progress towards the restoration of diplomatic and commercial relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina since June 1982; to examine the future constitutional and economic development of the Falkland Islands; and to

examine the prospects for a negotiated settlement of the UK/ Argentine dispute over the Falkland Islands in the light of the establishment of a democratic regime in Buenos Aires and in the light of previous failures to secure such a settlement."

In his letter of 28 June the Clerk of the Foreign Affairs Committee——

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Surely the right hon. Gentleman is aware that the Select Committee decided to conduct two inquiries, one with the terms of reference that he has just quoted, and the other on the events arising out of the happenings on 1 and 2 May. There were two separate inquiries.

Mr. Heseltine: If what the hon. Gentleman says is the case, I unreservedly accept that point. *[Interruption.]* However, that does not change the significance of the letter that we received in the Department from the Clerk of the Foreign Affairs Committee. This letter set the terms upon which the original advice and memorandum were placed. It asked for:

"A note of all changes in the Rules of Engagement issued to HM Forces in the South Atlantic between 2nd April and 15th June 1982 and confirming the accuracy of Mr. Pym's statement to the Committee on 11th June that changes in the Rules of Engagement: 'happened quite a number of times in the course of the war.'"

This request presented my Department with a difficulty. A comprehensive list of all the changes in the rules of engagement would have been classified, but we were advised that the Committee would prefer the note to be unclassified. Ministers therefore received a draft addressing the issue which had provoked the original inquiry, but in a document which was not in itself classified.

The memorandum was not misleading. It never purported to be a comprehensive list of all the changes in the rules of engagement, and it could never have been read as such. If the Foreign Affairs Committee wished, in the light of our advice, still to receive a comprehensive list, it had a simple remedy open to it, and that was to ask again for such a list. I would have supplied it on a classified basis and, indeed, subsequently I did.

The House will realise that I discussed the matter with the Foreign Affairs Committee when I appeared before it. It would be quite wrong of me to anticipate its views, but I must provide for the House my views on the significance of the so-called Legge minute advising me how to respond to the Select Committee's request.

Paragraph 1 of that minute sets out the basis of the request from the Committee which I have read to the House. Paragraph 2 gives five reasons why I should not comply with the Committee's request in full. The first reason transcends all the others, and I shall read it to the House:

"Firstly, the rules of engagement themselves are classified and are drawn from the Fleet operating and tactical instructions, which is a classified document. The Committee has indicated that they would prefer the note to be unclassified."

The second reason leaves no responsible Secretary of State any discretion, and I shall read it to the House:

"Secondly, some of the rules of engagement are still in force for our Falklands garrison. We run the risk of undermining their effectiveness if they were published and debated openly by the Foreign Affairs Committee."

The third and fourth reasons are about the time involved and the problems of converting the rules to layman's language. They are not compelling.

The fifth reason is presumably that which motivates the Opposition today. It reads:

"In addition, a full list of changes would provide more information than Ministers have been prepared to reveal so far about the Belgrano affair."

Taken out of context by someone unaware of the circumstances, that sounds damaging. But in the context of the first two reasons it is clearly not the reason why I did not give the Foreign Affairs Committee a full list of rules of engagement changes. My duty, first and foremost, is to national security. The House will realise that in this case Ministers followed the official and expert military advice of the Department, and I have never doubted that it was right.

The House will know that as soon as the memorandum had been sent to the Select Committee, Mr. Ponting leaked it to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, who took to the Foreign Affairs Committee the document containing the advice of his, Mr. Ponting's, colleague, Michael Legge. Mr. Ponting's explanation is that this was the straw that broke the camel's back; that his sense of integrity no longer permitted him to hold back from sending papers that he leaked to a wider world. Of course, he had been writing anonymous letters before that, but that is the explanation about which we have been told.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: There is one small gap in the logic of Mr. Ponting's position. Perhaps it would have a momentary credibility if Mr. Ponting's first exposure of his colleague Michael Legge's work was when it was presented, beyond Mr. Ponting's influence, to the Foreign Affairs Committee. The facts are diametrically opposed to this version of events.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: Michael Legge's name appears at the bottom of the Legge memorandum. Michael Legge was the head of defence secretariat 11 at the time. But the memorandum was not the sole product of Michael Legge's division. It was the joint work of two civilian divisions, together with military advice. Michael Legge was one of those divisions.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Michael's leg was pulled.

Mr. Heseltine: It was, by Mr. Ponting. But the truth is that the leg that has been pulled further and faster in this debate is the leg of the Opposition, and it is not surprising that they have not even one leg left on which to stand.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is not giving way.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) can see for himself that the Secretary of State is not giving way.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may be that you can see that the Secretary of State is not giving way to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, (Mr. Dalyell). But, through you, may I ask whether the Secretary of State has seen me seeking to intervene?

Mr. Speaker: I think that the Secretary of State saw the hon. Gentleman rise, but he can say that for himself.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Heseltine: No. I hope the House will feel that I have given way to hon. Members at points which have not interrupted the flow of what is a complicated explanation. It is very important that the House hears this critical analysis, because this is at the heart of the Opposition's amendment.

As I was saying, this memorandum was the joint work of two civilian divisions, together with military advice. Michael Legge's was one of those divisions. The other division was Mr. Ponting's. Michael Legge submitted his first advice to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 6 July. On the same day, he sent me a copy. He also sent a copy to Mr. Ponting, whose junior officials had co-operated in its production.

Ministers made no change to the basic approach in that draft memorandum. It was ready to be issued to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 16 July. Mr. Ponting, upon whom I was entitled to rely for advice, spent 10 days in absolute silence. He made no protest to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. He made no protest to me. He made no protest to any of his senior colleagues, only some of whom had been involved in earlier discussions. If he had had this sense of outrage about what his own colleagues were advising, why did he not challenge their advice? Why did he not try to stop the memorandum from going to the Foreign Affairs Committee in the first place?

I was entitled to expect that a man in such a position of trust would give me his full and dispassionate advice, but he did not. Parliament is expected to believe that, before Ministers make statements to the House or its Committees, civil servants in senior positions will advise on the text of such submissions. Mr. Ponting did not.

So we have another constitutional novelty. A senior and trusted civil servant upon whom Ministers were entitled to rely for loyal and conscientious service claims it proper to sit in silence believing that Ministers are deceiving Parliament so that at the moment that it happens he may leak anonymously the advice of his own Civil Service colleagues which he has done nothing to counter.

The Government, the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and I, and those official advisers with whom we have worked in a spirit of trust and mutual loyalty, have fully discharged their duties and have misled no one. The House will judge whether Mr. Ponting can say the same.

What lay, and still lies today, at the heart of these issues is the safety of British service men serving in the South Atlantic. Ministers were faced over the weekend of 1-2 May 1982 with clear evidence that the Argentine navy was planning to attack the task force. A major part of that threat was the General Belgrano. The task force commander decided that he must respond by attacking the Belgrano and so remove that source of danger to his ships. Exactly when the Belgrano was first sighted and exactly where she was when sunk were not relevant to the starkly dangerous and uncertain situation that our forces were in.

Ministers would have behaved with the utmost irresponsibility if they had rejected the advice of the Government's military advisers and not given the task force commander the authority that he had sought. They gave me that authority. HMS Conqueror sank the Belgrano. The Argentine navy was effectively knocked out of the conflict. The Government have already published a great deal of information about these events of nearly three years ago. I should like to be able to give the House every single detail, but I cannot today, just as my predecessor could not at the time. Some of the crucial information came to us from the most sensitive sources. Those sources are as vital to us and to our armed forces now as they were in 1982.

I, as the Secretary of State for Defence, have to balance my responsibility to give information to this House with my duty to safeguard national security, and in particular the security of our forces. That is a difficult line to draw. But I and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have always made it clear that that was what we were doing. Ours have not been the actions of people engaged in a hole-in-the-corner cover-up, in an attempt to mislead this House. Ours have been the actions of Ministers exercising the highest and most difficult responsibilities of our office.

4.50 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"believes that, by seeking to conceal information from, and to purvey distorted and misleading information to, the House of Commons and its Foreign Affairs Committee on the subject of the sinking of the General Belgrano, Ministers have betrayed their responsibility to Parliament.".

As was to be expected, the Secretary of State tried to carry out a character assassination of Mr. Ponting. Indeed, it was entirely to be expected because that, at the end of the day, is the only case which the Secretary of State can try to put at that Dispatch Box. He gave an account of a very unreal world in the Ministry of Defence. This terrible man Ponting, who had been given the Order of the British Empire on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, was trying to prevent information from being disclosed to Parliament when over a period of three years these innocent Ministers—the Secretary of State, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and the Prime Minister—were desperately keen to let Parliament have all the information that they could about the Belgrano. That is the unreal world in which the Secretary of State seems to have been living, because the world at the Old Bailey a few weeks ago was quite different.

The Opposition do not condone breaches of trust by civil servants or by Ministers who have a duty to account to this House, but at the Old Bailey a civil servant, who had spent 14 years in the Civil Service, risked prosecution and a gaol sentence of at least six months. That was the kind of sentence that Sarah Tisdall received when she was prosecuted by the right hon. Gentleman's Government. This civil servant apparently did not want to disclose any information. He carried out the wishes of Ministers. Then, by some kind of magic catalyst, he ended up at the Old Bailey where his whole career and future were put in jeopardy. That is the kind of unreal and selective account which the Secretary of State has tried to put before the House this afternoon.

The Secretary of State referred to the trial. He could have challenged some of the evidence given by Mr. Ponting at his trial at the Old Bailey—[HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] How? By calling witnesses to refute that evidence. Is the Secretary of State saying that counsel for the Crown and the Treasury Solicitor did not know what

evidence was being given when they sat in court day after day? The right hon. Gentleman could have refuted that evidence.

Mr. Heseltine *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall give way to the Secretary of State in a moment.

That evidence could have been refuted where it should have been refuted. The first place to refute it was before an Old Bailey jury on oath. The right hon. Gentleman did not have the guts to go to the Old Bailey——

Mr. Heseltine *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall give way when I have completed this part of my argument. The Secretary of State did not have the guts to go to the Old Bailey. Instead he sent his poor, unfortunate private secretary. Those of us who have served in Government know of the difficult and conflicting loyalties faced by a private secretary: that on the one hand he has a loyalty to his Minister and that on the other hand he is a member of the Civil Service. It is a very difficult job. The Secretary of State, in a cowardly way, sent his private secretary to give evidence for him at the Old Bailey.

Mr. Heseltine: I realise that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) does not understand how — *[Interruption.]* I have no idea what papers were put before the court. I have not seen the transcript of the trial proceedings. I was not asked to go to the court. The conduct of these matters is wholly outside the influence or control of Ministers.

Mr. Davies: Nobody is asking Ministers to influence or control anything. My point is that if the Secretary of State objected to the evidence given by Mr. Ponting—and now he has objected to it—why was Mr. Ponting's evidence not objected to at the time it was given? Obviously the Secretary of State has not read the newspapers during the past few weeks. He did not know what was going on at the Old Bailey and it did not interest him, although his Department was heavily involved. Although his private secretary was at the Old Bailey, the Secretary of State knew nothing about it. I remind him of what was said at the Old Bailey by Queen's Counsel for Mr. Ponting at an early stage in the trial.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury) *rose*——

Mr. Davies: Mr. Ponting was acquitted by the Old Bailey jury. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State was heard in silence. If the shadow Minister does not give way, hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Davies: Mr. Ponting was acquitted. I should have thought that the party of law and order would have some respect for courts of law and British juries.

Perhaps I may remind the Secretary of State and the Minister of State, who apparently did not read the newspapers, either, although he featured in them almost every day, of what Mr. Laughland, counsel for Mr. Ponting, said right at the beginning of the trial:

"Let me make our position perfectly plain. This trial is not about spying. It is a matter of lying, of misleading Parliament."

That is what the trial at the Old Bailey was about. This debate is about the consequences of that trial and about the not guilty verdict; it is about the extraordinary revelations, which the Secretary of State has not refuted, about the conduct of Ministers that came out at that trial; it is about a conspiracy to withhold information from this House for a period of almost three years; and it is about the breach by Ministers of the sacred trust of accountability which we believe they owe to this House. Let us be quite clear. The trial at the Old Bailey was not in reality the case of Regina against Ponting; it was the case of Thatcher, Heseltine and Stanley against Ponting. Much to the chagrin of the Secretary of State, the jury held for Ponting.

The Secretary of State went over the history of the matter and I shall try to do so, I hope, at shorter length, although I am not criticising him for the length of his speech. The whole tangled web, as the House knows, which the Government have sought to weave, as we believe, over almost three years in this matter follows from a statement that many of us in the House heard on that fateful day, 4 May 1982. Sir John Nott, the then Secretary of State for Defence, told the House that the battleship, the General Belgrano, had been first sighted on 2 May and was sunk the day it was sighted.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe) *rose*——

Mr. Davies: No, I shall not give way at this stage. I should have thought that that is a fairly uncontroversial statement.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: The General Belgrano was a cruiser, not a battleship.

Mr. Davies: I am sorry.

The statement which Sir John Nott made was untrue. But we have always accepted, and we say it again now, that that statement—that untruth—was a genuine error which was made without any bad faith, in the heat of armed conflict and armed battle.

I believe that there are few hon. Members—at least, I hope so—if any hon. Members who would argue that the high standards of accountability which the House demands of Ministers should be lower in time of war than in time of peace. But most hon. Members would also recognise that in time of war it may well be much more difficult to maintain those high standards. However, the duty on a democratic Government is to put the record straight immediately it is possible for them to do so, and, by putting the record straight, discharging that duty which a Government owe to the House of Commons.

It would be dangerous for our democracy if Governments felt that they did not have to put the record straight and it would be very dangerous if we in the House were to condone that behaviour, because then we would be saying that the standard of accountability is lower in times of war than in times of peace.

The first charge that we make against the Government is that the Government, and the Prime Minister in particular, fell down on that duty of accountability and failed to set the record straight as soon as it was possible to do so. There were plenty of opportunities to do so. There were plenty of opportunities for the Government to set the record straight about the incorrect date of 2 May which, as I have said, was not given in bad faith.

First of all—perhaps not first of all, but certainly there was the White Paper published in December 1982 which repeated the same false statement about the date of 2 May, although Ministers, certainly at the Ministry of

[Mr. Davies]

Defence if not other Ministers, knew at the time that that date was wrong and knew when the Belgrano was detected. Again, the same false statement was put into the *London Gazette*. We have read the accounts about Admiral Fieldhouse. Whether he wanted the date changed, I do not know, and I do not propose to go down that particular road.

Another 15 months went by during a period, as the Secretary of State has said, of controversy, of questions in the House, of statements by people outside the House, of letters to newspapers, articles and books written, and nothing at all was said or done about the matter. Finally, on 4 April 1984 the truth was dragged out of a reluctant Prime Minister—15 months after the White Paper which could have contained the statement.

As the Secretary of State has said, the truth came in a letter from the Prime Minister in response to a letter which I sent to her on behalf of the Shadow Cabinet. That letter said that an auxiliary oiler accompanying the Belgrano was spotted on 30 April 1982; the Belgrano group was detected on 1 May and the Belgrano was sunk on 2 May.

Mr. Hickmet: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I want to ask him a serious question which is central to the motion and the amendment thereto. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there was no alternative but for the Conqueror to sink the Belgrano? Does he further accept that that ship was not sunk in an effort to scupper the so-called Peruvian peace proposals?

Mr. Davies: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was in the House when the statement was made on 4 May but I shall answer his question. I made a statement on the BBC "Today" programme in my capacity as deputy defence spokesman for the Labour party the morning the Belgrano was sunk. When asked about the sinking, I said that if the General Belgrano was a threat to the Royal Navy and to our task force, appropriate action should be taken. But I said at the time that I did not know—I did not have the facts to know — whether it was a threat or not. Unfortunately, with all the prevarications and cover-ups that have been going on, we still do not have the facts. But when we get all the facts I shall make up my mind whether it was a threat. *[Interruption.]* I see that the Prime Minister finds this amusing. But let me return to the letter. She did not find the letter very amusing, as I shall try to show in a moment. During the whole two years, not only did the Government deliberately fail to give us those three dates instead of 2 May, but the Prime Minister had the effrontery to stand at that Dispatch Box on 21 February 1984 and try to pretend to the House that we had all the facts about that available to us in the House.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall read the exchanges which took place on 21 February at Prime Minister's Question Time between my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and the Prime Minister on that very matter. My hon. Friend said:

"As the captain of the Conquerer has said in print that he was following the General Belgrano for at least 30 hours and the Government persist in claiming that the General Belgrano was detected on the same day as it was sunk,"—

that is the very point—

"who is telling the truth or, bluntly, is it the submarine commander or the Prime Minister who is lying?"

Mr. Speaker said:

"Order. The hon. Member must not use that word. I am sure that he will rephrase that final comment."

My hon. Friend is adept at rephrasing his questions, so he asked:

"Is it the submarine commander or the Prime Minister who is telling the truth?"

The Prime Minister said:

"The full facts were given in several replies in the House and, I believe, in an Adjournment debate, in an article by my right hon. Friend the former Foreign Secretary and one by the former ambassador to the United States. All the facts are there. They support the Government's case." — [*Official Report*, 21 February 1984; Vol. 54, c. 695.]

I wrote to the Prime Minister on 6 March and she replied for the first time and gave the dates on 4 April. All the facts were not there. *[Interruption.]* Or perhaps all the facts were there, but they certainly were not here, in the House. Perhaps now at least—I put it very kindly—the Prime Minister will have the good grace to come to the Dispatch Box and say that on that occasion her statement was wrong—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Davies: The right hon. Lady at least owes the House an apology for that. I was about to say what happened after that single revelation of the truth. However, according to the Secretary of State it was Mr. Ponting who was stopping Ministers from divulging any information. That terrible man Ponting again — the Secretary of State straining at the leash and Ponting holding him back. But the reality — not the unreal account that the Secretary of State gave us this afternoon —is that pretty soon afterwards Ministers decided that they would not really answer any more embarrassing questions about the Belgrano. Whatever the motive, that is what ultimately led to the sending of the Legge memorandum by Mr. Ponting to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), and to the prosecution and acquittal of Mr. Ponting at the Old Bailey.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall not give way, as I wish to develop the point. It is worth recalling——

Viscount Cranborne: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall not give way.

Although the Secretary of State has been very reluctant even to look at the transcript of the trial, it is worth recalling what Mr. Ponting said on oath and under cross-examination on day seven of the trial about Ministers and the Legge report. Moreover, our court procedures are respected in this country. What Mr. Ponting said under oath about the Legge report sums up the whole problem facing the Government. He said:

"I thought it"

—the Legge report—

"was clearly showing that ministers were misleading a Select Committee of the House of Commons, and that they had misled the House of Commons consistently for two years before that."

The Secretary of State did not know that. Apparently he did not know that Mr. Ponting had said it. But there it is —he said it in the Old Bailey.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Davies: There are no prizes for guessing who those Ministers were: the Secretary of State for Defence, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and, indeed,

because of her ultimate responsibility, the Prime Minister. I do not think I need spend too much time on the position of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. The trial evidence speaks out clearly and devastatingly about his position in all this. The Secretary of State did not try very hard to retrieve the Minister's position for him. He did not manage to do that this afternoon.

I shall quote further from the transcript. Incidentally, that trial was instigated, of course, by the Government and the Attorney-General. It was the Government's trial. They brought Mr. Ponting to court. Perhaps it was not the Prime Minister. She knew nothing about it. The Secretary of State did not know anything about it. No one else knew anything about it, but the Attorney-General did, and he decided, on behalf of the Government, to prosecute Mr. Ponting. Therefore, I think that I am entitled to read out Mr. Ponting's evidence, which was given on oath in that trial, as it directly relates to Government Ministers and to how they acted throughout this affair.

On day six, this is what happened:

"Mr. Ponting described how Mr. Harford"—

we have not heard about him, but apparently he was Mr. Ponting's deputy—

"told him that the government was concerned over a letter"—

the famous letter again—

"that had arrived from Mr. Denzil Davies, MP . . . Mr. Laughland"—

the Queen's Counsel defending Mr. Ponting—

"asked Mr. Ponting what Mr. Harford, his subordinate, told him that he was doing about it . . . He told me that he was working on the two drafts as requested by Mr. Stanley . . . What had been—did he tell you—his instructions from the Minister for the Armed Forces?"

I must say that the Secretary of State's account of minutes written by civil servants when he did not tell us what ministerial instructions they had received shows that he lives in an unreal world. I shall repeat that question again.

"What had been—did he tell you—his instructions from the Minister for the Armed Forces?"

The Minister of State will have his opportunity. He did not take it in court, but he will get his opportunity. Indeed, he did not take the opportunity to try to refute these statements. He did not adduce any evidence to try to refute them. The answer to the above question was:

"That he was to prepare two draft replies, one of which would give a truthful account of the events and the correct date of sighting and detection and one of which would not, and Ministers wished to be able to choose which one they would use."

So there were to be two sets of replies, one true and one false, two sets of passports and two sets of accounts. According to evidence given on oath, that is apparently what civil servants are being asked to provide. The statement continues:

"It was unusual; I had never come across such a practice before in my Civil Service career"—

Mr. Ponting had been in the Civil Service for 14 years —

"Did Mr. Harford do as he was bidden? . . . Yes, he produced the two drafts for me, together with a covering letter, minute"—

to which the Secretary of State has, I believe, referred. Indeed, he received it. Later Mr. Ponting added, referring not simply to the letter but to other matters as well:

"Because the line suggested by Mr. Stanley was neither truthful nor correct, and it was an attempt to refuse to answer any future parliamentary inquiries whether from the dreaded Mr. Dalyell or from any other Member of Parliament."

So there was a refusal to answer questions. That was what was said on oath at the Old Bailey, and it was not challenged by any evidence called by the prosecution. That is the position — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are getting excited.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall give way in a moment.

The House can judge between the Secretary of State's version this afternoon which was given after the trial, after the hoped-for conviction had not been obtained and after Mr. Pontin's acquittal, and the evidence that was given on oath at the trial. As far as I am concerned the answers given at the trial show that the Minister of State acted wholly dishonourably in this regard. After that, he cannot command the confidence of the whole House when he makes statements and——

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall give way in a moment, but this is an important part of my speech.

The Minister cannot command the confidence of the whole House when he makes statements, drafts answers and makes speeches. Without any personal malice or gratification on my part—there may be more malice on Conservative Benches—I say to the Minister that he should take the honourable course and resign the high office that he holds.

Dr. Hampson: The right hon. Gentleman is dealing with a central and critical point. Despite the recollections of Mr. Ponting in court, my right hon. Friend said what the instructions to civil servants were, that the documents would be published in this House and that we should then see exactly what was instructed to civil servants. It sounded to me—and I think that it would have sounded to most hon. Members in the Chamber today—that it was perfectly clear that the only reason why two drafts were done—one, in Mr. Ponting's words, more truthful than the other—was that the Minister for the Armed Forces asked for that second draft to be written.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Davies: That is precisely the point we are making.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I urge Opposition Members to let the shadow Minister be heard.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that we are all grateful to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), the Secretary of State's former Parliamentary Private Secretary, for helping us in the matter.

I now come to the part played by the Secretary of State for Defence who, rightly, gave an account of the letter of 6 March, a copy of which no doubt arrived on his desk from the Prime Minister's office, and presumably he was asked to prepare a draft. As he said today, the right hon. Gentleman then asked for an inquiry to be carried out into the whole matter, a perfectly proper thing for him to have done as he had not been Secretary of State at the time when these matters took place. He is reported to have said that he wanted to satisfy himself that there was "no Watergate here" — an interesting choice of phrase — and Mr. Ponting, the trusted civil servant, one of the faith, was put in charge of that general inquiry.

Eventually we got the truth. At the end of the day, after much beating of breasts and heart-searching, the correct date was given. I understand that so many problems were involved that even the hapless Lord Whitelaw was called

[Mr. Davies]

to Chequers on a Sunday to try to advise on these matters. I think that I see the Prime Minister shaking her head in dissent. Maybe that was not true, and she may wish to deny it. If the Prime Minister indicates dissent, I believe her. I had better believe her because I do not have the secretarial facilities to do otherwise. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Davies: After that brief moment of candour, down came an iron curtain and it was decided, not by Mr. Ponting but by Ministers, that all further embarrassing information about the Belgrano, apparently even information which was not classified, was to be withheld from Parliament. No more embarrassing questions were to be answered, not from my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow or from anyone else. To borrow a phrase from Watergate, Ministers decided to "tough it out" and, on the subject of the Belgrano, to suspend all or most democratic and parliamentary accountability.

Who decided that? Was it the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister? Did the Minister of State, through the faithful former Parliamentary Private Secretary, relay all the requests and orders to the Secretary of State? I do not know the answer, but the Prime Minister must have known about them. She could not possibly not have known about the decision.

Thus, the decision was taken to "tough it out" after that one moment of revealing the truth. The Secretary of State did it quite well, although he tried to obfuscate matters and put out a bit of smoke this afternoon. His first act, as we know, was not to answer — he tried to pretend that somehow it was because of a letter that had gone to the Prime Minister — those nine questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow.

We have been told an interesting doctrine about refusing to answer. It goes something like this: "We cannot answer this question because, if we do, this terrible fellow who is asking it and with whose views we do not agree may not be satisfied with our reply. He may make a speech about the matter. He may have the effrontery to stand up in the House of Commons and attack the Secretary of State. We cannot answer his question No. 1 because he may then ask question No. 2. Perhaps we shall not be able to answer that, or, if we are able to do so, question No. 3 could be difficult."

That was the strange, almost potentially dangerous, doctrine that apparently the Secretary of State enunciated from the Dispatch box this afternoon. It was extraordinary. Why not answer questions on their merits? Why not answer seven or eight, or however many, of the nine questions if certain of them involved classified information, and then worry about the other questions later? That would have been the proper way of doing things in this House.

Mr. Baldry: Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that a balance must be found between full accountability on the one hand and national security on the other? Where is that balance to be found?

Mr. Davies: I shall come to the question of national security shortly.

As well as blocking questions, the "Stanley memorandum", as it was called — as the Secretary of State said, he approved it — went to the Select Committee. It was sparse and the Legge memorandum said, in effect, "We cannot send a more full account partly, though not entirely, because it would not be consistent with the line that Ministers have taken in the past." I accept that there were other reasons——

Mr. Heseltine *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: It is no good the Secretary of State shaking his head in dissent; it is in the Legge memorandum. One reason why there was not full disclosure was that Mr. Legge—and maybe Mr. Ponting as well — said that if the Select Committee got the information, then, to paraphrase, the line that Ministers had taken in the past would be breached.

It was not denied this afternoon that the Government were concerned to try to block questions and withhold information. Their case at the end of the day, as always, is, "We had to do those things. Government responsibility is difficult and there is the higher and greater good. It is all being done for the sake of that higher and greater good." Apparently the content and scope of that higher and greater good is to be decided solely by the Government, being judge and jury.

Let us consider what is this higher and greater good. It has had different incarnations from time to time. The first incarnation we could call national security. Mr. Amlott, the Government's prosecutor—I need not quote from his speech, it was reported widely in the newspapers — made it clear that national security was not involved.

We move on to the next issue, which is the terrible issue of intelligence, which presents a difficult problem. It is clear that there was a difficulty there——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The right hon. Gentleman has a difficulty there.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Davies: Not as great a difficulty as I suspect the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) has.

In considering the question of intelligence, I quote for the last time from the Ponting trial. On day 7, Mr. Amlott, the Government's prosecutor, pressed Mr. Ponting hard. I could read five or six pages from the transcript on the subject of intelligence. Possibly the final question in the cross-examination was:

"Do you accept that Mr. Heseltine was basing his decisions upon sound and sensible arguments that were put to him."

Mr. Ponting replied:

"No, I do not. The basis of this decision was clearly political, that to reveal this information would compound the political difficulties that the Government were in in changing their explanation. Nowhere in any of the documents inside the Ministry of Defence or produced in this court"

—I am sure that must be true—

"is there any written explanation that the reason the Government will not reveal this information was that at some point it would touch on intelligence information. That explanation has been given only subsequently, namely, since September of this year."

Indeed, in the Prime Minister's letter to me of 4 April, where she tried to justify the change of date—the letter, according to evidence that was given, was beefed up a bit when it got to the Prime Minister's Office, but I do not make any criticism of that — did not mention

intelligence. On that occasion operational matters were the higher and greater good used to justify the failure to give information.

Then as the last refuge—it is in the motion—we have

"the protection of our Armed Forces"——

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] Yes, we all agree with that. But it was not protection of the armed forces; it was the protection of Ministers.

Ministers at various times over the two or three years have misled the House about the date of the detection of the Belgrano, about the course on which it was sailing when it was sunk, about its course 11 hours before it was sunk, and about the changes of course of the Belgrano. They have refused to answer legitimate questions where no matters of national security were involved, and they did not give full and frank information to the Select Committee. It was all about the protection of Ministers, the protection of the reputation of Ministers, and the protection of the reputation of the Prime Minister herself.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): To buttress the right hon. Gentleman's point, is it not a fact that if the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Fieldhouse, had thought it right to mention in his dispatch the true date of the first sighting and also of the detection of the General Belgrano, surely there could not possibly be any risk to the fleet or any security risk for the future. That is why the Prime Minister should have corrected the matter in the defence White Paper six months afterwards.

Mr. Davies: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. If Admiral Fieldhouse felt that there was no problem, what were the operational matters 15 months later that apparently caused the Government to refuse to give the full information?

The Prime Minister must accept her full responsibility for the affair. She told this House—we have been over it and I mention it again—that we had all the facts when we did not. She failed to correct false statements in official documents. She said in a television interview, in the middle of the general election campaign, that the Belgrano was not sailing away from the Falklands when it was. She certainly was part of a decision—if not the instigator—to try to "tough it out". She has zig-zagged far more on this matter than the old General Belgrano ever did. The whole shameful business is a consequence of her style of government, I am sorry to say.

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Member suggested that the concept of intelligence arguments had not been brought into the justification until rather recently. I remind him of the letter that I quoted to the House. It was associated with Mr. Ponting's first findings on the matter—the draft letter that he wanted me to to send to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). In that letter he said that

"the other questions you have raised in your letter all concern detailed operational and intelligence matters on which I am not prepared to comment."

It was on Mr. Ponting's advice that I took the original decision.

Mr. Davies: I did not say it; Mr. Ponting said it on oath. That evidence could have been produced in court but the prosecution failed to do so.

We have a style of government that demands total fealty from all individuals and all groups. It is a style of government that shows contempt—the Secretary of State talked about the Civil Service—for civil servants and for their advice. *[Interruption.]* If the Prime Minister does not know it, perhaps she should start talking more widely among civil servants. If they have shown the faith, then they are all right. The irony was that Mr. Ponting had shown that he was one of the faith. Apparently Sir Derek Rayner gave him a book to read called "Your Disobedient Servant." Mr. Ponting read it rather too well, it seems. He was of the faith; in fact, he was apparently summoned to meet the presence in the inner sanctum. The trouble was that when he got there he did not like what he saw. It is a style of government that I believe will get shriller and more strident as Britain's economic decline sadly accelerates.

I suspect that the events of the past few weeks and the economic clouds that are gathering mark the beginning of the end for the Government, and I suspect that the Prime Minister in her heart knows it, too.

5.36 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has missed a golden opportunity — one of the opportunities that probably come only once in a whole political lifetime. He heard the devastating exposition of the facts by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. If the right hon. Gentleman had risen in a full House, with the country listening to the debate, and had asked leave to withdraw his party's amendment, he would have dispelled the largely unfair belief that the Labour party did not want to see us win the Falklands war. *[Interruption.]* He had the chance and he did not take it.

The right hon. Gentleman accused my right hon. Friend of character assassination against Mr. Ponting. In the remarks that followed, I shall not say that he condoned, but he went very far towards condoning, Mr. Ponting. Indeed, we have seen the spectacle of two Privy Councillors from the Opposition Benches appearing on the same platform as Mr. Ponting. Are we to have the canonisation of Mr. Ponting? Is he to be the next Labour candidate for Bethnal Green and Stepney?

I hope that the Labour party will forgive me if I venture to say that it has not conducted its campaign on the Belgrano issue with great skill. The Leader of the Opposition began by alleging that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had exercised political pressure on the Attorney-General to bring the prosecution against Mr. Ponting. I should have thought that any leader of the Labour party would think twice about making such an allegation. After all, that is the charge that the Conservatives brought against the Labour party in 1924 in the Campbell case — that the Cabinet had exercised pressure on the Attorney-General not to bring the case. The difference between the right hon. Gentleman's tactics and ours is that we defeated the first Labour Government, and his torpedo misfired.

I shall deal now with the sinking of the Belgrano itself. There is not a great deal that one can say in detail about the problem of intelligence. I know that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is a man of honour. I can think only that he might have been naive in that matter. Had all the questions that he put been answered, it might have been of assistance to hostile forces. I can only hope, although I do not believe that it is so, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not already gone too far in meeting his requests.

[Mr. Julian Amery]

With regard to the politics of the matter, only two charges could conceivably be made against the Government. One is that the sinking of the Belgrano scuppered the Peruvian talks, and the other is that the ship was outside the exclusion limit. The only thing that I ask right hon. and hon. Members to consider is this. Suppose my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her colleagues in the War Cabinet had ordered the Conqueror not to torpedo the Belgrano; suppose, as a result, we had incurred heavy casualties, although not necessarily defeat; and suppose that some hon. Member with the assiduity of the hon. Member for Linlithgow had researched the matter and found that we had deliberately not taken the opportunity to sink the Belgrano. Can one imagine what the reaction of the House would have been if my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had come to the Dispatch Box and said, "I did not do it because I hoped that we might get an agreement through Peru," or "I did not do it because it was just outside the legal exclusion limit."? Does the House think that the Leader of the Opposition would have hesitated to attack? I think that even he and the right hon. Member for Llanelli would have made mincemeat of us on such an occasion, not that their gladiatorial skills are all that great.

Mr. Dalyell: At all times the Government knew the position of the Belgrano. They knew that it had 6 inch guns with a range of 13 miles. They knew that the Hipolito Bouchard carried the M38 Exocet guidance system made by us, so they knew that the range was 20 miles. At all stages the capability of the Argentine service group was known, so what the right hon. Gentleman is saying is purely hypothetical.

Mr. Amery: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will know that war is a matter of risk. We had to take risks. We took a tremendous risk in launching an invasion of islands 8,000 miles away without proper air cover. In that case, we could not take any extra risks, just for the reasons that the hon. Gentleman has suggested.

I come to the matter that is of deep significance and underlies the debate. Regrettably, it has come to light in the debate. It is the relationship between Ministers and officials. It is a matter to which we must give important thought. Many of us in the House have held office of one kind or another, and we know what a strange experience it is when one is sent to help to preside, or to preside over a Department. One is a Member of Parliament. That is one's authority. One is responsible to the House. One is appointed by the Prime Minister, who has the support of the majority of the House. Two or three of us at the most go to the Department and find ourselves surrounded by hundreds or, in the case of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, thousands, of officials and officers.

Who are these officials and officers? They are not elected; they are selected. They are chosen by other officials. They are deployed and promoted by other officials. Of course, occasionally if some are more congenial than others, political favour gets them advanced to one place or another. Indeed, that happened to Mr. Ponting. But, by and large, they are an autonomous body. They are the servants of the Crown, on loan to the Ministers of the day. They enjoy very special privileges. Broadly speaking, they have a freehold on their job until the age of 60. They cannot be sacked unless convicted of felony, habitual drunkenness or bankruptcy, or previously sodomy, but that does not apply any more. They cannot be dismissed; they are there until the age of 60 and at the end of it they have an indexed pension. Moreover, they enjoy great influence over the formation of national policy. And they are immune from criticism.

Anybody who has been through the experience of government knows that one can get things done only if a good relationship can be achieved between the Minister and his officials. It must be based on frankness and fullness of discussion, often late at night. It must be hardheaded, but also sometimes lighthearted. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton, (Mr. Clark), has been taken to task for talking about Bongo Bongo land at a private meeting. Unless one can do such a thing and talk on those terms with one's officials —*[Interruption.]* I hear some hon. Members laughing, but it is a great deal better than the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who talked in public about his critics being "stoned out of their tiny Chinese minds."

One must be able to talk absolutely off the record and absolutely frankly. If that breaks down and one no longer has the confidence that Ministers can discuss tactics and options with their officials, and their officials can do so equally with them, we come to a serious crisis in constitutional government. It is not just a question of confidentiality; it goes to the root of our parliamentary government.

What is the story? Over the years, the Sovereign has ceded almost the entirety of the power of decision to Ministers representing the majority in this Parliament. That is the way in which we are governed now. The prerogative, if it remains at all, is very small. The Sovereign has surrendered the power of decision, and so have the Sovereign's servants, the officials. They advise and carry out things, but the Ministers decide. An official who tries to override Ministers, whether subversively or openly, is trying to claw back some of the prerogative which, over the years, the Sovereign has surrendered to Parliament.

Therefore, when right hon. and hon. Members sit on the same platform as Mr. Ponting, they are lending themselves to condoning someone who has struck at not only the confidentiality between employer and employee, but at something which goes much deeper than that; indeed, the rights of Parliament. What we claim as Parliament is that we and we alone have the right finally to decide the policy of the nation. If we condone what has been done by Mr. Ponting, Miss Tisdall and the others, we are striking at the root of the privileges on which we depend as the elected representatives of the people. It is the coalition between the permanent Civil Service, descending from the Sovereign, and the temporarily elected majority of the country that is the basis of our current national unity.

5.57 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Very little has been said so far in the debate about the use of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and the decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting. I want to begin by making it clear that when the Secretary of State said today that Mr. Ponting had betrayed a trust, that could not be denied. Of course, he betrayed a trust. Let us be clear about what he

did. He did not seek to betray his country. He was not seeking financial gain by selling stories to the newspapers. He was not giving away secret information. He was seeking to relay non-secret information to a Member of the House. So why was he betraying that trust? He was betraying it because he wished to expose what he believed to be a breach of a higher trust—that which should exist between Ministers and the House of Commons. It is important to put it in the right context. It is for that reason that I take the view that officials in the Ministry of Defence were right in their initial approach to Mr. Ponting, which was that he should be subject to disciplinary procedures within the service rather than prosecuted.

I do not want to go back over the ground of who did or did not authorise the prosecution, because it is consistent for Ministers to say that that matter was entirely for the Law Officers and they were not involved. Of course, I accept that. However, equally well known is the Prime Minister's view of such conduct. The Secretary of State was quoted by Sir Ewen Broadbent as saying that, if he had anything to do with it, he believed that the Director of Public Prosecutions should proceed to a prosecution. Therefore, it is clear that civil servants, Law Officers and the DDP were operating within a climate in which they knew that the political masters wanted to get Mr. Ponting through the courts. That was a mistake.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the light of what has happened and what we now know, if the right hon. Gentleman were a Minister, would he employ Mr. Ponting as a civil servant?

Mr. Steel: I have already dealt with that point. I have made it clear that Mr. Ponting was guilty of a breach of trust, so inevitably he would have to leave the service. I then went on to deal with the prosecution and use of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. It is important to make a clear distinction between the action that should have been taken in each of those areas.

Second, I wish to consider the sinking of the Belgrano itself. It is a truism that in time of war unpleasant things happen. It is even more true that in time of war unpleasant decisions have to be taken. In time of war too the Government of the day are entitled to the benefit of the doubt and the support of the House. I hope that the Secretary of State accepts that the Government received the benefit of the doubt and the overwhelming support of the House throughout the operation of the task force. It is going slightly beyond that and something of a nerve, however, for the Government to ask the House in their motion tonight to recognise that the particular decision at a particular time to sink the Belgrano was necessary and legitimate when they have openly admitted that they are denying us the information on which the decision was taken.

The House was not told of the background to the War Cabinet's decision, so we must assume that the War Cabinet believed that it was important to immobilise a major section of the Argentine navy early in the dispute to protect the task force, that the original intention was to go for the aircraft carrier but that at the end of the day the Belgrano happened to be the chosen target. As we were not members of the War Cabinet, we do not know. That is merely one possible and logical explanation.

Mr. Heseltine: It may be possible and logical, but it is not the explanation that the Government have given. We have made it clear that there was clear evidence that the Belgrano posed a threat. That is the explanation. The right hon. Gentleman is being very fair, but in doing so he must recognise that Governments sometimes have to take decisions and that the whole explanation can never be made public.

Mr. Steel: I accept that. That is why I say that those of us who were not in the War Cabinet could only wish Ministers well and hope that they took the right decisions. Of course, the Belgrano and other ships were a threat. I hope that the Secretary of State is not suggesting that the Belgrano was peculiar to that category.

The fact remains that in the heat of the battle the then Secretary of State, Sir John Nott, gave the wrong information to the House. It is clear that that was not his fault. Nevertheless, Parliament was given the wrong information about the circumstances in which the Belgrano was sunk. It was after that—I do not know at what stage — that Ministers became culpable. In the White Paper published in the autumn the true facts were still concealed from the House. A year later, in a "Nationwide" question programme during the general election campaign in May 1983 the Prime Minister specifically said that the

"Belgrano was not sailing away from the Falklands".

As we now know, that was the exact opposite of the truth.

Throughout 1983 and early 1984, in a whole series of answers given in the House, in broadcast interviews and in letters to Members, a familiar phrase appeared to the effect that the Belgrano and the task force could have been only a few hours apart converging on each other, leaving a somewhat ambiguous impression that they were in fact converging, although we now know that they were not.

The House is entitled to ask two questions which the Secretary of State has so far failed to answer. I hope that the Minister of State will answer them when he winds up the debate. First, at what point in the saga did Ministers discover that the information given to the House was wrong? Secondly, how long would they have continued to give the wrong information to the House if the truth had not been dragged out of them by a series of letters and questions from Members, with or without the assistance of Mr. Ponting? Those are the important issues on which the House should concentrate.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): The right hon. Gentleman has already agreed that these things happen in war. Does he also agree that information which could on the face of it seem innocent may be impossible to disclose because it leads on to other information which could help the enemy?

Mr. Steel: I am coming to that. The House has never asked for intelligence information across the Floor, but that is a very different matter from the non-classified information that was constantly misdirected to us.

I believe that there are three important reasons why Ministers were wrong not to correct the information at the earliest opportunity. The first, putting it crudely, is the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). As is well known and as the Secretary of State has fairly said, the hon. Member for Linlithgow has pursued a particular line of reasoning and attitude to what happened to the Belgrano. He has been virtually alone in the House—others may agree with him, although I do not know of many—in suggesting that the Belgrano was deliberately

[Mr. Rees]

Over the weekend another meeting took place. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) is here. Last night I watched him on television, and he said, "I've got a leak. I'm joining in." The press got on to the Ministry of Defence, which said, "It's got nothing to do with us. We never comment on leaks." We have been so immersed in this in our house over the last week that we said, "Poor old so-and-so, he's going to be up for breaking the Official Secrets Act as well."

Mr. Mates: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is entertaining the House hugely, but surely he is not trying to make a serious allegation. If he is, he is suggesting that it is one and the same thing for a private citizen, a Back-Bench Member of Parliament like myself or, indeed, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), to divulge information that has been brought to us. We are not civil servants or Ministers and therefore are not subject to the Official Secrets Act.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. A great number of hon. Members are waiting to catch my eye. Long interventions make for long speeches.

Mr. Mates: A personal attack, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has just been made on me. Surely I am entitled to answer it. The right hon. Gentleman must understand that it is often our duty as Back-Bench Members of Parliament to bring into the public domain information which is of concern to one's own constituents. That is quite different from Mr. Ponting.

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The Official Secrets Act covers every man and woman in this country. The hon. Gentleman broke the Official Secrets Act. Good luck to him. I say that because I was schooled to believe that if it is serious, let the law do what it likes with such people, but if it does not matter, do not potch around with the criminal law. Under the Official Secrets Act, if one reveals who supplies the cakes to the Ministry of Defence canteen, one can be done under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. It is only the Attorney-General who can prevent that from happening. He can say that to prosecute is not in the public interest. Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman is prosecuted, I promise to go and give expert evidence at the Old Bailey when this person appears there.

Mr. Baldry: If the right hon. Gentleman finds the Official Secrets Act so abhorrent, I just cannot understand why the last Labour Government did not take steps either to repeal or to reform it.

Mr. Rees: I have had a note which says "Sit down," but very quickly I shall tell the House. First, we did not have a majority. Secondly, I said to my colleagues that there was no point in going ahead with it. I got into trouble in 1969 over the reform of the House of Lords, when the Home Secretary said to me "You take it, Merlyn. We have got an agreement with the Opposition". I ought to have known what that meant. He had been around a long time and the Bill was dead. The Opposition did not co-operate. I have been in Northern Ireland and the Opposition did not give us any help then over pairs and so on, and I was not prepared to take on the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am listening attentively and, indeed, I am very interested in the right hon. Gentleman's speech, but the 10-minute rule is now in operation and the right hon. Gentleman has really reached the end of his time.

Mr. Rees: I simply say that there is good reason for not prosecuting Ponting. I have here notes from people who have written to me telling me about heads of the Civil Service who have done what Ponting did in the past 30 years. One of these thought that if he were caught he would get 14 years, which must have been for an offence under section 1, but he did not. There might come a time when a civil servant has to say that Parliament is being misled. Ponting is not on the scale of the big issues in Germany. I accept that. But the House had better put its mind to what will happen if the House is misled. Mr. Brian Walden says "Humbug." That tells us more about Mr. Walden than it does about his ministerial knowledge. The House was misled. The information was only dragged out. That is why I certainly will not vote for the first part of the first motion, but I shall vote gladly for the second.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that the 10-minute limit is in operation. If hon. Members give way to interventions there will be no additions for injury time.

7.11 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): The speech of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) began well but the knock-about turn which constituted the last three quarters of it was, candidly, unworthy of him and unworthy of the importance of the occasion. I wonder whether the public at large will be satisfied with our proceedings today. We are discussing a matter of the utmost importance and it may well seem to the public that either we are raking over dead men's bones about the sinking of the Belgrano, or, perhaps, that Her Majesty's Opposition and the alliance parties have pursued the personal obsessions of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) ad absurdum.

We should be discussing today how the House can seek to exercise a measure of parliamentary control and monitoring of the Executive in time of war and how Her Majesty's Government in time of war can exercise control on behalf of Parliament of operations conducted by Her Majesty's forces in the field.

I remember the first debate that we had on the Falklands war following the invasion of the islands when my boss, the then Secretary of State, John Nott, made perhaps the only major mistake in his reports to the House in that he adopted a partisan tone and it was fatal. From then on deliberations over the important matters that ensued were essentially bipartisan. This was one of the aspects of our parliamentary consideration that most impressed the British people. It saddens me that now, instead of drawing the appropriate conclusion, we have lapsed into the worst aspects of partisanship.

I do not want to go back in history too far, but it is worth recalling the immensity of the task that faced our armed forces. The armada that the King of Spain sent to the English shores in 1588 did not stand a lesser chance of success than our task force in setting off for the Falklands. We had no strike carriers. We were critically vulnerable to Argentine land-based air power and carrier-based air power. The Argentinian aircraft carrier The 25th of May was a major threat. In addition, we were operating at extremities of range with no bases of our own. In those

circumstances it was critically important to put the Argentine navy out of the war, to ensure the maximum air cover for our fleet in difficult circumstances and to provide a sufficiency of air superiority to enable our forces to be put ashore on what had then become hostile islands in adverse sea and climatic conditions.

On 1 May we already had the first sign of how extreme the threat was. The Argentine air force was thrown into action against the task force for the first time. There was a major air engagement. Winston Churchill said about our crews in the battle of Britain in August and September 1940:

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

The same applied in full measure to the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force Harrier crews embarked on HMS Hermes and HMS Invincible. They had only 19 aeroplanes, very few air crews and had to operate round the clock for considerable periods against repeated attack.

On 1 May the Glamorgan was bombed. Luckily, the bombs did not strike home. Arrow was strafed. The first personnel casualty was incurred and it was clear that unless a major Argentine capital vessel was put out of action and soon, the risk to Her Majesty's task force would grow. In those circumstances, the Cabinet was right to modify the rules of engagement to allow the commander of Conqueror, who had been shadowing the General Belgrano, to attack, sink and destroy the vessel. There is no doubt that the destruction of that ship, which was second only to the carrier The 25th of May in importance in the Argentine navy's order of battle, put the Argentine navy out of the war and constituted a dramatic turning point in the conduct of the operation.

Mr. Steel: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that a second ago the Secretary of State for Defence interrupted me and denied that sequence of events? He said that the Belgrano was a threat. I put forward the same theory as the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Wilkinson: I regret that I gave way. The right hon. Gentleman's intervention was as inconsequential as his speech.

The point at issue is that throughout the war the Secretary of State had the difficult task of reporting to Parliament, often at extremely short notice because the Argentine radio and other propaganda media were transmitting their version of events. For example, when HMS Coventry went down we had the difficult decision of whether to make a report immediately to the House or whether to try to analyse such reports as could be obtained from the South Atlantic and to make a more considered report. The Secretary of State always tried to make a report at first opportunity.

At the instance of the sinking of the Belgrano there was an error both about the course being steamed by the Belgrano and about the timescale of the sighting and the attack. As the Argentine Government did not rescind the state of hostilities that, formally at least, still applied, Her Majesty's Government were right not to modify the statement that Sir John Nott made. The Government did so when it appeared later that the intelligence and security criteria were not as valid as had previously been the case. But we should not delude ourselves about the imporance of what is said and done here in the House.

My time is short but I want to make one observation. I well recall an occasion when John Nott came to my party's defence committee. In the course of that meeting he made no reference to the future conduct of operations on East Falkland, and that was after the San Carlos landing had taken place.

Yet the next day it was suggested in the press that John Nott had perhaps hypothesised that the next line of advance might be to Goose Green. Then, of course, when Two Para had the very difficult engagement there and sustained heavy casualties while capturing Goose Green, it was alleged that it was because John Nott had leaked and divulged sensitive information to our Back-Bench defence committee, and that the Argentines had got wind of the line of our forces' advance and had been prepared for the attack. This, of course, was not so. It was purely a bit of conjecture on the part of a particular journalist, and demonstrates the importance of very strict security control over statements made to the House.

In the last analysis it should be remembered that the House is charged with great responsibility. If we had so voted, we could have prevented the task force from sailing and could have interrupted the course of operations. But once such operations are engaged upon, it is the duty of every hon. Member to act responsibly and to bear in mind security considerations. I believe that the Government have done that, and that the amendments of the Opposition and their alliance friends are wholly irresponsible.

7.20 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The debate focuses attention on the relationships between Ministers and their civil servants, between the Government and the House of Commons and between the Government and the country.

First, I must take issue with the Secretary of State, and with the way in which he tried to accuse Mr. Clive Ponting by using such phrases as badly serving both him and the House, making the most extreme and unfounded allegations, breaking his loyalty to Ministers and the ethics of the Civil Service, and so on. Mr. Ponting is one of my constituents. He did not act in a particularly saintly way, but he faced the genuine human dilemma of whether to keep silent or break the supposed trust that Ministers had in him. In my view he made the right decision. He should have been disciplined for it, but he should not have been prosecuted for it as a criminal. For the Secretary of State to come to the House and to try to portray him as some sort of criminal simply in order to deflect criticism away from the actions of Ministers is unworthy of his office and of the duty that he owes to the House.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way, as I have only a short time in which to speak, and there are important points to be made.

The Secretary of State indulged in a selective rewriting of history. I shall give a brief example. He spoke about the Legge memorandum and about the way in which it had supposedly been some sort of joint production between Mr. Ponting's department and that of Mr. Legge. Of course, there was some consultation with officers under Mr. Ponting in the course of drawing it up, but it is to rewrite history to try to extrapolate from that that there was a joint effort at work, and that Mr. Ponting was somehow putting his whole effort behind it while at the same time going behind the Minister's back to criticise it.

[Mr. Smith]

The Secretary of State made great play of the element of trust and loyalty that he expected from his civil servants. But one is entitled to ask, "Trust and loyalty to what?" It is one thing for a Minister to require trust and loyalty in the genuine service of the Government and the country in an honest way that demands integrity. That is the sort of loyalty that civil servants should display. But no Minister has a right to demand such trust and loyalty when it is required in order to aid and abet the deception of the House. That is the key point.

In that connection, it is worth reflecting on what the judge said at the trial. In his summing up he defined the interests of the state as being entirely and solely the policies of the Government of the day. That was the most dangerous thing that a judge could say in defining the interests of the state. I remind the judge of a pamphlet written by Sir Patrick Devlin, now Lord Devlin, in 1956. He wrote about judges and juries and said two extremely important things. First, he said:

"the executive has found it much easier to find judges who will do what it wants than it has to find amenable juries."

Secondly, he said:

"trial by jury . . . gives protection against laws which the ordinary man may regard as harsh and oppressive."

The jury decided to give Mr. Ponting protection not simply against the act that he had committed but against the nature and use of the provisions of the Official Secrets Act under which he was prosecuted. The judge said that the interests of the state were synonymous with the decisions of the Government of the day. Of course, if that doctrine was taken to its logical conclusion it would point the path of tyranny. As democrats, hon. Members on both sides of the House should be wary of that.

The arrogance of power which assumes that the Government are always right, and which dislikes and tries to clamp down on all sorts of dissent in a democracy, is aided and abetted by section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, and bears the stamp of everything that the Government have done in the past few years. It was that arrogance that led them to deceive the House and to prosecute Mr. Ponting. The lesson to be drawn is that when Governments try to withhold information and to treat Parliament and the nation with the arrogance that says that they and only they have the truth and are right, it is often impossible for the general public to make any assesment of the tangle that ensues, or of how right or wrong the Government and their decision-making processes are.

That is why section 2 is nonsense. It is not just nonsense because of its catch-all quality or because, as has been noted, someone can be prosecuted for revealing who supplies the tea to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but because it can be used by the Government to defend their arrogance in power and to defend political decisions that have nothing to do with genuine national security. Of course, there must be protection for genuine national security matters, but everyone, including the prosecution in the Ponting trial, agrees that on the two occasions when Mr. Ponting leaked information, national security was not in any way involved. That is the point.

Perhaps section 1 of the Official Secrets Act should be more clearly defined and tightened up in case national security is at stake, but let us get rid of section 2 and the uses to which it is put, including the use to which it has been put by this Government. They have used it purely for political ends and have not used it in the interests of the nation as a whole.

7.30 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): In recent days, when I have seen accusations in certain national newspapers that the Prime Minister and others have been misleading Parliament and the people, I have kept hearing the words of a hymn that we used to sing at school:

"Once to every man and nation,
Comes the moment to decide,
Between the sides of truth and falsehood,
Between the good and evil sides."

Tonight the House must make something of that choice, and there seem to be some inescapable truths which we must take into account.

When the Argentines invaded the Falkland Islands it was the first time, perhaps since the Nazis were expelled from the Channel Islands, that an alien power, by force of arms, had sought to invade sovereign British territory and to subjugate fellow British subjects under the rule of a foreign flag.

Argentina acted with unqualified aggression; aggression which had no possible excuse or justification. At the darkest of moments the people of the Falkland Islands were entitled to look to us in Britain, to defend their freedoms, to come to their rescue and to restore to them our protection.

A moment of decision had come in our nation's history. We could have fudged it. Perhaps under less resolute leadership, we might have fudged it. But the inescapable truth was that, at that moment, we had a clear duty to the men and women of the Falkland Islands and, further, a clear duty to the people of the whole world to demonstrate that aggression would not succeed. That duty demanded, if all else failed, a determination and willingness to use force to free the Falklands. Some could not see the clearness of the choice.

When, on 7 April 1982, Sir John Nott told the House of the sailing of the task force — of ships such as Brilliant and Broadsword, Hermes and Invincible, Alacrity, and Apple Leaf departing — and even as our sailors were setting forth for the South Atlantic, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was asking what was the cost of it all. What is the cost of freedom? Would we be free today if our fathers and forefathers had tried to give freedom a price? Freedom is beyond cost.

When our sailors, soldiers and airmen were in the South Atlantic, there were those such as the hon. Member for Linlithgow who spared no opportunity to encourage despair, despond and defeatism. On 7 April 1982, as the nation was praying God speed to the task force, the hon. Gentleman said:

"Some of us believe that the fleet should turn round and come back to Portsmouth . . . as soon as possible." — [*Official Report*, 7 April 1982; Vol. 21 c. 1037.]

On 14 April the hon. Gentleman questioned our air cover, spoke in detail of the planes in the Argentinian air force and reminded the House of the fate of HMS Prince of Wales. He recalled that the original Scharnhorst was sunk in the battle of the Falkland Islands and that, because of those seas, there had been few survivors. He asked for how long we could maintain a blockade 8,000 miles away from base in the Roaring Forties at the beginning of an Antarctic winter. We know the answer to that question. It was until we had won through. But what comfort those

statements must have been to the enemy and what chill they must have caused to the families of those in the task force.

On 10 May the hon. Member called into question the support that we could expect from our European partners. On 13 May he told the House that the Argentine had a tough marine corps and that there would be massive casualties. On 20 May he sought to warn of defeat of the first magnitude and on 24 May he called into question the support we could expect from our American allies.

The hon. Gentleman must answer to history and his conscience for his statements. I say that we would do well to be wary as to how much credence we give to the accusations of those who seek to give freedom a price and whose words must have given comfort only to Britain's enemies.

We then come to the inescapable truth of the sinking of the Belgrano—that it was sunk solely because it was a threat to the task force and a threat to the lives of our sailors and soldiers.

As Mr. Ponting acknowledged at his trial, there was a clear military case for attacking the Belgrano. He said that he had seen the Foreign Office papers and he had seen nothing to suggest the contention that the ship was sunk to end any Peruvian peace plan.

Indeed, as the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) told the same court with candour:

"if 10,000 men were 8,000 miles from home, the politicians had to act quickly to protect them, even if that meant sinking the Belgrano."

The simple and inescapable truth is that the sinking of the Belgrano was a necessary and legitimate act to protect British lives.

Contemplate the reaction of Parliament and people if the Belgrano had not been sunk and if the Belgrano had then attacked our ships, causing casualties and loss of life among our sailors. Is that what some hon. Members would have preferred? Because an enemy ship was sunk, many British service men are alive today who might otherwise have been at the bottom of the south Atlantic.

It then being clear that the sinking of the Belgrano was a legitimate and necessary act, it follows that there was no action that needed to be covered up.

The next inescapable truth is that, in dealing with the facts surrounding the sinking of the Belgrano, or with any other defence matter, we will always have to balance national security with public accountability. It is clear that any effective rebuttal of the case of the hon. Member for Linlithgow was incompatible with Britain's national security. That is because the hon. Gentleman was clearly determined to tear away all of this country's security and intelligence protection — a nine-question letter to the Secretary of State, for example, the answers to which could have been of considerable assistance to our enemies.

Later, the hon. Gentleman wrote:

"My information is that the Argentinian fleet was, by that time, under orders to return to base".

One can only speculate as to where that information came from. He continued:

"You state that on 2nd May we had an indication about the movements of the Argentinian fleet . . . what precisely were those indications?"

Confronted with such questions, the answers to which could only have compromised our nation's present and future security, Ministers properly limited the scope of their replies. They would have been failing the nation if they had done otherwise.

The last inescapable truth is that the motivation for these attacks by the Opposition, including the Social Democrats, is not because they really believe that Parliament has at any time been deliberately misled, but because of their desire to try to impugn the integrity of the Prime Minister.

The former Speaker of the House, Viscount Tonypandy, reminded us yesterday aptly of the Prime Minister's courage:

"I think that, had a man been Prime Minister, he would probably have lost his nerve long before. Any man would have gone back to the United Nations to make sure that he was not going to be ostracised by the world community, in much the same way as the Opposition were putting themselves in the clear if things went wrong.

Britain would have lost all influence in international affairs if Mrs. Thatcher had submitted to the pressure and gone back to the UN.

It would have meant that, never again, would Britain take any decisive action to defend her people. The Prime Minister showed remarkable courage and determination throughout . . . By her action, she saved the good name of Britain."

We know that, the people of Britain know that, but the Opposition, realising the strength of her integrity, seek, by whisper and innuendo, to impugn that integrity.

That is what today's debate is all about. The Opposition will fail because the people of Britain will say of them as they have said of others before them:

"Frustrate their knavish tricks. Confound their politics."

7.37 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I doubt whether this is a good occasion on which to refight the naval strategy of the Falklands war, first because the Ministers now responsible were not in office at the time.

I doubt whether it is a good idea, either, to try to reopen the Ponting case, because the jury has acquitted him. I doubt whether we are doing justice to the importance of the issues that face us if we think that the responsibility can be placed simply on the shoulders of what are quite minor figures in the story.

I shall, therefore, draw attention to what I believe to be the real importance of the debate, for which it will be studied in future years, long after the names of the participants, and maybe even the Falklands war are forgotten. That is that we are discussing today a central question, which must be decided, as to the proper relationship between the Cabinet, the Commons and the courts. That is what the debate is about—*[Interruption.]* —and if the House will listen, I will establish the point.

It arose, in the first instance, because the Cabinet, who are there by virtue of having won the election, and exercise the prerogatives of the Crown, believe, and have argued, that civil servants, once appointed, are bound in duty simply to work for the Ministers of the day, and that point was put powerfully by the Secretary of State in his speech.

I wonder whether hon. Members think that what happened in the Ponting case happened there for the first time. I remind the House of a report in the *Daily Telegraph* on 13 November 1976. Under the heading:

"Whitehall spies fed Churchill secrets in the 1930s"

the article stated:

"Sir Winston Churchill received hundreds of secret documents surreptitiously removed from official files sent to him in breach of the Official Secrets Act when he was fighting appeasement as a back bench MP. Mr. Martin Gilbert, Sir Winston's biographer, reported that these documents had been found in the Churchill Archives at Chartwell and said 'there was total, consistent and persistent breach of the Official Secrets Act'."

[Mr. Tony Benn]

I do not know, looking at it now, whether Conservative Members think that it was wrong for senior civil servants to keep Mr. Churchill informed when he was a Back Bencher. I remember, as a boy, in 1937, seeing Mr. Churchill sitting where the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Bexley and Old Sidcup (Mr. Heath), now sits. Were the civil servants wrong to inform Mr. Churchill? They thought they were doing a public duty. Mr. Churchill was getting information which allowed him to destroy the appeasement policy of Neville Chamberlain, in much the same way as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has undermined the credibility of the Government in regard to the Falklands war. But whatever view we take, we must not think that that question has always been resolved in one way.

I happen to think that civil servants, Ministers, Members of the House of Commons and political parties should never put their consciences in hock to anybody else. If we think that a course of action is wrong, we have a duty to say so. Our religious liberties in Britain would not have been won if people had not broken the law in order to worship as they wished. It was that which laid the foundation for our political liberties.

Was it right of the Attorney-General to prosecute Mr. Ponting when Mr. Ponting was informing a Member of Parliament? There is a precedent for that. I cited it the other day, Mr. Speaker, in a rather unhappy exchange with you about privilege. In 1938, Mr. Duncan Sandys, a Member of the House and a territorial officer, received information from a fellow territorial officer as a result of which he tabled questions in the House of Commons. Following that, Mr. Duncan Sandys, although an MP, was told to appear before a court martial. He sought the support of the House. The House, in a famous Select Committee report on the Official Secrets Act, published in 1939—my father was a member of that Committee, so I was brought up on the doctrine within it—made it clear that Parliament would not allow people to be prosecuted when their only offence was to tell Members of Parliament things that they should know in order to perform their parliamentary duties. Indeed, the House laid down clearly in that decision in 1939 that to prosecute in regard to information falling under the Official Secrets Act, when it is given to a Member of Parliament, is in itself a breach of privilege. Indeed, I believe that the Attorney-General, in bringing that prosecution, was guilty of a contempt of the House.

A great deal of correspondence took place last week between the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister concerning the method of prosecution. The Prime Minister spoke as if it were a terrible thing that there should have been any consultation. But the Prime Minister is head of the Civil Service and head of the Armed Forces — indeed, with the nuclear button, she is especially responsible, without any holidays as part of the package. The Prime Minister is also head of the security services and, of course, she is the head of the Government. Therefore, it is inconceivable with the Whitehall network that exists that any contemplated prosecution, under section 2 of the Act, of a most senior civil servant, known to the Prime Minister personally, would not have been reported to No. 10 along the network. The prosecution would not have taken place if the Prime Minister had not given assent. Perhaps, like Henry II, all she said was

"Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?"

and left it to others to do what was necessary. No one will persuade me that the Prime Minister was not involved. But in any event she should have been involved.

There is a precedent for everything. In 1924 the Labour Government fell over the Campbell case because the Labour Prime Minister intervened to bring about the dropping of a prosecution. There was a general election and Labour was defeated. Mr. Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister, in answering a question about prosecutions, said that

"when the proposed prosecution is of such a character that matters of public policy are, or may be, involved, it is the duty of the Attorney-General to inform himself of the views of the Government or of the appropriate Ministers before coming to a decision."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1924; Vol. 179, c. 1214.]

Therefore, if the Attorney-General did not tell the Prime Minister of his intention, he was in breach of a clearly established rule set down by a previous Conservative Prime Minister.

There are other aspects, all of which bear on the relationship between the Cabinet, the courts and Parliament. Where a Minister says to a judge, "That is a matter of national security", I believe that the judge has a duty not to disregard fairness. In his judgment in the GCHQ case Lord Fraser said:

"The decision on whether the requirements of national security outweighed the duty of fairness is for the government and not for the courts; the Government alone has access to the necessary information, and in any event the judicial process is unsuitable for reaching decisions on national security."

If a Minister, using the prerogative that he has temporarily acquired by election, says, "This is a matter of national security", the courts now will not even attempt to be fair. Indeed, in the Ponting case, Mr. Justice McCowan said that

"the interests of the state"

were the same as

"the policy of the Government of the day".

That is a doctrine that every dictator in history would have liked to enshrine in capital letters above his presidential palace. It would be a deadly danger for any party, Conservative, Labour or other, to allow such judgments of the courts to go unchallenged. If we were to accept, in the Commons, that doctrine about national security, the Commons would be capitulating to a Government who had decided to rule by prerogative instead of by accountability to the House of Commons. That is what the debate is about, and it is much more important than whether we can catch each other out with little quotations.

The Secretary of State for Defence has made great play —I am not being personal—about the need to protect the troops. What he is clearly saying is that the Government received all their information about the movements of the General Belgrano from United States intelligence. Everybody who knows anything about such matters knows that we do not have satellite intelligence in the South Atlantic; the Americans do. The Americans intercepted the Argentine messages and sent them to GCHQ. We are not talking about protecting a soldier from being shot tomorrow by a sniper. That is what is usually meant by protecting the boys in uniform in the middle of a war. At the insistence of the Americans, the Government are protecting the fact that it was American intelligence that won the Falklands war by giving us the necessary

information. I believe that as a quid pro quo the trade unions at GCHQ—which is a part of that international intelligence system—had to be abandoned.

These are central questions that reopen matters that I was brought up to believe were settled in the 17th century — that the prerogative could not be used so that Ministers could take matters to the courts and get the judgments that they wished; that the prerogative could not be used in Parliament to buy the silence of the Commons in order to accept whatever a Government said; that the prerogative could not be used to put at risk a man of conscience who chose that course rather than his career. Unless this House comes back to those questions and resolves them, we shall find that the so-called Belgrano-Ponting case will turn the clock back not to Victorian days but to a much earlier, less glorious and less democratic period in our history.

7.48 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I was not intending to mention the name Ponting in my short remarks because, unlike the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I want to concentrate on the main issue for debate tonight — the Belgrano incident. *[Interruption.]* But I cannot forbear from mentioning one aspect that came out of the trial which has not so far been mentioned, because I feel very deeply that the worst offence that Mr. Ponting committed was when he was being questioned by Detective Chief Inspector Hughes. It was mentioned in court and I have the transcript here. Chief Inspector Hughes said:

"I have good reason to suspect that you are involved in passing confidential documents to Mr. Tam Dalyell . . . For that reason I am going to caution you".

Mr. Ponting said:

"Good God, you don't suspect me".

Then he went on to imply that his own personal staff might have photocopied and leaked those documents. He implied that Mararet Aldred, his principal, Nick Darms, his HEO, and even his own PA, Mrs. Ritchie, might have been the persons who committed the leak. If that is the way that that senior, trusted, civil servant behaved towards his own staff, we are well rid of him.

What saddens me is that two senior right hon. Members who have both held high office, the right hon. Members for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees)—alas, only one of them is here, and I am friendly with and respect the other greatly —should rejoice and drink champagne with that sort of a man. It is not worthy of them.

The second thing that Mr. Ponting said, I am afraid, made my blood rise even higher and made me glad that I said what I said yesterday about some of the feelings within the Royal Navy about what was going on. This comes out of yesterday's edition of *The Observer*:

"I was asked to rephrase the letter (to be sent to Denzil Davies) placing greater emphasis on the Argentine attacks on 1 May. This proved somewhat difficult because the level of attacks had actually been very low and ineffective."

What arrogance that from a comfortable seat in Whitehall Mr. Ponting can judge the effect that the Argentine air force had on our sailors down there who were trying to fight a war. That is why I said yesterday —I do not want to go all through it again today as there is not the time—that some constituents of mine who were down there and did fight came to tell me that they felt very badly indeed that the feeling is still around that all was not quite well over the sinking of the Belgrano. They were in the ships that were attacked. The particular individual who was down below in the Glamorgan when those two bombs went off thought that his end had come. He thought that either they had hit a mine or that they had been torpedoed, so great were the shock waves from those two 1,000 lb bombs from the Argentine air force. In nobody's mind who was there was that a minor or light incident. It was after that that they went to do another job away from the main part of the task force. They were closer to the Belgrano than perhaps has been admitted.

I do not take issue with the Ministry of Defence about that. I do not quarrel with its decision not to give away the position of any of our ships because once it has done that it must give the position of them all. It is the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who has been constantly trying to find out where our submarines and ships were, all information that would be of the greatest value to the enemy, that would give away our——

Mr. Heseltine: There has been a certain amount of interest in this matter. My hon. Friend has taken a great deal of interest in it and asked some questions on the assumption that some of our ships were much closer than it was assumed that they were. We have examined the matter again, and I believe that that is not the case. The issue is clear. The House will understand that calculations were made not only on the precise position of the ships but on the rate at which they could close. Sir John Nott, who was Secretary of State at the time, gave the figure of about 200 miles. I think that it was probably more than that. Perhaps the closest was about 260 miles from the task force. The issue was one of calculation—how quickly the ships could converge. It was because the calculations within the Ministry showed clearly that the risk existed that the answers were given in the way that they were.

Mr. Mates: I do not wish to quarrel with what my right hon. Friend said, nor do I expect him to come out with any of the details. The reason why I am saying this is that I want to make this point. It was perfectly clear to every single member of the task force who was at sea that every single Argentine ship was a threat, wherever it was, because the ships were not out there for any reason other than to threaten our task force and to attack it. At the end of the day, when our men have come back home, they resent very deeply what the hon. Member for Linlithgow says, such as "The Belgrano was going home", "The Belgrano was no threat", "The Belgrano was too old to do any damage to any of our ships". Those facts are simply not the case. The threat was real and not imagined. From what I have been told, the fear in which those brave sailors lived was very real as well.

However, there is one source to which we can go. I know that this has been said before, but it was a long time ago, and most people, I believe, have forgotten it. It is what the Argentines said that they were doing. It all came out in a "Panorama" programme when Fred Emery was describing the events. He said:

"It was 'go' for the Argentine fleet. Then he described how the fleet set sail. Then the Argentine admiral Lombardo said:

'We thought that the British were going to concentrate near Port Stanley and we tried to attack isolated ships or small groups of ships out of that region'."

That description applies exactly to the small group of ships to which I referred. He continued:

"The Air Force were going to attack the ships near Port Stanley".

[Mr. Mates]

Fred Emery said:

"and the same order to attack isolated British ships that was given to the 'Belgrano' and her ships as well?"

Lombardo said:

"Not up to this moment because she . . . and the other two escort ships, were going to make an—I don't know how to say in English . . .

Fred Emery suggested "A pincer movement?" and Lombardo said "Yes". Emery said:

"That's the first Argentine admission the 'Belgrano' was part of the pincer movement to join battle with the British."

What could be clearer than that? What could be clearer than the Argentine naval chief of staff himself setting out on British television what the Belgrano and its group were about? The interview goes on, and once again we refer to the words of the admiral. This is fairly crucial because it is connected with the change of course. Lombardo said that at about midnight the ships were given orders to come back. Emery asked, "To come back where?" and the admiral said:

"To their former positions. That is to say, the two groups in the north to their continent and the group in the south to their States island."

Emery asked:

"Was that a political decision or just a military decision?"

Lombardo replied: "Military decision, sir." The fleet was ordered to turn around for military purposes for one reason and one reason only, that the Argentines had got our intentions wrong. We were not landing when the Argentines thought we were landing or where they thought we were landing. They realised, too late as it turned out, that they were in mortal danger of attack from the task force. That is the sole reason why the Belgrano was ordered to turn round. Anyone who says that it was going home on a Sunday afternoon, back to port, does not know what he is talking about because there it is out of the mouth of the Argentine admiral himself. The captain of the Belgrano himself, captain Bonzo, said:

"If I changed course, it was to complete an anti-submarine tactic so as not to maintain a predictable course for a long time."

If there are hon. Members who will not believe my right hon. Friend or who did not believe Sir John Nott, and they can honestly tell us that they do not believe the naval chief of staff of Argentina either, all that I can say is they do not want to know the truth. The truth is that that ship was a danger. It was a great danger to our task force, particularly to those parts of it that were close to it. At the end of the war the fact that the Belgrano was sunk and the entire Argentine navy went home must have saved countless British lives.

In the middle of all that, for Opposition Members to quibble about the time, place and course, the detail and the distance, is to miss the main point because Opposition Members who were staunchly behind the Government during the war—I am happy to say that that is most Opposition Members—accepted the needs and risks of that war. It is only the few who have sought to make mischief, who have consorted with people who are prepared to deceive and to lie, simply to try to discredit my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's handling of the war, who do no service to this country. When they laugh and joke about mistakes and when they rejoice that errors have been made, they do no service to this country either.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will be as responsible and statesmanlike when he winds up today as he was when he spoke about the terrorist attack in Brighton. We would look forward to hearing from him that this war was conducted honourably and responsibly because he knows that that is the truth. I hope that he will share that truth with us.

7.59 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): If it is thought that this debate should be about what happened during the weekend when the Belgrano was sunk, I should point out that there is no reason to have a debate on that today. We could have debated it at any time in the past year or so with as much knowledge and authority as we now have. The time to debate that matter is not now but in a few weeks' time when we have the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs which has been going into the matter in great detail.

When I hear dogmatic views expressed, as we heard from the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), I recall that having spent months going through a mountain of evidence I still cannot make up my mind about the truth of the matter and I look forward to considering it further. How hon. Members who have not looked at the evidence can be so sure and so dogmatic passes my comprehension. As a member of the Select Committee, I take the view that the Government are throwing a grave insult at that Committeee. Having already insulted it by withholding information from it, the Government are now gravely insulting the Select Committee by trying to get the House today to pre-empt and thus devalue its work and its report.

I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that I may refer only to those parts of the Select Committee's work that are already publicly available. It is well known that the Select Committee has been working on this inquiry for some time — well known to everyone except, apparently, the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman said today that the only thing being investigated by the Select Committee—he even read out the terms of reference—was the future of the Falklands and the peace process. We concluded that inquiry months ago and issued a report. The Secretary of State himself gave evidence to the Committee. The report itself, under the heading

"Foreign Affairs Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Wednesday 7 November 1984, right hon. Michael Heseltine MP"

has the following title in bold type:

"The events surrounding the weekend of 1-2 May 1982".

When it became clear that the Secretary of State did not even know to what inquiry he had given evidence, I began to doubt the creditworthiness of the rest of his speech.

We are still taking evidence and the Secretary of State has today promised us two further pieces of evidence. He seemed to be claiming some special credit for letting us see the "Crown Jewels" — more than somewhat belatedly, as we had to drag it out of him—but no credit is due to the Secretary of State as it would have been unthinkable for him to withhold that evidence from the Select Committee. If it was not devastatingly damaging for the judge, the jury, the lawyers and their staff and the court officials and servants to know what was in that document, there can be no reason to withhold it from two right hon. and nine hon. Members of this House. I am surprised that the Secretary of State is not requiring us to be vetted by an Old Etonian as was the jury in the Ponting case.

When the House has the Select Committee report, irrespective of the conclusion that we reach about the

Belgrano—I do not yet know what conclusion that will be—the House will clearly be in a much better and more informed position to pronounce on the matter than it is today.

The justification for today's debate is a justification for a debate on a quite different subject—the revelations and the things that crawled out of the woodwork during the Ponting trial. Those disclosures have confirmed and supplemented what we already knew about the Government's lying to the House, lying to the Select Committee and lying to the country. I use the word "lying" advisedly, strong though it is, because it is a cardinal principle that suppressio veri is equivalent to suggestio falsi, if only because it violates the second of the three requirements—the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The Legge minute has been mentioned several times. In that minute, a civil servant advised his Ministers to deceive the Select Committee by withholding information. What must concern the House is not that Mr. Legge offered that shabby advice to the Minister for the Armed Forces but that the Minister, with the consent of the Secretary of State, accepted and acted upon it. We now know from the evidence that the Minister for the Armed Forces accepted it enthusiastically—a good deal more enthusiastically than his boss the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State today listed the reasons which Mr. Legge gave for deceiving the Select Committee and which the Minister accepted. Those reasons were wholly bogus, hollow and meretricious and were clearly exposed as such in the Select Committee's examination of the Secretary of State, to which I referred earlier. If any hon. Member doubts my word about that, he should read the evidence, which makes it absolutely clear that those reasons did not stand up under questioning.

As time is limited, I mention just one of the reasons given by Mr. Legge for withholding the information. He said that the rules of engagement

"would have to be paraphrased at some length since their format would be almost incomprehensible to the layman".

Yet those rules were given to the War Cabinet, and all the Ministers who were members of the War Cabinet were laymen. I cannot imagine why it should be thought that what was intelligible to the laymen in the War Cabinet would be beyond the understanding of those on the Select Committee. Was the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw), for instance, assumed to be less intelligent and not so quick on the uptake as, say, Lord Whitelaw? The very idea is enough to make a cat laugh. The Secretary of State himself subsequently admitted that it was nonsense when, despite all the reasons that he listed for not giving the rules of engagement to the Select Committee, after much travail he finally gave them to us a few weeks ago. Layman though I am, I had no difficulty at all in understanding them.

One further matter arises out of the Ponting trial. I mention it again as it deserves special attention. A number of people have said that they could not understand why the Government made the mistake of prosecuting Mr. Ponting and that they could not understand what the Government hoped to get out of it. I was not sure myself when I first thought about it. In the light of what has happened, I now know what the Government hoped to get out of putting Clive Ponting in gaol. They hoped to establish, as the judge tried to establish, that their lying to the House was in the national interest. They wanted to protect themselves against any criticism from the Select Committee or anyone else and to be able to say that, however reprehensible the deed, it was done in the national interest.

The aquittal gets rid of all that well and truly. Twelve British citizens have summarily dismissed the judge's monstrous opinion — clearly shared by the Prime Minister and at least some of her Ministers—that the national interest is whatever the Government of the day want to do. That is a monstrous doctrine, because if confers on a Government a cachet of papal infallibility. I do not doubt that all Governments do what they judge to be in the national interest, but no Government have the right to assume that their judgment can never be wrong.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has reached the end of his time.

Mr. Mikardo: I shall just finish my sentence, Mr. Speaker, if I may. No Government should assume that they can never be wrong and that what they do cannot sometimes therefore vary from the national interest. As has been said, that is the cherished doctrine of General Pinochet and of General Jaruzelski. It is the codex of all courts in police states. Before the time of our present Prime Minister and Mr. Justice McCowan, that doctrine was unheard of in our country.

8.10 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): First, I assure the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees)—for whom I and the whole House have great respect, and who made the only worthwhile contribution from the Opposition Benches—that I would not join in any chorus of criticism of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I have known the hon. Gentleman for a long time. I think that he is a bit cracked, if he does not mind my saying so, but I believe that he is absolutely sincere. However, the trouble with people who have bees in their bonnets—and it is right that there should be such people—is that they often find themselves unable to see the wood for the trees.

At least the hon. Gentleman's position is more honourable than that of the Opposition. He consistently opposed the sending of the task force to the Falklands. The Opposition were in favour of sending the task force. However, their amendment shows that they are not even prepared to agree that

"the protection of our Armed Forces must be the prime consideration in determining how far matters involving national security and the conduct of military operations should be disclosed."

In that respect the Labour party suffers by comparison with the Liberal party, whose amendment recognises that factor.

As the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, the Ponting trial is over and done with. It has given rise to a great deal of nonsense. Anyone who believes in trial by jury — as I certainly do — must accept the verdict, and that is the end of the matter so far as the courts are concerned. Whether it was right to prosecute is, with hindsight, a matter that can be discussed, but it would be a bad day for British justice if prosecutions authorised by the Attorney-General were automatically assumed to merit conviction, and it would also be a bad day for British justice if an Attorney-General were deterred from prosecuting for fear of an acquittal and a row in Parliament.

[Sir Anthony Grant]

However, that is not the important issue, nor is the absurd accusation that the Prime Minister lied to the House. The antics of the Opposition over the prosecution were especially ridiculous. Everyone with the slightest intelligence knows that the Attorney-General authorises all prosecutions. The tedious correspondence has bored the pants off everyone and resulted in the Leader of the Opposition making an ass of himself and having to climb down. Likewise, Mr. Ponting himself is not the main issue. However, we are entitled to express nausea at the ridiculous attempt in some quarters to canonise a thoroughly dishonourable man.

Mr. Ponting talks about the right to know, but he did not want anyone to know of his sneaky activities. He did not have the guts to resign, he was prepared to employ double standards in the advice that he gave to Ministers, and he posed as a hero only when he was caught out. Far from regarding him as a hero, I believe that most people would regard him as an unprepossessing and sanctimonious creep. We need not worry about Mr. Ponting. He will soon be a gimmick candidate for the Social Democratic party and will appear endlessly on BBC panel and parlour games.

The Opposition have fallen over themselves to praise Mr. Ponting. I do not mind the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) defending his constituent. However, the Opposition's attitude is in marked contrast to the treatment of my constituent, Mr. Robin Page, a DHSS civil servant, when Labour was in office 15 years ago. Mr. Page was disturbed at the way in which the Labour Government were misleading the House over supplementary benefit frauds. He wrote an article—I accept that he was wrong to do so under a pseudonym—in which he criticised the misleading of the House. He was dismissed by the late Dick Crossman and threatened with the Official Secrets Act. He lost his job and all his pension and gratuity benefits.

The Labour doctrine at that time was as follows. The then Minister of State, Department of Health and Social Security, now Lord Ennals, said:

"It is intolerable for anyone to feel such confidence in his own righteousness that he is entitled to break the rules of the Civil Service confidence and at the same time stay in his job and denounce the Department in which he serves. I do not see how any Government could work if civil servants were permitted to behave in that way."—[*Official Report*, 23 February 1970; Vol. 796, c. 955.]

Will the Leader of the Opposition support the re-establishment of my constituent, who has written to him with that request, or will he apply double standards to the cases of the two civil servants? If he does so, the Opposition will be guilty of humbug.

The direction in which the Belgrano was sailing—or, indeed, with respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), its distance from our ships—is another irrelevancy. It is not of any more vital current importance than the direction in which the Bismarck was sailing in the second world war. The matter is interesting to military historians and to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, but everyone else—especially those whose relatives served in the task force—is simply relieved that it was sunk.

What Ministers reveal to the House is, however, a matter of importance. Undoubtedly the maximum information should be disclosed, but there is a very real dilemma that cannot be ignored. Not everything can be revealed. The public understand that, even if the media do not. Where the security of the nation and the safety of service men are at risk, the right to know must take second place. The public would never forgive Ministers who put at risk a single life merely to satisfy the whims of cranks and political opportunists.

As the right hon. Member for Chesterfield said, the important issue for the future is the relationship between Ministers and civil servants. When I was at the Department of Trade and Industry, I was warned by a senior civil servant that the old standards of loyalty were disappearing and that one would be wise not to rely on civil servants in the future as one had done in the past. I found that very sad. I did not really believe it, but that change of atmosphere led to the increased use of political advisers.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield brought in powerful Left-wing political advisers, who cocooned him from the civil servants. I do not think that he was wrong to do so, because I do not believe that the present leak will be an isolated case. Leaks will occur again, and will lead to parties, of whichever complexion, bringing in their own Civil Service, on the lines of the system in the United States, the French Chef du Cabinet system, or, indeed, the more extreme systems of other countries. I believe that that would be a retrograde step, as a responsible Civil Service acts as a shock absorber to ambitious and over-excitable ministerial springs. Our Civil Service has given us an enviable stability in comparison with other nations.

Ministers may disregard all the other nonsense talked in the debate, but they should address themselves to the problem of how to deal in future with relations between officials and Ministers. The Government must consider the general morale within a service upon which we depend. Is all well in that connection? Only Governments can put matters right.

I remind the House again of the wise words of Lord Ennals:

"I do not see how any Government could work if civil servants were permitted to behave in that way."

I take precisely the same view of Mr. Ponting in this case. Much deeper issues are raised in the debate than what happened in the South Atlantic two years ago. Ministers should apply their minds to those issues, and the House should reject the Opposition's absurd amendment.

8.19 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) is absent, as he referred to the Lombardo interview on "Panorama". The hon. Gentleman is a member of the Select Committee on Defence and I assume that he has read the note written by one of the advisers to that Committee, which says of the "Panorama" interview:

"This interview has been seized upon by the government as confirming their fears of 1 and 2 May. It was mentioned for example in the Prime Minister's letter to Mr. Foulkes. It has, however, been suggested that Lombardo now feels his remarks were quoted out of context. The phrase 'pincer movement' is probably an overstatement. *The Belgrano's* Task Group 79.3, comprising some of the least modern ships of the Argentine Navy, was clearly not earmarked for a major offensive role. The sort of manoeuvres described do not conform to a classic pincer movement."

Mr. Speaker: Order. Has this evidence been published?

Mr. Douglas: It is not evidence. It is a note of advice given to hon. Members. I should not quote evidence.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must warn the hon. Gentleman that it is not normal to report the internal proceedings of a Select Committee.

Mr. Douglas: You have my assurance, Mr. Speaker, that I have not quoted evidence. It is a note or observation, and I am prepared to submit it to any hon. Member. I have quoted it merely to contradict some of what the hon. Member for Hampshire, East said.

I do not propose to follow the events of 1 and 2 May because the Select Committee on Defence and others might prise the information out of the Government in due course. I see no reason why the so-called "Crown Jewels" should not be made available to Select Committees that are interested in these matters. Having accepted that view, I trust that the Government will ensure that such information is speedily given to the Select Committees.

I accept that intelligence and operational matters must be kept secret, but the House has not considered how we were operating during Operation Corporate. We never declared war on Argentina but operated under article 51 of the United Nations charter. There might have been good reasons for our not declaring war. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) gave some. One is that, if we had declared war, the United States would have had to make its stance clear; and in those circumstances security and intelligence information from the United States might have been withheld. We should be clear about what we were safeguarding in trying to bottle up the events of 30 April to 2 May 1982. It is one thing to do that at the time, but quite another to do it two or three years after the event.

The kernel of the case against the Government has little to do with Ministers but a lot to do with the Prime Minister's presidential style of government. The nation will be suspicious that she, who is a tenacious lady—much respect has been paid to her today—surrounds herself with people who give her the answers that she wants. That is extremely dangerous. Hon. Members have referred to the dogs that have not barked. I do not mean to be disrespectful to Conservative Members, but some of those dogs are conspicuously absent from this debate. I refer to the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) and the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins). When Lord Carrington and the right hon. Member for Spelthorne faced difficulties concerning Operation Corporate, they took the opportunity to resign, but the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East got no such opportuntity. The nation will recognise that in this cover-up. The Government operated under perhaps a mistaken view of the diktat of the Prime Minister. Ministers gave her the information that she wanted. That might have involved the Attorney-General. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) gave a potent view of what ought to have happened in regard to the political considerations that should have been in the Attorney-General's mind. There are real dangers in the Prime Minister's approach, which must be halted.

I should like finally to consider the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). One of the reasons why we have parliamentary privilege is to defend our constituents, not ourselves. I have told my constituents and my constituency party that if everyone else in the land thinks that they are wrong but they can convince me that they are right, it is my obligation, with the use of parliamentary privilege, to defend their interests in the House of Commons. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow takes the view that his responsibility is to prise the truth out of the Government. That might annoy or upset the Government, but that is what we come here for. There is a distinction between the will of Government, the will of the House and the good of the nation. Through this debate, we are getting a clearer understanding of how the Prime Minister operates. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) questioned the use of "civil servants" in Cabinet. We have a 10 Downing street Cabinet Office which is stacked full of yes-men and women for the Prime Minister. There are dangers in this form of elective dictatorship, especially when the party in government has a large majority.

I welcome this debate and the exposure of the Government's misleading the House and the Select Committee, but I shall welcome it even more if it is clearly understood that some members of the Cabinet should occasionally stand up to the Prime Minister.

8.27 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): What greater test can any Government face than to fight a military campaign and have a disloyal adviser in a key area of defence? I am reminded of the betrayal of the Spartans at Thermopylae to the Persians.

In what other country would the Government have to balance disclosure against national security in such a blaze of examination, comment and publicity?

Mr. Mikardo: The United States.

Mr. Browne: No, not the President.

Mr. Mikardo: Yes.

Mr. Browne: What party would place its own fortunes so obviously above the national interest to try to bring down a democratically elected Government who, above all others since the war, have faced and continue to face our national interests with courage and integrity?

The Falklands campaign was relatively small but involved intelligence and tactics that still form part of the everyday and overall defence of our nation. We should never forget that, daily, we face a struggle to retain our freedom. Our armed forces must remain vigilant constantly. Our intelligence and tactics are of great interest to the enemies of our freedom.

The Falklands campaign was one of the finest feats of arms in our entire history, in which a decisive factor was the sinking of the Belgrano, which itself was based on intelligence. It would be greatly against the interests of our country to disclose the sources of that intelligence. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) talked brazenly about the United States being the source of that intelligence. What does he hope to achieve by saying that? If it were true, and I emphasise if it were true, its disclosure could only damage the interests and influence of the United States throughout Latin and South America. It would also damage our relationships with the United States.

We must remember that the Falklands campaign is still operational. We have soldiers, sailors and airmen there

[Mr. Browne]

today, who must live in a state of war readiness. The disclosure of the source of the intelligence and the tactics are still appropriate to them.

The Government must daily live under the unenviable burden of balancing disclosure and secrecy in the national interests. I listened to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and I am convinced that the Government have balanced disclosure and secrecy in the national interests. I wholly support them in continuing to do so. They have achieved this balance, despite a thoroughly devious and disloyal adviser in a senior position in a key Ministry.

Let us now consider what our constituents think about this matter. I do not believe that the general public care when the Belgrano was sighted, where it was facing when it was engaged, or how far it was from our ships. Most of them do not give a hoot. They are extremely glad that it was sunk.

Our constituents could be excused for feeling that Mr. Ponting was treacherous, especially in the light of our debate. It appears that he did not act in search of a political idealistic truth, nor even for political reasons, but for party political reasons. I accept the court's decision, but I have a big job in persuading some of my constituents to accept it.

The Ponting case has many effects. First, it adversely affects the relationships between Ministers and civil servants. We have an excellent Civil Service, which has extremely high standards, is basically non-political and acts in the national interests. We now have a problem of confidentiality, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) pointed out. Secondly, the case has the effect of causing potential delays in political decisions in future wars. That is serious. We face daily the problems of Queen's Order No. 2, and, as my right hon. and hon. Friends will know, I often ask questions about it. In certain circumstances, it may be considered too dramatic a move to mobilise our reserve forces under that order. It would take a major political decision to do that. That is the fear of many military planners, and that presents a genuine risk in our defence posture. The case will affect adversely difficult political decisions that will have to be made in future for the exercise of Queen's Order No. 2.

The debate makes it clear that the decision to sink the Belgrano was utterly correct. Even the Argentinian admiral agrees that he would have done the same in the circumstances. Nevertheless, correct or not, the decision took courage and decisive action. What of the future? We may not be in the fortunate position of having such a decisive and courageous Prime Minister. The effects of this scrutiny of and back biting about a tactical decision in a battle serve our country ill.

Finally, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) criticised section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. Many hon. Members realise that there are things wrong with it, but his credibility vanished when he made a naive statement about GCHQ. Many hon. Members have known about GCHQ, but we have also known that the institution had been infiltrated. It is a top secret location instituted for communications, yet union rules forbade even the searching of brief cases of those leaving the base. It was an amazingly insecure place. Undoubtedly it took courage to re-establish security there. However, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that section 2 needs to be replaced or substituted, but, until hon. Members can agree on an effective substitute, it should remain.

This debate has shown conclusively that the Government acted decisively, correctly and courageously, and they should be praised for it.

8.36 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Unlike the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), but like many of my right hon. and hon. Friends who have spoken, I opposed the decision to recapture the Falkland Islands by force. All the information that has subsequently been given to the House has more than confirmed my judgment.

It was obvious to any layman at the outset that the task force was embarking on an objective which involved great dangers. The information shows that we were lucky that only 255 members of the task force and 754 members of the Argentine forces lost their lives. Many more could have been killed. Inherent in the decision to recapture the Falklands by force was the fact that the Government would subsequently embark on their Fortress Falklands policy. We are spending thousands of millions of pounds a year on that policy, which is indefensible. I say that not in an attempt to be wise after the event but because it is important that the House should learn the lessons of the Falklands exercise. In so far as I would criticise Governments about what happened in the Falklands, the main responsibility lies not with this Government but with all the Governments since 1965, who failed to respond to the resolution carried in the United Nations General Assembly, which called on Argentina and Britain to resolve the issue through negotiations. The sovereignty of the Falkland Islands should have been negotiated, and the best deal obtained, during those years when there were democratically elected Governments in Argentina.

The debate is not a general debate about the Falklands, nor the sinking of the Belgrano, but about the circumstances of the trial of Clive Ponting. This afternoon the Secretary of State went to great lengths to discredit Mr. Ponting. To some extent he seemed to attempt to retry him with himself as the prosecuting counsel. Most Conservative Members were clearly convinced by the Secretary of State, but I was not. Time will tell, but the crucial issue that the Secretary of State did not address himself to was the verdict of the trial. The decision was a historic vindication of the jury system. As the defence solicitor for Mr. Ponting said, it was a political verdict at a political trial. That decision is historic because the crucial issue in the trial was the constitutional one, which involved the decision of Ministers to provide misleading information to the House. It is no use the right hon. Gentleman seeking to make out that civil servants made suggestions that resulted in misleading information. That has been the policy for months. At one point it almost seemed as if the right hon. Gentleman was trying to criticise Mr. Ponting for coming forward with proposals to continue the Government's policy of misleading the House of Commons.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who opened the debate so effectively for the Opposition, quoted the answer which the Prime Minister gave my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 21 February. Indeed, my hon. Friend has pursued these matters diligently over the years. That was an important answer. It was not just a spontaneous answer

to a supplementary question. It will be recalled that that question had stood on the Order Paper for two weeks. It specifically asked the Prime Minister why she would not set up a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the Belgrano. We know that the Prime Minister's answer was far from the truth. There is also the whole question of the so-called Stanley memorandum.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said, this is not about the Legge minute or about what civil servants wrote. They were simply doing what the Government wanted. The issue is that the Government chose to submit the memorandum to the Select Committee. That memorandum was designed to mislead the Select Committee, which had asked for information on the changes in the rules of engagement.

Dr. Hampson: Surely the Select Committee asked for a document that was not classified, and that is what it got. When it asked for a classified document with full information, it got that.

Mr. Strang: If the hon. Gentlman reads the Legge minute, he will understand what I am referring to. That memorandum was at best intended to prevent the Select Committee from getting the information that it sought.

It would be churlish not to acknowledge that the Government have now decided to allow the Select Committee to see the document known as the "Crown Jewels". When the Secretary of State gave evidence to the Select Committee, he was most adamant that it should not see that document. It is obviously important that the Government have now decided to make it available. When the Minister of State replies, I hope that he will make it clear that there is no qualification other than that of the most elementary precautions that one might take, and that all members of the Select Committee will see the whole document.

The crucial issue is the Government's responsibility to Parliament. Our unwritten constitution does not work if Parliament cannot depend on Minister's telling the truth. They have not told the truth on this issue. Incidentally, I hope that the Select Committee will explain why the truth has not been told. I still find it mysterious that the Government should have maintained this deception for so long if, as the Secretary of State has said, there was nothing to hide. That is the task of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, and we shall see whether it is able to provide an answer to that question.

This whole debate will be a tragic, wasted opportunity if it does not lead the Government to reconsider their position and to abandon the approach whereby they are prepared deliberately to mislead this House. That is the crucial historic lesson of that vetted jury which declared Mr. Clive Ponting innocent.

8.43 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Three dates are crucial to the argument about the sinking of the Belgrano. The first is 2 April 1982, when Argentine armed forces invaded the Falkland Islands, engaged in combat with the British armed forces there, captured the British armed forces and expelled our governor. That was every bit as much an act of war as when Germany invaded Poland in 1939. From that moment onwards, the armed forces of the Crown were perfectly entitled to sink any Argentine warship anywhere, except in neutral waters. They needed no permission in international law from the Prime Minister, or any declaration of war. War came into existence when Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands.

The second date — and this has not yet been mentioned in the debate—is 25 April 1982. On 26 April 1982 *The Times* carried an article from Nicholas Ashford, dated Washington, 25 April, and headed:

"Costa Mendez says it is technically war".

It stated:

"Senor Costa Mendez underlined how seriously he considered the situation when he told reporters on his arrival in New York that Argentina was now technically in a state of war with Britain."

Therefore, for the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) to refer to the sinking of the Belgrano in a state of war as "murder" is forgivable only in someone who is not responsible for the words that he utters.

This is crucial. Why should the House want to debate the sinking of the Belgrano, any more than the shooting down of an aircraft? Time and again, at Question Time and in defence debates, Opposition Members have come back to the sinking of the Belgrano and have used words which they knew to be untrue when they described it. It was a perfectly legitimate act of war, as would have been the sinking of the aircraft carrier The 25 of May, whatever course she was on and whatever orders she had received. This is the central truth of the matter.

My only other comment is to invite the House to recollect how even the Israeli intelligence forces were wholly deceived by the signals put out by the Egyptians before they attacked in the last war between Israel and Egypt. If the House remembers those two things, it will have grasped the central point and the complete justification for the sinking of the Belgrano.

8.47 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) is a long-term Member of the House. He will know that the Opposition are not refighting the war. We are concerned with the fact that Ministers have sought to conceal information from the House of Commons and its Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

If Conservative Members vote for the motion tonight, they will do so before having the benefit of a White Paper —which has often been called for—and before they have the benefit of the report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to a number of matters relating to the attempt of Ministers to keep certain material from the House and its Foreign Affairs Select Committee. We know that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was not too keen on divulging material. Indeed, we know that he was less keen than was his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

We were told in court evidence last week that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces went to No. 10. The private secretary to the Secretary of State, Mr. Mottram, was examined by Mr. Laughland, counsel for the defence, and we know that Mr. Mottram wrote the following memorandum to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. The evidence states:

"The Secretary of State"—

for Defence—

"would prefer to reserve the argument that you could not reveal operational matters for those cases where it was the professional judgment of those concerned within the department that there were genuine security objections to giving that information?"

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Mr. Mottram replied:

"Yes."

It is a pity that neither Minister is here, because it is clear from that that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was, in common words, trying to use the formula of "operational matters", contained in this memorandum, rather than the well-tried formula, subsequently used by the Secretary of State, of, "I have nothing to add to the letter that my right hon. Friend sent to the hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies)." From that court evidence alone, it can be seen that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was attempting to keep information out of parliamentary answers, beyond rules and precedent.

I wish particularly to look at the matters relating to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. It was the Legge minute, about which we have already heard, that caused Mr. Ponting to reveal this information to the Select Committee, and so to the House. The Legge minute told Ministers that they should not reveal, or if they did it would be more than they had done already, the rules of engagement of 30 May and the extent of the changes in the rules of engagement of 2 May. These matters were in the Legge minute, and it was these matters which this afternoon the Secretary of State claimed were matters of security. I believe that he was attempting to put up a false front to defend, not the safety of our armed forces, but the conduct of Her Majesty's Government and, in particular, the conduct of the Prime Minister.

In the court case, evidence was given not only by Mr. Mottram but by the secretary who wrote that minute, Mr. Legge, himself. Mr. Legge was cross-examined by Mr. Laughland about the matter. Mr. Legge had received a minute on this matter from Mr. Darms of another Department, and Mr. Laughland said:

> "No. Even that would show that on 30th April the Government had authorised what is called 'the engagement of', that means the attack on, the carrier even outside the total exclusion zone?
>
> A. It was permitted, yes.
>
> Q. Was there, to your knowledge, some disadvantage of a national nature, security nature, in revealing that that had been authorised from the 30th April?
>
> A. Not that single piece of information, but the grounds on which it was taken.
>
> Q. And also, of course, the danger to which you were being alerted was that the change on the 2nd May wasn't just to sink the Belgrano, but really authorised attacking all or any Argentine warships over a very large area, whether inside or outside the TEZ.
>
> A. Again, the reasons — — The fact itself would not be sensitive, it is the reasons for the decision."

The House will remember that this afternoon the Secretary of State—I am glad that he has now come into the Chamber—implied that he had declined to answer the questions of the Select Committee, which asked for the dates, the reasons for and the outcome of the changes of the rules of engagement, because security was involved. In the evidence from the trial that I have read, no less than the assistant secretary, on oath, said that those matters were not security sensitive. That backs up the amendment of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition because it shows, beyond question, that the Secretary of State, backed up by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, acting on the advice of Mr. Legge's minute, was attempting, and initially successfully attempting, to withhold information from the House. That is what my right hon. Friend's amendment is about.

If that is so, it is up to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces when he winds up the debate to deny those facts, or they stand. If they stand, they are bound to raise further questions, which Conservative Members should ask themselves. They will raise questions which the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs will be bound to ask. What is more important, they will raise questions which people outside the House will continue to want answered.

Before Conservative Members vote for the motion, they should ask themselves some questions. First, why has this motion been rushed on to the Floor of the House before a more considered one? Why are the Government trying to fight the battle of the Falklands again on the results on a court case at the Old Bailey? I can only suggest that the defence that they are trying to make—on security—is really a defence of the Government's past conduct rather than an attempt to defend the rights of the House and of the British people.

The last question that I put to Conservative Members is one that they will be asked in due course. Events will take their course, more will be revealed and there will be questions. At the next general election, this is one of the questions which the electorate will ask of all hon. Members who vote for the Government's motion: why was this motion put down, on what basis of evidence did you vote for it, and why did you not vote for the Opposition's amendment? The person who will have to answer those questions more than any other is the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), the Prime Minister.

8.56 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I thank the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for having allowed me four minutes.

This is not the first time that we have considered an issue of this nature. The closest parallel was the sinking of the French fleet by the Royal Navy at Oran in 1940. On that occasion, 1,297 French sailors lost their lives. Sir Winston Churchill said:

> "This was a hateful decision, the most unnatural and painful in which I have ever been concerned . . . No act was ever more necessary for the life of Britain and for all that depended upon it."

That act was regarded as regrettable, but it was not regarded with remorse.

We should look on the Belgrano episode in the same light. I shall point out some evidence that has not yet been mentioned. Lord Lewin said in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 8 April 1984 that

> "the Belgrano constituted a potential threat to the Task Force and she had been used to direct aircraft which scored near misses on Task Force ships."

I take it that he meant by that that the Belgrano had been helping to direct the aircraft that attacked the Glamorgan, and only just missed it with two 1,000 lb bombs.

The role of the civil servant was referred to by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) at the conference that he addressed at the weekend. He spoke of Mr. Clive Ponting having a higher duty. It is only fair to remind the House of what the right hon. Gentleman said to me when he was a Minister some years ago and I thought that he had overruled his civil servants. On 17 June 1976, the right hon. Gentleman said:

> "As the hon. Gentleman knows, officials of the Department give evidence on behalf of Ministers. Officials have

no views. They are the spokesmen of the Government of the day." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 17 June 1976; c. 419.]

If it was the view of the right hon. Gentleman on 17 June 1976 in the Committee which considered the Health Services Bill that officials had no views, it is obvious that he has changed his mind. But in the very unlikely event that he obtains office again, how may we be certain that he will not revert to his old role of treating civil servants as having no views?

When a great deal of circumstantial evidence is provided about an act—and during my brief stay with the Army this struck me very forcefully—it is possible to discern the pattern or secret behind it. But, to be absolutely safe, it is difficult to know with certainty how much evidence can be safely provided without revealing the nature of the secret or secrets. I suggest that where the lives of a great many British service men are at risk, they must be protected by keeping those secrets intact and safe. It is my view that the satisfaction of the obsessional curiosity about intelligence of anyone is not worth the life of a single British soldier.

9 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): This has been a debate in which there have been several speeches of high quality. However the most significant speeches are those which have not been delivered. In the Conan Doyle story, "Silver Blaze", Sherlock Holmes drew attention to what he called the curious incident of the dog in the night time. Watson replied that the dog did nothing in the night time, to which remark Holmes responded, "That was the curious incident." In this debate, there have been not one but two silent dogs — the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General. Their silence is as significant as anything that they might have said had they spoken. It is as though we have sat through a performance of "Hamlet", but without Gertrude and without Guildenstern—though, of course, we are about to hear from Yorick.

With the failure of the Prime Minister either to speak today or to answer the detailed questions put to her in correspondence by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, I suppose that we shall never know the full truth behind the decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting. What is perfectly obvious is that there are a lot of people who want to make it clear that they had nothing to do with it.

The Prime Minister memorably told the House last week that she was on holiday when the decision was taken. The Attorney-General owned up that he, too, was on holiday. During a press conference at Rosyth dockyard, the Secretary of State for Defence declared mysteriously that he was out of his office at the time, but the Prime Minister later said that he, too, was on holiday or, as she put it, "on leave" — rather appropriately for someone who likes to dress up in combat gear. As for the Minister for the Armed Forces, he was on holiday as well.

One can imagine the inter-office memorandum that flew around Whitehall that carefree August:

> "We're all going on a summer holiday
> No more working for a week or two."

The House will recall that the words go on:

> "Everybody has a summer holiday
> Doing things they always wanted to
> So we're going on our summer holiday
> To make our dreams come true."

All these vacationing Ministers have carefully worked out alibis. So what is the solution to the mystery? The answer is that the person responsible for the decision to prosecute was the Solicitor-General. Yes, the butler did it.

But we all know that the Secretary of State for Defence wanted it done. He told Sir Ewen Broadbent, his second permanent secretary, that in his view Mr. Ponting should be prosecuted, and I understand that a minute of that meeting was taken.

What was it that made the Secretary of State so convinced that this civil servant should be put on trial. After all, Mr. Ponting was not the only person who had prima facie broken the Official Secrets Act by revealing information about the sinking of the Belgrano. Commander Christopher Wreford-Brown, the captain of the Conqueror, the submarine that sank the Belgrano, revealed the true date of the sighting of the Belgrano nearly a year before the Government admitted it. He was in clear breach of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, yet nearly two years later he has not been prosecuted. In June 1984, Lord Lewin, the former Chief of the Defence Staff, revealed to journalists details of the role of the top secret hydrophonic towed array system in detecting the Belgrano, information that the Secretary of State said today it was unthinkable to reveal. And eight months later Lord Lewin has not been prosecuted.

Even if one considers only the papers that Mr. Ponting leaked, the person who received those papers—my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—was liable for prosecution, yet he, too, remains at large. Nor has it been suggested by anybody that Mr. Ponting violated national security. Indeed, prosecuting counsel at the trial said specifically:

> "It is not suggested that the disclosure, in fact, damaged national security."

This assertion was clearly repeated by the judge at the trial who, it is fair to say, sought scrupulously not to bias the jury in favour of Mr. Ponting. The judge said:

> "Mr. Amlott, for the Crown, has at all stages made clear that it is not suggested by the Crown that the disclosure made by the defendant to Mr. Dalyell in fact breached national security."

So why was it Mr. Ponting who had to be put on trial and, if at all possible, sent to gaol? It was because he had committed the unpardonable sin of drawing the attention of a Member of Parliament to the fact that for months on end Ministers of the Crown had not only been misleading Parliament but that their action had not been inadvertent or accidental, for those two leaked documents demonstrated that certain information had either been deliberately withheld from Parliament, even though hon. Members had asked for it and it was not classified information, or else had been supplied to Parliament in a form and manner that were calculated to mislead. That is why the discredited section 2 of the Official Secrets Act had to be brought into operation, a section which the present Home Secretary in this House described, when in opposition, as "simply indefensible." Mr. Ponting had blown Ministers' cover and disclosed their cover-up, so he had to be the subject of a political trial—a show trial.

The hope of Ministers must have been that a verdict of guilty would vindicate all they had done. It could also be politically useful in reviving the patriotic fervour of the Falklands period itself. The Government, after a favourable verdict, could once again drape themselves in the White Ensign, even though their true colours were the Jolly Roger. So the Ponting trial was all set to be a

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

triumphant revival of that successful favourite, "Oh, What a Lovely War!" Unfortunately for the Government, its real title turned out to be "The Man Who Knew Too Much."

It has repeatedly been pointed out today that until April of last year the Government had consistently given the impression that the Belgrano was sighted on 2 May 1982, the day on which it was sunk. That was the information supplied to this House by Sir John Nott, then Secretary of State for Defence, on 4 May when the sinking of the Belgrano was announced. In fact, the Belgrano was sighted on 1 May and located on 30 April.

It was only in her reply to a letter sent from my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) dated 4 April 1984, a reply that took more than four weeks to draft, that the Prime Minister finally admitted the correct date. That letter also purported to provide for the first time information relating to the change in the rules of engagement that authorised the sinking of the Belgrano. But even after that letter the Government still refused to give to the House details of the course of the Belgrano before she was sunk or of the public warning that was issued in connection with her sinking.

It was the problem of how to reply to my right hon. Friend, together with a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, that led to a series of grubby, squalid meetings at the Ministry of Defence and in Downing street.

Before the spring of last year, Ministers had regularly seen to it that false information about the sinking had been communicated to Parliament and to the country. On 14 December 1982 a White Paper on the Falklands war was published. Paragraph 110 of that White Paper opened with the words:

"On 2 May HMS *Conqueror* detected the Argentine cruiser, *General Belgrano*".

When Sir John Nott told Parliament, two days after the sinking of the Belgrano, that she had been sighted on 2 May when it was really 1 May that mistake was excusable in the aftermath of the engagement and taking into account possible difficulties in communication. But by the time of the publication of the White Paper the true date was known. What was a pardonable mistake in May had become an untruth in December.

Moreover, on that same date, 14 December, a dispatch on the war from Sir John Fieldhouse, the Chief of Naval Staff, was published in the *London Gazette*. Sir John had wanted to put the true date of the sinking, 1 May, into the dispatch, but his dispatch was doctored in circumstances which are still not clear, and the false date was substituted for the true one.

As time went on, further items of false information were supplied to the House by Ministers. Statements remained in *Hansard*, in a White Paper presented to the House and in the *London Gazette* which not only were misleading but which Ministers knew to be misleading. No effort was made in the usual and accepted way to correct them. They were simply left on the record. Not a single correction has ever been volunteered by the Government. Every admission has had to be squeezed out of them.

Then the letter arrived from my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli. The first reaction that came from the Secretary of State was creditable. Being relatively new to his post he wanted to know the facts about the Belgrano and that is why Mr. Ponting was asked to compile the background brief that became known as the Crown Jewels. The Secretary of State is reported to have said at the time that he did not want another Watergate. There is one considerable difference, among others, between this affair and Watergate. At least Nixon had the tapes to help him remember what lies he had told.

At the end of March, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State finally got round to considering what advice to give to the Prime Minister on the reply that she should send to my right hon. Friend. Two meetings were held at the Ministry of Defence, one on 30 March and the other on 1 April. What emerges clearly from the trial evidence, not simply from Mr. Ponting, but just as plainly from Mr. Mottram, the Secretary of State's private secretary, and also from internal memoranda which were produced, is that the aim of those meetings was not to decide how best to tell the truth to Members of Parliament. No, Mr. Speaker. The objective of Ministers throughout was to see what they could get away with; what they could palm off on Parliament.

Indeed, the Minister of State had asked for two draft replies to be prepared——

Mr. Heseltine *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall give way when I have finished my passage, as the Secretary of State said.

The Minister of State had asked for two replies to be prepared, one of which would give a truthful account of the events and the other which would not. That request caused such bewilderment that the Minister of State confirmed his instruction in writing. Which draft did the Minister of State prefer? The game is given away by the documents placed in the Library today by the Secretary of State. In his minute accompanying those drafts, Mr. Ponting wrote: "Minister (AF)"—that is the Minister of State—

"asked me to prepare a draft admitting for the first time that Belgrano was sighted on 1 May and not 2 May, this is draft 2 attached."

The Minister of State could not wait to scribble next to that the words

"No. Drafts on both bases were sought."

Would he have scrawled those words if he was content with the truthful version?

Mr. Heseltine: The House will have noticed that the right hon. Gentleman has skipped time in order to give credibility to a wholly misleading account of the events. The purpose of those two meetings that took place on the Friday and the Sunday was to decide how to cope with the request for information in the light of Mr. Ponting's advice that the answers were to do with intelligence and operational information.

Mr. Kaufman: Mr. Ponting is not answerable to the House, but the Secretary of State is. It is he whom we are holding to account this evening. The trial evidence——

Mr. Heseltine: Why does not the right hon. Gentleman tell the truth?

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. Gentleman can no doubt give lessons in that.

The trial evidence makes it quite clear that the Minister of State wanted the evasive version to be sent. The information that my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli had requested was unclassified, but the Minister of State insisted that it was classified. When the meeting decided that at any rate the true date of the sighting should

be supplied, the Minister of State disagreed. The Secretary of State, with the permanent secretary, then went across the road to see the Prime Minister. They left at 4.30 pm and returned at 7.30 pm. In his evidence to the Select Committee on 7 November 1984 the Secretary of State said:

"the only time that I have been to the Prime Minister to reveal something that I felt had to be put right in terms of the record of the House of Commons, she could not have been quicker in urging me to make the earliest possible rectification."

Nearly three hours seems a long time to make a decision that could "not have been quicker".

Even so the answer sent to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli was in part misleading due to the intervention of the Minister of State. It was he who recommended that there be inserted in the Prime Minister's reply an extract from a lecture by Admiral Woodward, which included the statement:

"I therefore sought, for the first and only time throughout the campaign, a major change to Rules of Engagement to enable Conqueror to attack Belgrano outside the Exclusion Zone."

The letter from the Prime Minister went on:

"Ministers agreed to the proposed change in the Rules of Engagement at about 1 pm London time on 2 May."

It is quite true that that is what Admiral Woodward asked for, but it is not what he got. The War Cabinet certainly agreed to a change in the rules of engagement, but the minute leaked by Mr. Ponting pointed out that

"the change on 2 May was not restricted to *Belgrano* but included all Argentine warships over a large area."

Conservative Members cheer. But that is why Sir Clive Whitmore, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, supported inclusion of this passage with the memorable justification that it was "not a direct lie." Sir Clive is, of course, a former private secretary to the Prime Minister.

So, content that they were not telling a direct lie, the Ministers approved the draft and sent it across to the Prime Minister. She then, at noon on 2 April, held a meeting with Lord Whitelaw and the Chief Whip

"to consider the political aspects of the letter",

or, to put it another way, to consider the political risks of telling part of the truth even if part of it was not a direct lie. That letter was duly sent to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli.

The problem still remained of what reply to send to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. Mr. Ponting offered a draft which would have for the first time admitted that the Belgrano had reversed course on the day she was sunk. That information was unclassified, but the Minister of State opposed its being provided and the Secretary of State accepted the Minister of State's advice. In dealing with that letter, the Minister of State opposed providing the requested information and said in a memorandum:

"It is not our practice to comment on military operational matters."

The memorandum went on:

"Mr. Stanley personally has no difficulty whatsoever on operational grounds in declining to give this information. The text of the draft letter to Mr. Dalyell attached to Head of DH5 Minute abundantly illustrates, in Minister AF's view, the depth of the water the Secretary of State would get into were he to send it."

The Minister of State said that it would be "a danger to answer." A reply was sent which provided no information. My hon. Friend was not to be put off, and tabled a series of parliamentary questions. It was then that the Minister of State suggested that a reply should say:

"It is not our practice to comment on military operational matters or details of military operations."

But Mr. Ponting pointed out that it was not possible to sustain that line because the Prime Minister had provided operational information. The Secretary of State rejected the Minister of State's suggested reply, but he did not provide the information that my hon. Friend had requested.

Again, seeking further to avoid providing information to my hon. Friend, the Minister of State sent a minute, which stated:

"The Minister has subsequently discussed a slight variation in the Secretary of State's answer with No. 10 so as to provide a justification for effectively declining to answer Parliamentary Question 3143C."

On another occasion when two writers, Mr. Arthur Gavshon and Mr. Desmond Rice, put a series of questions on the Belgrano sinking to the Ministry of Defence, officials prepared replies. But the Minister of State prevented the replies from being sent, saying that he did not wish to encourage any debate whatever about the Belgrano.

Yet again the Minister of State held a meeting with Admiral Sir Peter Stanford, Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff. He asked Sir Peter to agree with him that all information relating to the Belgrano was classified. Sir Peter refused to do so.

In May of last year the Minister of State sent a minute to Mr. Ponting saying that all future questions on the Belgrano should be given the reply that it was not the Department's practice to comment on military operational matters. But that was not so. The Department frequently comments on military operational matters.

Then last June came the request from the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs for a note

"listing all the changes which had taken place in the Rules of Engagement for the Task Force during the conflict, together with the dates and the reasons for the outcome of those changes."

Such was the climate of deception and misinformation in the Ministry of Defence that one official, Mr. Baker, sent a minute saying:

"I should be grateful for any corrections of fact or emphasis, particularly from DS5B, with relation to the Belgrano aspects lest I have departed inadvertently from the public line and risk a breach in our united front."

That was a united front against a Select Committee of this House — *[Interruption.]* — and Mr. Legge submitted another minute which offered a series of reasons for not providing the information requested, among which was:

"a full list of changes would provide more information than Ministers have been prepared to reveal so far about the Belgrano affair."

The Secretary of State said that that reason was irrelevant. If it was irrelevant, why did Mr. Legge feel it necessary to give it?

So on the instructions of the Minister of State a draft reply was prepared for the Select Committee which very specifically and very deliberately did not provide what was requested. What is more, it repeated in paraphrase a passage in the Prime Minister's letter which had been dubbed by Sir Clive Whitmore as "not a direct lie". The Secretary of State agreed that that unsatisfactory and misleading memorandum should be sent.

It was not only the Minister of Defence who was involved; we have also to consider the role of the Prime Minister herself for a period of nearly two years. The Prime Minister, in a series of parliamentary answers and letters to MPs, provided information that was inaccurate, misleading or both.

The Prime Minister stated:

[Mr. Kaufman]

"The 'General Belgrano' and her escort had made many changes of course during 2 May." — [*Official Report*, 16 December 1982; Vol. 34, c.*199*.]

But, in fact, the Belgrano made one major change of course, reversing her direction away from the task force.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow asked the Prime Minister to make available, on Privy Councillor terms, a full account of the events leading up to the sinking of the Belgrano, the Prime Minister replied:

"No. There is nothing that can usefully be added to what has already been said."—[*Official Report*, 28 February 1983; Vol. 38, c.*11*.]

But there was a great deal which could usefully be added, and the Prime Minister herself added it, not on Privy Council terms but in letters to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli 13 months later and to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) five months after that. So that reply from the Prime Minister was also misleading.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow asked about the circumstances of the sinking of the Belgrano, the Prime Minister said:

"The full facts were given in several replies in the House. All the facts were there." — [*Official Report*, 21 February 1984; Vol. *55*, c. 695.]

But the full facts had not been given; all the facts were not there. Within six weeks more facts were given to my right hon. Friend, and in the following September more facts still were published, so again the Prime Minister's remarks were false.

On 4 April came the Prime Minister's letter to my right hon. Friend which included the alleged information about the rules of engagement—the information described as "not a direct lie"—so that was a misleading answer.

In a reply yet again to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, the Prime Minister said:

"The circumstances leading to the sinking of the Belgrano were described in my letter to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on 4 April."—[*Official Report*, 17 May 1984; Vol. 60, c. *225*.]

But, quite apart from the misleading passage in that letter, the right hon. Lady had not described all the circumstances that could be published, since more information was provided in her letter of 19 September to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. My hon. Friend received that response following a letter that he sent to the Prime Minister after the documents leaked by Mr. Ponting had been published in the *New Statesman*.

It was only at that very late point, with the facts already published against the Prime Minister's wishes, that the Prime Minister could bring herself to come clean, but even so she could not control her penchant for peddling misleading information. In a letter dated 8 October 1984 to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) she said:

"The Belgrano certainly made many changes of course during May 2nd."

That reply was in direct contradiction to paragraph 10 of the annex to her letter of 19 September.

In the light of that conglomeration of misleading answers—*[Interruption.]*—how can the Prime Minister possibly justify the statement that she made last Thursday, when she said:

"There has been no attempt whatsoever to mislead the House."

She was much nearer the mark when she said on the same day:

"I think that if there is a charge to be made against me, it is that I have given too many facts that might best not have been given." — [*Official Report*, 14 February 1985, Vol. 73, c. 479-80.]

Yes indeed. The trouble is that all the facts are different. The fact is that this Government prosecuted Mr. Ponting, but it is the Government who were convicted. The Government who prosecuted Mr. Ponting are a contemptible Government. They are a dangerous Government. They are a Government fashioned in the image of their Prime Minister. They are a Government who must go.

9.29 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): The accounts that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has given of the events in the Ministry of Defence are a complete travesty of what occurred. In his speech this afternoon, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave his view, and our view, of what occurred, and I am confident that reasonable people in the House—I hope, on both sides—will find in favour of the views given by my right hon. Friend.

As the right hon. Members for Gorton and for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) referred to the two drafts, which is a matter of importance to me, I shall refer to it. It is the case that I requested Mr. Ponting to produce two drafts in response to the letter of the right hon. Member for Llanelli. I shall explain why once again. The chronology starts with a question that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked in 1982. The question was:

"at what time contact with the 'General Belgrano' was first made by one of Her Majesty's submarines."

The question fell to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker), to answer. My right hon. Friend was advised in writing that the information sought was classified, and he was advised not to give it. My right hon. Friend therefore replied on 10 December 1982:

"It would not be in the public interest to give this information."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1982; Vol. 33, c. *621*.]

That was the existing public position, coupled with a statement made by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office in another place on 13 July 1983, when my noble Friend said that the reference to 2 May in the Falklands White Paper

"was not intended to indicate when the cruiser was first located." —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 July 1983; Vol. 443, c. 884.]

When the letter from the right hon. Member for Llanelli arrived, I could have asked Mr. Ponting to prepare just one draft in accordance with existing ministerial statements, and it was perfectly proper for me to ask for a draft on that basis. But I actually went further. I took the initiative, and I was the first Minister to do so, in asking Mr. Ponting to go further than Ministers had done before and to prepare a draft acknowledging that the Belgrano was sighted on 1 May rather than 2 May. To twist and distort my request into saying that I asked for two drafts to be prepared, one telling the truth and one telling a lie, is frankly a monstrous slur—*[Interruption.]*

The debate has centred on information and on the responsibilities of Ministers for the disclosure of information to Parliament. I shall devote my remarks to that central issue. In deciding how much information to disclose surrounding the sinking of the Belgrano,

Ministers in fact had three options. They had the option of full disclosure, the option of no disclosure and the option of partial disclosure.

Full disclosure was only a theoretical option. In practice, the security and operational sensitivities surrounding the sinking were such that it would clearly have been wholly irresponsible to go down the path of full disclosure. I do not believe that that is seriously challenged.

A policy of non-disclosure was, however, an option. It would have been a perfectly respectable option and one well grounded in the statements of successive defence Ministers in successive Governments. The last time this issue was addressed by a Select Committee of the House was in the 1971-72 Session when it was considered by the Select Committee on Parliamentary Questions. That Committee's report listed in appendix 9 all the matters about which successive Administrations had refused—I quote the word "refused"—to answer questions. It is a remarkably long list. In the list of matters on which the Ministry of Defence had refused to answer questions is "operational matters".

Since that Select Committee report, successive Secretaries of State for Defence have been asked to list the subjects on which it is not their practice to answer parliamentary questions. On each and every occasion when that question has been asked, the Secretary of State concerned has included "operational matters" among his subjects. That was true of the answer given by Mr. Mulley, as he then was, on 2 May 1978. It was true of the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) on 9 November 1979, it was true of the answer given by Mr. Nott, as he then was, on 11 November 1982, and it was true of the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 5 June last year. When my right hon. Friend gave his answer that it is not the practice to provide information on operational matters, that answer occasioned no comment, no criticism and no challenge.

Against that background, Ministers would have been perfectly justified from the outset in adopting a policy of non-disclosure, certainly in anything like the operational detail that has been given both in this Parliament and in the last Parliament well before Mr. Ponting commenced his activity. The fact is that from the very beginning Ministers went considerably further than they strictly need have done in disclosing the details of this particular operation. The easy option of non-disclosure was rejected and the difficult option of partial disclosure was adopted from the outset. That was a very creditable decision on the Government's part and should be recognised as such.

Having rejected non-disclosure, it may be asked why Ministers had to stop at partial disclosure and not go the whole way. Some say that the reasons were political. We argue that they were of a genuine security and operational nature. I will take the political aspect first.

The thesis that the Belgrano was torpedoed for political reasons to torpedo the Peruvian peace initiative is, I believe, now completely discredited and has even been repudiated by Mr. Ponting. No other significant political reason has ever been advanced as to why Ministers should have something to hide in relation to the Belgrano. The thesis that there has been a cover-up for political reasons, big or small, does not wash, never has washed and never will wash.

The House might reasonably conclude, therefore, that the only conceivable reason why successive Ministers since May 1982 have been forced to adopt a policy of only partial disclosure is that of security and operational considerations of the very highest importance. The House would be right to come to such a conclusion.

I will now deal with those considerations as best I can in this public forum. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) and for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), and to others of my hon. Friends, for stressing the key importance of protecting sensitive operational information.

Whether on Belgrano matters one takes as one's watchword the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, or whether, as is apparently the case on the other side of the House, one takes as one's watchword the words of Mr. Ponting, one cannot escape the conclusion that issues of the very highest security importance surrounded the sinking of the Belgrano.

In her letter to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 19 September last year, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

> "I must make it clear that it would be, and will remain, quite wrong for me to disclose all the material that was available to Ministers at the time. To do so would still risk irreparable damage to national security and could put lives at risk in the future."

These words were chosen very deliberately and with immense care. They represent not one degree of exaggeration.

Those who prefer the words of Mr. Ponting need look no further than the classification of the detailed account that he wrote for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State into aspects of the sinking of the Belgrano. As the originator of that account, Mr. Ponting was responsible for its classification. He classified it "TOP SECRET — CODEWORD", the highest security classification that there is. Mr. Ponting was therefore equally clear that issues of the highest security importance were at stake.

However, there is one further aspect of security matters in relation to Mr. Ponting of which the House should be aware, as it bears directly on the view that the House may take of how Ministers have acted. I have seen it widely reported that Mr. Ponting knew all. Mr. Ponting did not know all, and Mr. Ponting did not know the most important of all.

I do not think that any reasonable Member of this House can doubt that from the time when the Belgrano was sunk a very real security constraint has materially affected how much information Ministers could give to Parliament. The constraints on Ministers in disclosing information about the sinking of the Belgrano have also had a vitally important naval operational dimension. This was a submarine operation. Of all the conventional weapon systems — on land, sea and air — there is no system where it is more crucial to protect information about capabilities and about the conduct of operations than submarines.

The Falklands conflict represented far and away the most important operational deployment of the Royal Navy's submarines since the second world war. By the same token it represented, and it still represents, far and away the most important opportunity for hostile intelligence — Soviet intelligence as well as Argentine

[Mr. John Stanley]

intelligence—to obtain an insight into our submarine capabilities and into their methods of operation. *[Interruption.]*

All the public attention has tended to be focused on just one of our submarines—HMS Conqueror.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil) *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: In the words of the debate, I will complete my passage. Then I will give way.

In fact, it was just one of our submarines that deployed to the South Atlantic during the conflict; we deployed a total of six—HMS Conqueror, HMS Courageous, HMS Onyx, HMS Spartan, HMS Splendid and HMS Valiant. One conventional submarine and no fewer than five SSNs, the nuclear powered attack submarines, were deployed.

In dealing with parliamentary questions, we had therefore to take into account that what questions were answered about one SSN would prospectively have to be answered about the others. And we have indeed had questions about the activities of HMS Splendid and HMS Spartan as well as about HMS Conqueror. We had to take into account that what we revealed — even on an unclassified basis—might be prejudicial to our conduct of SSN operations in the future.

We had to take into account the exceptionally important and sensitive roles of SSNs in the NATO theatre.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Answer the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Stanley: We had to take account of the fact that our SSNs have certain capabilities in common with our Polaris SSBNs and that therefore insight into the capabilities and methods of operation of one could have implications for the other. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the debate."] We also have to take account of the fact that, however much information we gave, more and more questions were asked in more and more detail. Those questions took us into every major area of the capabilities of our submarines.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: Those questions took us into their sources of intelligence, their methods of communication, the capabilities of their sonar and the performance of their tactical weapons system. Ministers have been accused of being cautious about the giving of information in relation to the Belgrano. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the debate."] Against the background——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Minister, but it is intolerable that he should be interrupted from a sedentary position by so many hon. Members. He has a right to be heard.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members would like the Minister to answer the debate, which is about the Old Bailey trial and how it came about.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is endeavouring to answer the debate.

Hon. Members: No, he is not.

Mr. Stanley: I am indeed trying to answer an issue of central and fundamental importance. Ministers have been accused of being cautious about giving information in regard to the Belgrano.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: I regard caution not as a matter for criticism but as a matter for commendation. Yes, we have been cautious. We will continue to be cautious. We are right to be cautious and we should be failing in our responsibilities if we were to be anything other than cautious.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. The Minister has read us a long passage explaining the high national importance of deepest security for our submarines. Will he explain whether that is the true reason for the necessity for the security of our submarines? If so, how come one of the logs went missing?

Mr. Stanley: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are still conducting the inquiry. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Stanley: I wish now to deal with the Leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). I have heard him argue that as it is now nearly three years since the conflict ended, the security objections have surely fallen away and all can now be revealed. *[Interruption.]* I have heard him say that many times on the radio, and I am glad if it is not his view. Anyone who thinks that, because almost three years have passed since the Falklands conflict, the security objections have fallen away shows no understanding of defence and security realities. A key job of hostile intelligence is to assess how we may carry out future submarine operations by analysing those that we have conducted in the past. We are not in the business of giving gratuitous help to those people.

Mr. Steel: I have never dissented from my view. When did Ministers first know that the information they were giving was wrong?

Mr. Stanley: As I have said before, the 1 May date was classified and held to be classified virtually until my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister replied to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). That was the advice that we had.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister was not giving way.

Mr. Stanley: I assume that Ministers will have been aware during 1983.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: That is why my noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave the answer that she did in another place.

Mr. Kaufman: If the date of the sighting of the Belgrano was classified until the Prime Minister revealed it on 4 April 1984, why was not Captain Wreford-Brown prosecuted for revealing it a year before that?

Mr. Stanley: As the right hon. Gentleman will recognise, that is a happy question for the Law Officers, not for me.

Dr. Owen *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. All hon. Members heard the Minister say that that was a happy question for the Law Officers. As a Law Officer is present, perhaps he can give us an answer now.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer that point of order. Mr. Stanley.

Dr Owen *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: This will be the last time I give way.

Dr. Owen: On 14 December the Commander in Chief, Admiral Fieldhouse, submitted his dispatch, which he had presumably written a few days earlier and which included that date. Why would he have included that date if he thought that it was highly secret information which should not be revealed?

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister answered that question during Prime Minister's Question Time, when she said:

"I understand from Admiral Fieldhouse that during the drafting of his dispatch from Northwood he queried the date in the sentence on the detection of the Belgrano but agreed that it should be left as 2 May in order to protect sensitive operational and intelligence information."—*[Official Report,* 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 164.]

That was the position.

It has been suggested that the dilemma of answering the key question in this debate of how much operational information should be released could be resolved by releasing everything that is itself unclassified and withholding only that which is classified. That has a certain superficial attraction. Unhappily, security and intelligence matters are very much more complicated, as the previous Government recognised in its 1978 White Paper on the Official Secrets Act. The key passage which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already highlighted bears repeating, because it is a policy statement by the previous Government of profound importance, and one which we ourselves endorse.

The previous Government said:

"The Government has concluded that information relating to security and intelligence matters is deserving of the highest protection whether or not it is classified. This is pre-eminently an area where the gradual accumulation of small items of information, apparently trivial in themselves, would eventually create a risk for the safety of an individual or constitute a serious threat to the interests of the nation as a whole."

That is a very important statement. Intelligence is the business of completing a jigsaw, in which some of the pieces are kept secret and some of them become public. The more public pieces one puts on the board, the easier it is to deduce the remainder.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: The Minister quoted from the 1978 White Paper and the statement that I made in the House. I used those words, but said that, as with Franks, whatever the subject—be it defence, intelligence associated with it or law and order — what matters was that it was serious. That does not apply to Ponting, which is what we are concerned about tonight. I fully agree with the right hon. Gentleman on what he has said, but that is not what the Ponting case is about.

Mr. Stanley: The right hon. Gentleman must distinguish between the security dimension in relation to the Ponting case, which I agree was not a significant element, and the security dimension relating to the sinking of the Belgrano, which was of profound importance.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: I shall not give way again.

It is for the House to decide whether, in pursuing a policy of partial disclosure in relation to the Belgrano, Ministers have got the balance right between giving too much information and too little. My personal view, for what it is worth—*[Interruption.]*—is that in no way can it reasonably be claimed that Ministers have given too little information. It could well be argued that in our attempts to allay the Belgrano mania the information we have already given is too much. As the Prime Minister said in reply to questions last week, we may indeed have erred on the side of giving too much. The House should be mindful of that.

I hope that the House will not mind if I conclude on a personal note. Over the last fortnight or so, I consider that I have been subjected to a campaign of character assassination, the like of which I would not have believed possible if I had not been the object of it. I have been accused of more or less everything under the sun, except of actually sinking the Belgrano myself. The accusations have ranged from the ludicrous, like the claim of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that I had altered Admiral Fieldhouse's official despatch when I was still a Minister in the Department of the Environment, to other accusations that I take with the utmost seriousness. The accusation that I take most seriously is that I have somehow behaved improperly towards this House of Commons. That accusation I completely reject.

The Opposition's amendment to the Government's motion refers to the responsibility of Ministers to Parliament, but it wrongly assumes that Defence Ministers have only one responsibility to Parliament — the responsibility to give information. Defence Ministers have two responsibilities to this House, not one, and that second responsibility is the overriding one upon them. We have the overriding responsibility to this House for the proper discharge of our duties as Defence Ministers, for the protection of the defence interests of our country and for the protection of the lives of our service men in any future conflict. We have discharged those duties responsibly and properly.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 202, Noes 350.

Division No. 110] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*

Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'brok*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter

Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes, 351, Noes, Nil.

Division No. 111] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger

Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Carol Mather.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Atkins and
Mr. Kenneth Hind

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House recognises that the sinking of the General Belgrano was a necessary and legitimate action in the Falklands Campaign; and agrees that the protection of our Armed Forces must be the prime consideration in determining how far matters involving national security and the conduct of military operations can be disclosed.

Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation Scheme

10.27 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That the draft Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation Scheme 1985, which was laid before this House on 4th February, be approved.

The main purpose of the draft order is to introduce changes in the rates of grant paid to agricultural co-operatives. The House will recall that reductions have been made recently in the capital grant rates available to individual farmers and businesses. These have been fully discussed and approved by both Houses.

As I told the Standing Committee which discussed these changes on 23 January—these are the broad and most important changes—three factors guided us in making our decisions. First, there was the desirability of reflecting changing priorities as the situation in agriculture develops, especially in relation to products in surplus. Secondly, there was the need, to which we give increasing attention, to take account of the conservation aspects. Thirdly, there was the need for agriculture to play its part in the Government's programme of restraint on public expenditure.

The first and third factors are both directly applicable to the subject under discussion tonight. We believe it right that the co-operative scheme should also bear its share of the global savings that are being made, but we are applying a policy of priorities in deciding on the changes.

Before dealing with the details of the new rates, I shall comment on the level of Government support for co-operation. The co-operative development division of Food for Britain has a statutory responsibility to encourage, develop and promote agricultural co-operation, and in the current year Government financial support towards those activities will amount to just under £2 million. That expenditure is separate from that on the co-operative grants scheme, the AHCS, under which Food for Britain makes recommendations to the Agriculture Departments on the worthwhileness and merit of applications.

In the last two financial years, 1982-83 and 1983-84, those recommendations—which we have accepted and on which we are thus committed to pay—came to just under £4·5 million and £5 million respectively—an indication that producers are fully aware of the benefits which can accrue through co-operation and that they are prepared to invest to achieve them.

Grant aid plays a part in stimulating this producer investment, and it is right, therefore, that, in taking decisions about where any necessary reductions should fall, we should be mindful of the particular needs of different sectors and of the priorities we attach to their expansion in conditions which continue to develop and change. It is for that reason that we have decided not to reduce the level of grant rates for horticultural co-operatives.

The reasons for making horticulture an exception are, first, to recognise the particular needs of the sector; second, further to improve horticultural marketing; and, third, to take account of its priority status in Food for Britain's co-operative development division's operating strategy. There is a continuing need to improve our marketing ability and competitiveness in that area, and horticultural co-operatives are gearing themselves well to meet the increasing and more sophisticated demands of their customers. We hope that by holding grants at existing levels this development will continue.

For sectors other than horticulture we are reducing the grant rates for buildings by five percentage points, from 15 to 10 per cent. for cereals co-operatives and from 30 to 25 per cent. for others. I should emphasise that no other changes are being made. At presently estimated levels of demand, savings should amount to about £300,000 in a full year.

As I have just said, in reaching those decisions we have been guided by the desirability of reflecting changing priorities as the situation in agriculture develops. One aspect of this is the need to take into account the surpluses of some commodities—and cereals is a good example. Due to the highly successful efforts, aided by substantial support in a variety of ways, we have moved in 10 years from being a net importer to being a substantial exporter of cereals. Moreover, it cannot be disputed that the cereals sector is better able to withstand lower rates than others. Indeed, Food for Britain's draft co-operative development strategy recognises that major advances have been taken in this sector and that over 600,000 tonnes of sophisticated central storage are now owned by specialist co-operatives. Grants at 10 per cent., together with the commercial benefits which will accrue, should be sufficient to ensure that essential investment continues.

One particular feature of the AHCS is that grant rates generally are about 10 percentage points above those which apply to individual farms under the AHDS scheme. That is what is commonly termed the co-operative premium, which was introduced about five years ago to recognise the need for structured co-operative marketing. I know that Food for Britain regards the premium as an important aspect of the scheme and welcomes its retention.

The draft order that we are debating tonight is somewhat longer than would otherwise be the case for an amendment of this nature. There have been several amendments made since the scheme was last drawn up in 1971, and we are therefore taking the opportunity to consolidate at the same time. Perhaps I may draw the attention of the House to the main difference—indeed, the only one to which I intend to draw the attention of the House at this stage—between this draft and the 1971 order as subsequently amended.

Paragraph 2 now includes a definition of horticultural produce for the purpose of distinguishing those activities which attract the rates of grant set out in division C of column 2 of the schedule. As I have explained, rates for those horticultural co-operatives remain unchanged. The definition is the same as that used in the agricultural and horticulture grants scheme.

The paragraph also contains a definition of "recognised group". That relates to items 14 and 15 of the schedule and to grants of 15 per cent. and 25 per cent. respectively for tractors and other machinery purchased by forage groups in certain hill areas. Although fairly small amounts of grant have been paid to such groups for a number of years under EEC directive 75/268, we have been advised that authority for such payments should now be provided for in the main scheme. At present those grants apply to the original less favoured areas but not to the extension

[Mr. John MacGregor]

sought for so successfully by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and agreed by the Council of Ministers in 1984.

I am pleased to announce, however, that after the scheme comes into operation, proposals will be considered from forage groups in those marginal areas. This, I believe, is a useful extension of Government support, and one that will be of benefit to livestock farmers in the more exacting parts of the country.

There are some other technical changes, but no others of substance from the 1971 order, and I commend this scheme to the House.

10.35 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): When I was listening to wind-up of the debate in Committee, I wondered how in this debate the Minister of State could keep to the same emotional level of intensity. I am grateful for the fact that in his speech he did not even try to do so.

We did the Government a favour, because in asking that the matter be dealt with on the Floor of the House we gave the Government the opportunity to withdraw the original scheme and relay it. Basically, as the Minister said, it is in line with the earlier scheme on capital grants. It is right to record that that has had a singularly mixed reception, particularly in the poorer farming areas. I welcome the part of the scheme that pertains to horticulture because, as the Minister rightly said, there is no cut in the capital grant there, and if those people are to adapt to markets, they need an adequate level of capital grant.

I should like to deal with the second reason that the Minister aduced for restructuring the grants in the way that the Government have chosen. They are aligning grants more accurately with the environmental pressures on farming. That point has been made repeatedly not only by the Minister of State but by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. When he introdued the changes, he said:

"In making these changes we are reflecting the Government's declared aim of achieving a closer integration of conservation and agricultural policies". — [*Official Report*, 11 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. *434*.]

The Minister of State said:

"The second feature also reflects changing priorities. The changes take an important step forward in the integration of conservation and agriculture." — [*Official Report, Fifth Standing Committee*, 23 January 1985; c. 7.]

When the matter was debated in Committee, a great deal of heat and not much light was created by the fact that hon. Members were arguing about whether some people were trying to compare Governments, good or ill. That is not the matter in hand. I am prepared to accept what the Minister of State said, that as a matter of Government policy that they should try to deal with the changing balance in favour of the environment, but I must ask whether the structure of grants and the way in which the grants have been changed achieves that object.

What the capital grants have done in this scheme as in the other one, is to discourage the unsatisfactory things that are being done on farms today which are adversely affecting the environment, but the Government have not taken the further step, which is equally necessary, of encouraging good things to be done on the farms. Although it is not relevant to the debate, stonewalling, which was in the original grant, is academic if fencing is cheaper. If there is a significant difference, that is so much dressing to the debate and will not play any particular part in it.

Capital grants can play a role in environmental care, but we must recognise that capital grants of themselves have a limited impact. Instead of mere discouragement of bad practice—although that is a part of better environmental care — we should have had a series of proposals for grants, if we are to rejig the whole system, which recognised that positive measures can be taken.

I shall give just one example of Welsh woodlands. It is now generally accepted that the oak trees in several Welsh woodlands are becoming overmature because of damage by animals to the young oak trees. A fencing grant to preserve the younger trees and woodlands could have been introduced specifically to encourage conservation. Machinery could also have been devised to help in the covering of bare peat areas, again encouraging conservation. But nothing of that kind has been done. My criticism is not that the Government have failed totally, but that they have wasted a chance. Having decided to rejig the capital grants, they should have done the job properly and rejigged them in such a way as to give proper encouragement to the good things rather than merely discouraging the bad things.

The Minister must accept that the main way to promote conservation is through management grants rather than capital grants. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has commented that farmers cannot live on capital grants for dry stone walls. They need an alternative income if they are to be encouraged to take conservation measures. We should therefore be looking for management schemes with a direct and significant conservation element.

The Select Committee on the Environment was a great deal harsher on the Ministry than was the RSPB. Its report make it clear that the present capital structure, far from encouraging conservation in agriculture, is one of the greatest factors in discouraging it. Paragraph 29 states:

"Nearly all witnesses were agreed that the present grant and price support structure was the major obstacle in the way of a comprehensive and successful conservation programme in this country."

The Government must look at the financial structure of capital grants — they have missed an opportunity this time, but I hope that it will not be long before the matter is examined again — to try to promote conservation. It emerged in paragraph 31 of the Select Committee report, which said:

"All of our witnesses, except MAFF, recognise the need for a serious change in direction."

The Select Committee concluded:

"We recommend that MAFF fundamentally change its approach on financial structures so that resources are redirected away from environmentally damaging operations and towards conservation-conscious methods."

Two things are therefore needed, but only one has been attempted by the Government in their reorganisation of the capital structure on this occasion.

I appreciate that this may not be the best time to mention the National Farmers Union annual conference to Conservative Members, but *Farmers Weekly* reported on it as follows:

"Extra grants to help farmers in their conservation efforts and to control pollution were demanded at the NFU annual meeting. The recently imposed cuts in farm capital grants were strongly

criticised. Speakers suggested that if the Government really wanted farmers to improve the environment, there would have to be extra money to do so."

The NFU has committed itself to a process and a policy of conserving the environment, but farmers often working at the margins in hill areas must have an alternative source of income if they are to be encouraged in that. The gravamen of our disappointment is that the Government have neglected an opportunity to put this right.

10.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I am happy to show that there is support across the Floor of the House for the remarks of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). The headquarters of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is in my constituency and the postbag of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is full of letters urging him to promote positive management schemes for the protection of the environment and the benefit of farmers in marginal areas. I welcome what the hon. Member for Pontypridd has said.

I wish to address myself to capital moneys for co-operatives coming not from capital grants but from the co-operatives themselves. The tax treatment of moneys which represent profits of co-operatives are treated much less favourably than the profits that a farmer achieves on his own farm. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to treat with the Treasury on this matter so that the profits that are earned in a co-operative can be reinvested in the co-operative with the same tax benefit to the farmer who is selling his produce through the co-operative as would be achieved if they represented the profits from his own farm.

This issue has been drawn to my attention by Bedfordshire Growers, which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will recognise as one of the best and most effective horticultural co-operatives in the country. At a time when we are having to reduce the capital grant, it is nonsensical that we should not be doing everything in our power to ensure that moneys from the best of all possible sources — the profits of the co-operatives—are reinvested in the co-operatives.

If a farmer is a member, for example, of Bedfordshire Growers, the co-operative makes a profit and he is asked —this request is often made of farmers by co-operatives including Bedfordshire Growers—to leave in his money as working capital for the co-operative, he will not have the same beneficial tax treatment as if he ploughed the money into investment in plant or machinery on his own farm. This seems to be foolish and to have no justification.

When my hon. Friend the Minister of State approaches the Treasury he will be met with the suggestion that to allow such investment would be to permit abuses on a wider basis. The Treasury always says that sort of thing but I do not believe that it will be able to sustain the argument if my hon. Friend presses the case that I am urging. For such investment to be tax deductible by a member of a co-operative, it would be necessary to show that he was a member of a recognised co-operative and to produce accounts to show that it was in the co-operative that his money had been left. It would be for the co-operative to show that the farmer's money had been invested. In these circumstances, the chances of abuse would be extremely limited, if not nil.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State appreciates that co-operative marketing societies, whether in agriculture or horticulture, are important in enabling British farmers to compete, especially in the fresh vegetable market, both at home and in the hinterland on the Continent. I am sure that we should do all that we can to encourage them.

10.48 pm

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply shortly to this short debate if I may have the leave of the House to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) will recognise that all his comments except his opening welcome to horticulture grants were not relevant to the scheme that is before us. In the three factors that I outlined in the changes to the general capital grants scheme in Committee, the second factor, the environmental one, is not relevant to the particular changes in the co-operative sector. The co-operative grants are for a different purpose. Nevertheless, it has given me an opportunity to repeat some of what I said in Committee, and I am grateful to him for that.

The hon. Gentleman ought not to underestimate the extent to which we are shifting the balance in the capital grants system as the agricultural scene changes so that much greater attention is given to environmental considerations. We are making much more of a shift in that direction than did, the Labour Government. I admit that we are making changes in capital grants for other reasons, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman does no underestimate the extent to which we have had environmental considerations in mind when making changes this year and last. The hon. Gentleman said that the discouragement of what he described as bad practice was minimal, but I am sure that he does not underestimate the value of removing grants for pulling up hedges, land clearance and reclamation work.

Mr. John: I am happy to recognise that, and thought that I had done so in my speech. I also thought that I had eschewed comparisons of Governments and avoided mentioning the Environment Select Committee talking of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food dragging its feet, for example. As I recognise the importance of what is being done, will the Minister recognise the importance of the further steps that should be taken, by which I mean encouragement of that which is right? "Thou shalt not" is an inadequate moral basis for life.

Mr. MacGregor: We are talking about thou shalt not get grants for doing things that are environmentally damaging. The hon. Gentleman obviously support what we have done.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): Is the Minister saying that the Ministry of Agriculture ought to be under an obligation to take environmental factors in to account when pursuing its main statutory duty?

Mr. MacGregor: I listened carefully to the Second Reading debate of the hon. Gentleman's Bill two Fridays ago. He will remember what my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said. On one of the clauses in the hon. Gentleman's Bill, my hon. Friend advanced a convincing argument on constitutional matters. I am saying that we are taking environmental issues into account when making changes to the capital grants schemes.

[Mr. MacGregor]

I should like to consider just one more of what might be called the negative aspect—this year's significant changes in grants for field drainage. The changes are more significant than some of the other changes in, for example, the removal of grants for hedging. I hope that hon. Members appreciate the environmental importance of that.

Last year, we introduced, in the less favoured areas, advantageous rates of grant for certain environmentally desirable investments such as the building, replacement or improvement of walls built of a material traditional in a locality and the provision or improvement of hedges and shelter belts. I admit that that was not a huge leap forward, but it is a positive step. Other changes have been made, and they build up a picture. For example, £9 million of additional money has been given to the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council this year. It will obviously go to environmentally important subjects. Only recently, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment announced a new experimental scheme for the next three years in the Hapvergate marshes in Norfolk, in which the Ministry of Agriculture is participating to the extent of 50 per cent. funding and a considerable management input. That is an interesting experiment which has important environmental connotations.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has taken the lead in the past nine months—I have been assisting him in the Council of Ministers in Brussels on the new structures directive to try to get a conservation initiative written into it. As the hon. Member for Pontypridd knows, that structure will last five years. We shall continue with that initiative at the next Council meeting next week. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that we have in mind the conservation aspects of the changes to capital grants.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) asked about the taxation of agricultural co-operatives. As he will know, that is essentially a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I understand that the changes introduced to capital taxation in the Finance Act 1984 were intended to maintain broad neutrality of treatment between co-operatives and other enterprises. However, the Federation of Agricultural Co-operatives, with which I have discussed the matter, has made representations to the Chancellor that the changes bear unduly harshly on co-operatives. I shall ensure that my hon. and learned Friend's remarks are drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

It has been a short debate. I have heard no criticism of the changes that we are making through the order——

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It would be a mistake to allow the debate to conclude without any criticism. I thought that the debate would be longer, and wish to interject briefly. What does the Minister believe to be the total financial savings from the cuts? He mentioned a figure of about £300,000 in connection with one part of the scheme, but I was not sure whether he was referring to the totality of savings.

Mr. MacGregor: I was referring to the totality. The figure is about £300,000 in a full year.

There seems to have been little criticism. I cannot count that intervention as a criticism, and, therefore, perhaps I can say that there is no criticism of the order. I hope that the House will approve it.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation Scheme 1985, which was laid before this House on 4th February, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): In order to save the time of the House, I shall put together the Questions on motions 3 to 5 on the Order Paper.

AGRICULTURE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Amendments of the Potato Marketing Scheme 1955, as amended, which were laid before this House on 20th December, be approved.

That the Potatoes (Assured Markets) Order 1985, (S.I., 1985, No. 63), dated 21st January 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 23rd January, be approved.

That the Potatoes (Protection of Guarantees) Order 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 64), dated 21st January 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 23rd January, be approved.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Question agreed to.

New London Taxicabs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Major.]*

10.56 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Do you realise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the traditional London taxi is about to disappear from the streets? I discovered that shocking truth recently, and what I found since leads me to believe that the House of Commons, all Londoners and all those who live in our other towns and cities where our London model is used should be made aware of the impending disaster.

Most of us take the design of the taxi for granted. It has been with us for so long — its history reaches from Edwardian times and is based on the hackney carriage, although the present model was introduced in the 1950s — that it is easily recognisable to everyone. It is a singular design. In many cities travellers have to put up with mere saloon cars plying as taxis. That is part of the dull uniformity which is the curse of modern cities. In London we have a vehicle which was not only designed for its purpose but which over the years has been improved to meet changing needs, circumstances and standards.

The London taxi can negotiate the busiest London street and can turn round in a remarkably small space. It can take up to four passengers safely, has room for an enormous amount of luggage beside the driver, and can accommodate a wheelchair in the passenger compartment. The London dial-a-ride system for handicapped people uses it with few complaints.

As improvements have proved necessary, they have been made without altering the basic design. Taxi drivers are happy with it; Londoners love it; and foreign visitors are charmed by it. It is efficient, economical, reliable—who has ever seen a broken-down taxicab? — and popular. It is a triumph of design in that it marries practical experience of need with high aesthetic standards. Socially, it is a distinguished ornament of the British way of life. It makes a Cockney feel like a king; it is the poor man's chauffeured Rolls for a night; and top hat and tiara fit as comfortably in it as do busy businessmen with their brief cases. Why, therefore, is there any question of changing it? Why, when we have a winner, must someone insist on change for change's sake? Why must the London travelling public be forced to accept a token of dull uniformity in its place?

I have gone into this in some detail. It appears that one of the villains of the piece is Carbodies Ltd., the very firm which makes the current design. It has apparently been working on a new design since 1976, and it has produced a prototype but does not expect to go into production for another year or more because of the numerous modifications needed. It does not seem to be in any hurry.

Mr. Dennis Poore, the chairman of Manganese Bronze Holdings plc. which owns Carbodies, told me that the new model is required to meet European Community regulations. When I asked him what these were, he wrote on 8 October 1984 promising to tell me

"within a week or so".

I am still waiting—on 18 February 1985. A week is a long time in business as well as in politics!

Another villain of the piece is my hon. Friend's Department, the Department of Trade and Industry. It made the decision — incredible for a Conservative Government—to invest £1·3 million in the new design in 1983. The GLC also paid over some money, but then we are used to the present GLC irresponsibly spending money like water.

The Government cannot be so easily acquitted. When in a parliamentary question I asked what public funds had been invested in the new model, the Minister of State replied that the details were confidential. He added:

"To attract support, all research and development projects must satisfy the published criteria for assistance under the support for innovation scheme."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1984; Vol. 65, c. *1023*.]

Innovation indeed! At the rate it is going, Carbodies' new design will be out of date when it is produced, whereas improvements to the existing model will keep it abreast of the times. Is more taxpayers' money to be wasted on this project? Does Carbodies want more before it completes it? How much money has been spent on it so far? How much has come out of the public purse? Will my hon. Friend answer those questions?

The usual villain of these scenes — the European Community—can be acquitted. Any new taxi will have to comply with European Community regulations. But the present model has been granted exemption from European Community regulations relating to inferior fittings and exterior projections, according to the Minister of State's reply to my question on 31 October. The present London taxi meets current British national type approval requirements in all respects.

It all sounds so depressingly familiar — change for change's sake, more and more public money invested in a project whose justification gets less and less.

The new design, so far as it has been revealed in the prototypes, is unlikely to be popular with Londoners. Mr. Poore tells me that it is not based on the Range Rover, but that is the impression one gets. Taxi drivers who have seen it say that it is too small, too cramped and too low. All those whose opinions I have sought have condemned it. There has been little, if any, consultation with taxi drivers themselves, and none at all with the general public. Some organisations for the disabled have welcomed it, for it is said to incorporate a ramp and to permit the loading of a wheelchair somewhat larger than the size which the existing model can accommodate, but the difference is only slight.

I recently received a letter from a London taxi driver who has been in the job all his life, except for when he drove a tank in Germany. His father was a horse and motor cabman before him. He says:

"Since the war I have carried just three wheelchairs and their occupants, one of which was quite recently. One chair went into the boot, one chair went on to the luggage platform and one went inside. In no instance did the person involved have any trouble getting into the cab for the tip up front seats are ideal for any unfortunate person who needs a wheelchair and I feel certain no other vehicle can be as satisfactory as the present FX4. It is said that the new vehicle will create more jobs. I wonder what the present builders of the FX4 think of the idea."

On the other hand, the extra features that the new design requires will add enormously to its price. One trade source told me that £10,000 was the likely minimum, and rising, compared with the lower price for the existing model. It is debatable whether all future taxis must be forced to incorporate a wheelchair feature when the demand can only ever be for a very limited proportion of the population. The very act of carrying a heavy wheelchair might involve drivers in awkward questions of

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

legal liability if accidents were to occur. Compared with modifications to the existing design, I doubt whether it is wise to claim, as Mr. Poore did last year, that the new model will add an extra dimension to the lives of the physically handicapped. It will be a cruel deception if, when the new model is on the streets, the process of getting wheelchairs into it via a ramp is so cumbersome and awkward that drivers will not welcome disabled passengers in wheelchairs.

Since I began taking an interest in this matter, I have received many letters and messages of support for the traditional London taxicab from all over the world. Correspondents from the United States have been particularly concerned and have often expressed themselves in ways which may interest the House. Here is part of a letter from Mr. Samuel Gorovitz, of Maryland:

"Like many fellow Americans, I have great fondness for England and for London in particular, and have visited many times. I have taken hundreds of photographs during these visits over the past twenty five years. Just a few weeks ago, I proudly hung on the wall of my home a 30" by 40" enlargement of the best of these pictures — a photograph of a taxi rank in Knightsbridge, taken in March of this year when my wife and I were there to visit our daughter, then studying at the University of London. That picture more than any other, captures for us the feel and spirit of London.

The traditional London taxi is a symbol of England that is universally recognised and admired. That is not merely because of the aesthetic appeal of the design; it is also because of its association with the pervasive quality of the London taxi system —the envy of the world, and a standard of competence and civility that is unapproached anywhere else. It is thus no surprise that all those friends and neighbours with whom I have discussed this gloomy news have reacted with the same horror that prompts this letter now.

Replace the traditional taxi, and you do not merely make a change in equipment, you change the face of the city. You destroy a visual image that says 'London!' in the most welcoming possible way to people throughout the world. You desecrate a national treasure, no less than by turning a stately home into an auto parts warehouse. No newer taxi, no matter what its performance characteristics, could fill the resulting gap.

It is not that I oppose technological progress. On the contrary, I devote much of my time to advocating and facilitating it. But the best of the old must never give way to an unreasoned quest for the new. That is a lesson I had thought we Americans still needed to learn better from you British!"

This is what Mr. Charles A. Cerami of Washington says:

"I am sure you know the saying, 'Tout hommes a deux pays: le sien et la France'. There are countries and cities that have made themselves part of everyone's world. London has that status more than almost any other, and it benefits greatly from it. First in material ways—as British Airways and the Connaught Hotel would surely attest. More importantly in the knowledge that so many others stand with you in the love of your capital city . . . In this case, it is not merely a matter of sentiment. Taxicabs in most other cities are increasingly uncomfortable. Those of London are a splendid exception. Do not destroy what is good."

London taxi drivers are a splendid body of people—kind, courteous, efficient and helpful with very few exceptions. They are proud of their craft and of their vehicle. Let us not prevent them from continuing to serve the people of London and its visitors to the same high standard as we have always enjoyed in the past.

11.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. David Trippier): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) for providing this opportunity for a debate on the new London taxi.

I have listened with great interest to my hon. Friend's arguments in favour of the existing black cab—or the FX4 to give it its proper name—and I have much sympathy with his views. The familiar London taxi is undoubtedly considered by many to be an old friend. Indeed, its familiarity on the streets of London is such that the image of the taxi has become almost synonymous with that of the capital itself, both here and overseas. Precisely because it is so familiar, however, we tend to look at the black cab as we do other, rather older and less changing, landmarks and symbols of the city.

In fact, the familiar black cab is simply the latest in a long line of mechanical, as opposed to horse-drawn, cabs which stretches back to August 1897 when the London Electric Cab company of Lambeth put on to the roads of London 14 yellow and black "Bersey" cabs nicknamed, I understand, "humming birds" and capable of attaining a speed of 9 mph. The "humming birds" lasted until 1899, when they were withdrawn on account of the noise they made and their low level of reliability, allowing horse-drawn cabs to make a comeback. The reprieve of the horse-drawn cab was only temporary, however, and in 1903 the first petrol-driven cab was licensed. Taxis initially sought to impersonate the horse-drawn cab, but as time went on other, more original, designs began to emerge, in line with the trend in motor vehicles generally.

The point that I stress, of course, is that although the current black cab is sometimes thought of as an unchanging part of the London scene, it did, in fact, follow a number of very different vehicles, each designed to reflect the needs and wishes of the time. It was actually introduced in its present form just 30 years ago, in 1955.

Although a short time in historical terms, 30 years is a long time in terms of vehicle development, and it is the age of the FX4 that is really its problem. Vehicle technology has advanced substantially over the past 30 years and, while many improvements have been built into the FX4, in the view of many the time has come for a major redesign of the London taxi to be undertaken. A number of manufacturers have been considering the design of a replacement for the FX4, and Carbodies Ltd., which, as my hon. Friend pointed out, itself manufactures the FX4, and which has been in receipt of support from the Department, is engaged in developing a new taxi, codenamed the CR6. My Department and the Department of Transport provided support for this project under the support for innovation scheme, the details of which, following usual practice, must remain confidential so I am afraid that I cannot answer my hon. Friend's specific questions. We supported the project, first, because it seemed to us to be viable and, secondly, because it satisfied the criteria applying to the scheme. The design of the CR6 is aimed at meeting both present day and anticipated legislative requirements and to give both passengers and drivers the standard of comfort and performance that we have come to expect from modern vehicles.

For instance, as my hon. Friend has already said, the CR6 has been specifically designed to allow ease of access for those confined to wheelchairs. This is an important development and one which should provide enormous benefit to those whose handicap means that at present any journey involving public transport can be achieved only

with the greatest difficulty. In a civilised society it is right that new designs of public transport should be developed to suit as many people as possible. As is apparent, taxi designs tend to have a long life and the CR6 may set the standard in this respect for the future. I think I am right in saying that it will be the first specialised taxi to have access for the disabled as a specific design objective. As such it will be well placed to take advantage of increasing international awareness and concern about the special needs of the disabled in public transport.

On the question of the external appearance of the CR6, my hon. Friend dislikes the design and of course there will be others who agree with him. Personally, I find it distinctive and appealing, but judgments about such matters are necessarily subjective. This is an area where manufacturers must make a judgment based on their expertise, experience and understanding of the market, but it is, of course, the customer—the taxi owner—who will prove whether or not their judgment is correct.

Indeed, as I have already said, I understand that other manufacturers have been considering the possibility of designing a replacement for the FX4 and I believe that at least one manufacturer is already planning to produce an alternative to the CR6. It is, of course, open to any vehicle which meets the London conditions of fitness to operate as a licensed taxi in London. If my hon. Friend is correct in his view that the CR6 will prove unpopular, I have no doubt that other manufacturers will take advantage of the situation and ensure that alternatives are made available.

I am fairly sure that I shall not be able to change my hon. Friend's opinion of the Carbodies CR6 here tonight. I would hope, however, that he will soon have an opportunity to view one of the prototypes at close quarters and to discuss with the manufacturers some of its advantages over the present vehicle. In time, I hope that he, along with the many other taxi-users in London will come to appreciate the qualities of the CR6 and that it will eventually capture a similar place in their affections as has the present taxi. If I may nevertheless offer just one crumb of comfort, I am told that the oldest FX4 still plying for hire today on the streets of London started work some 16 years ago, in 1969. London taxis are built to last and I am sure that the black cab will be a familiar sight on our streets for a good many years yet.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schooling (Benefit)

1. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number and percentage of 16-year-olds who, by most educationally recognised criteria, have not benefited from their schooling experience.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): We believe that improvements are possible in the standards achieved by the great majority of pupils of all abilities. Our policies for school education are designed to bring about such improvements.

Dr. Mawhinney: Does my hon. Friend agree that a number of children do not substantially benefit from their schooling and that this is a sad reflection on some aspects of the teaching profession? Is that not the best possible vindication of the Government's intention to introduce teacher assessment as soon as possible?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend's interpretation is entirely right. We are improving the training of teachers. We are seeking broad national agreement on the objectives of the curriculum. We are bringing in via pilot schemes records of achievement for all school leavers. The system of appraisal to which my hon. Friend referred is entirely right and proper at this stage.

Mr. Alexander: Does my hon. Friend accept that some teachers seem to be unaware that literacy and numeracy are very important? Will my hon. Friend stress to those teachers that a youngster who cannot write a job application without spelling mistakes—he may have left school able in the studies of dance, drama and comparative religion—will not be able to obtain a job in competition with his colleagues who can?

Mr. Dunn: We have always taken the view that, whatever the trends in standards in the past, we must continue to improve the position. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that a child who cannot read or write—whatever his talents or abilities—will suffer in later life. I am sure that teachers generally and those who provide education share that view.

National Union of Teachers

2. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has had any recent discussions with the National Union of Teachers concerning the pay and conditions of its members.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I met the representatives of the National Union of Teachers on 21 January to explore prospects for further joint consideration of performance appraisal for teachers.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that he is dealing with a responsible trade union which is protesting about the fact that during four of the past five years the annual salary increase has fallen behind the inflation rate? Why is the right hon. Gentleman not seeking a solution to this problem, bearing in mind that we are witnessing the second year of destruction in the classroom? Has the right hon. Gentleman received advice from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that this dispute, like the mining dispute, is another worthwhile investment for the nation?

Sir Keith Joseph: The meeting was to discuss the performance appraisal for teachers. Although we discovered that the National Union of Teachers and I had a considerable amount of common ground, I must tell the House that I remain in favour of a close link between performance and pay. That would require regular appraisal of professional performance. I would certainly welcome a new pay system in which good teachers receive differential rewards. Appraisal can serve a variety of other purposes, such as fostering professional development of teachers and underpinning the more effective management of the teacher force. If progress on appraisal in the context of pay negotiations is too slow—all the evidence points that way—it is my duty to explore the possibilities for progress in other ways.

Mr. Madel: As there is a need to build into the teacher salary system a proper method of assessment, and as there is still confusion and argument about the actual duties of teachers, should not the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 be drastically amended to take account of the new conditions?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am not absolutely convinced that we know of a better system to put in its place, but I am ready to listen to suggestions. I know that representatives of the local education authorities will meet me soon to discuss my hon. Friend's proposition.

Mr. Freud: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that much of the grievance is caused by ossification in the structure of education, and that many of those who are most ready to go out on strike are the able teachers who are unable to get promotion? Does he accept that there is a vast amount of goodwill on all sides towards restructuring education? What does he intend to do about coming clean with the teachers about the money that is available?

Sir Keith Joseph: I accept that the fall in the number of pupils has sharply reduced the promotion prospects for teachers, and that is an added reason why an appraisal system might replace some of the propects for some of the teachers in the light of changing circumstances due to a fall in the number of chidren at school. As for the potentially

increased money that is available, I am aware of the suggestions that an extra 7 per cent. might be available in addition to the increase that might result from annual negotiation. I see no prospect whatsoever of such an increase. I hope that the teaches' leaders will not mislead their members.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there can be no justification for teachers taking action in pusuit of pay demands that harms their pupils? Is he aware that many teachers would prefer it if their professional voice was represented by a general teaching council and not by a union that has imported values that are properly alien to the teaching profession?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree that, for the vast majority of teachers, it must be almost unthinkable to damage the education prospects of children in their charge. As for a general teaching council, the Government are willing to listen to arguments in its favour, but I am not convinced that it is automatically a force for good. I remain to be convinced.

Mr. Flannery: Do not the Conservative Government think that there is never any justification for any group of people taking action? Does not a vote of 12,000 out of 14,000 in the 23 areas, because they have fallen behind since Houghton by over 30 per cent., show that teachers have been driven to desperation, and that that is why they are taking action? Why does the Minister want to wed the wage demand to the restructuring when these people need the money now and he could do the restructuring at another time?

Sir Keith Joseph: The employers have made it clear that 4 per cent. is as much as they can afford. Capacity to pay must be the paramount consideration in pay settlements. I know that this is unpalatable to the teachers, but it remains an inescapable reality.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Bearing in mind that the third largest teachers union — the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association — has decided this week not to take strike action, does my right hon. Friend agree that ways must be found to give fairer representation to those unions that are acting in the best interests of professional teaching?

Sir Keith Joseph: From time to time the constitution of the Burnham committee comes up for consideration by the holder of my office, particularly when applications for the membership to be reconsidered are made in the light of changed factors. I am open to suggestions that that time may come before long, but I am not convinced that that has happened yet.

Mr. Radice: Has the Secretary of State noticed that this is the second successive year when he will have presided over disrupted classrooms and a demoralised and undervalued profession? Does he not understand that it is his job to bring the parties — the teachers and the employers — together? Why does he not arrange to see both parties immediately?

Sir Keith Joseph: Surely the hon. Gentleman knows that what the negotiating machinery should be is laid down in statute. It is not for me to intervene in that statutory process. As for the second year of disruption, I should have thought that that added to the arguments for the teachers to consider seriously the proposals, in some form, that have been laid before them by the employers, although I must again repeat that the amount of money that might be available which I have seen quoted is wholly misleading.

Teachers (Pay)

3. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in resolving the teachers' salary claim; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: On 28 January the teachers panel rejected the management panel's offer of a 4 per cent. pay increase and refused arbitration. A further meeting of the Burnham committee was held on 11 February but no agreement was reached.

Mr. Taylor: Given the damage that will be done to children's education, will my right hon. Friend appeal even to the members of the National Union of Teachers not to join in this militant action while negotiations are still alive, and will he give us some idea of the actual salary claim that has been submitted by the NUT?

Sir Keith Joseph: I certainly appeal to the teachers not to disrupt the interests of the children in their charge. I believe that many teachers, even those who belong to the unions that have suggested disruption, will think many times before taking disruptive action. As for the evaluation of the teachers' pay claim, I have seen estimates which suggest that it might cost as much as 50 per cent. of the present remuneration of teachers, but lesser figures have also been canvassed.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State accept that in addition to the 23 local education authority areas mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), in which three days' industrial action is to take place next week in pursuit of the teachers' pay claim, many thousands of other teachers will also refuse to cover for absent colleagues and make voluntary contributions at lunchtime and after school to the duties they perform in the schools in which they work. Will the Secretary of State therefore advise his political friends on Solihull district council that since those duties are voluntary and are not part of the teachers' contract, the district council should not be proposing to take the NUT to court under the Trade Union Act 1984.

Sir Keith Joseph: Such decisions are entirely for the local education authorities concerned, but the teachers ought to consider whether it is in their interests, in seeking higher esteem as professionals, to disrupt the education of the children in their charge. I believe that the vast majority of teachers will not do it.

Mr. Haselhurst: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that ordinary teachers are aware of the possibilities of enhancement that could come from restructuring? Does this not also cast a light on the effectiveness of the present Burnham structure?

Sir Keith Joseph: I think that there has been a misconception and that it has sometimes been encouraged by some of the teachers' unions. Some form of teaching assessment, preferably associated with pay, might enhance the career development of teachers and improve the deployment of teachers by their employers, for the benefit of all the children.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Secretary of State be more constructive this afternoon and recognise that teachers do an extremely difficult job, that they do it very well and that since Houghton their pay has fallen by 30 per cent.? Will he also recognise that it is a good pay claim, that teachers are worth paying properly in the interests of our children and that he ought therefore to intervene to resolve this dispute?

Sir Keith Joseph: I certainly recognise that teaching is a hard job and that most teachers try to do it as effectively as possible. I accept that in the years immediately after Houghton while a Labour Government were in power the benefit of that pay increase was rapidly and dramatically eroded. Since the Tory Government came into office in 1979, teachers have had an actual increase in real pay. If they were to get anything like the increase which they are now seeking, the result would be an increase in unemployment, the level of which we already very much deplore.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. Friend aware that this morning the NUT has clearly indicated that it will continue strike action during the examination period? Is this not a dereliction of the duty of teachers to look after the interests of every pupil?

Sir Keith Joseph: I think that my hon. Friend misunderstands the situation. I cannot believe that most teachers would wish to do such damage and, indeed, I hope that the NUT has not given such guidance.

Mr. Radice: While understanding the constitutional position, may I ask the Secretary of State to confirm that he is perfectly entitled to call the parties in and to tell them how much money is available?

Sir Keith Joseph: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would join me in expressing what I am sure is a genuine feeling, that disruption of children's education is in no way justified. There is a negotiating machinery, and I have no right to call the parties in to negotiate. The employers have made it plain that 4 per cent. is the most that they can afford, and that is the inescapable reality.

Children (Paid Employment)

4. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has issued any guidance to local education authorities in relation to the impact upon the education of children under 16 years of age of their taking paid employment.

Mr. Dunn: No, Sir.

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful to the Minister for that lengthy answer. Against the background of the recent Low Pay Unit report, which showed extensive and occasionally illegal part-time employment of children under the age of 16, will the Minister consider reviewing, and possibly extending, the power of local education authorities so that they may intervene in circumstances where it is clear that such employment is damaging the education of the individual child?

Mr. Dunn: I am aware of the allegations in the recent Low Pay Unit report "Working Children" about the illegal employment of children. Clear responsibilities are already laid on parents, employers and local education authorities. I understand that most local authorities now follow the lines of a circular issued in 1976, and we have no further plans.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Is not the recent activity in some schools of children under 16, picketing and threatening to strike, indicative of an attempt to copy those in paid employment, such as teachers, who are supposed to be teaching those children?

Mr. Dunn: I am not entirely sure whether my hon. Friend's question follows from the answer I have just given. None the less, the point can validly be made that if teachers wish to set an example they must carefully consider the action that they propose to take, both in and out of school.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that many children no longer get full benefit from their education because of family poverty and that some children take extemely badly paid part-time jobs, either at early or very late hours, which do not allow them to get the full benefit from their education? Will he press the local authorities to enforce the legislation so that youngsters cannot be exploited in this way?

Mr. Dunn: It is always of concern to us if laws to protect the welfare of children are not properly enforced. Employers have a duty to obey the law, and parents have the primary responsibility for the welfare of their children. Therefore, it is not just the local education authorities who have a responsibility in this matter.

University Incomes

5. **Mr Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the change in the annual incomes in real terms of universities since 1979; and whether the income of Oxford university has changed in the same way as the average for all universities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Peter Brooke): The annual recurrent income from all sources of universities in Great Britain increased by 10·8 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and 1982-83. The corresponding increase for the University of Oxford was 9·3 per cent. The figures do not allow a true comparison between years because of changes in funding arrangements during the period and the provision of additional funds for reductions in staff.

Mr. Greenway: Given that there has been higher spending on education in real terms under this Government, including spending on Oxford university and its lecturers' salaries, was it not deplorable that that university's congregation recently decided not to confer the traditional honorary degree on the Prime Minister—its most famous daughter—on the spurious ground of education cuts and without a proper study of the facts?

Mr. Brooke: The House will recall the observation that no cause should be considered lost until the University of Oxford has espoused it.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister understand the bafflement of those universities which have a technological specialisation who appear to have been singled out particularly for loss of income, when they believe they are doing a good job to enhance the economic structure of the country?

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

The GLC now has a firm basis on which to plan for its 1986-85 budget and rate precepting. It knows the details of my right hon. Friend's rate-capping order; and it knows the amount specified in this Bill, which, subject to the agreement of Parliament, it will have to pay over to LRT. It can now make its rate.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On the issue of certainty, can the Secretary of State tell us whether he accepts that the courts are traditionally acknowledged as making certain decisions, but, more important, whether he has any information that the Court of Appeal or, if necessary, the House of Lords could have decided this matter more quickly than Parliament by passing new legislation? Surely that would have been a much more certain and normal way to proceed.

Mr. Ridley: As a result of the High Court judgment there is no direction in place; there is no order of any sort. Nor did the court seek to say what the sum of money paid should be, nor substitute its own direction for one that it quashed. Whether we rely on the High Court or go to appeal or even to the very top, it does not mean that a direction will be made. What it means is that any direction that may be made may or may not be challenged or may or may not be upheld, so there is no certainty at the end of the entire legal process that there would be a direction in place that would be valid.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): If the Secretary of State was prepared to abide by the undertaking that he gave in Committee when we were discussing section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984, he could make a revised direction to the GLC which would be legally binding upon the GLC. The only thing which he could not do and which he is seeking to do in this Bill is to create an operating surplus for London Regional Transport. That is something that he said specifically he would not do. If he gave up the surplus that is unnecessary for LRT's revenue and operating needs, he could make another direction which would be legally binding. Why does he not do that?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. He did not hear either speech that I made on the Ways and Means resolution. He appeared, made a speech and left without listening to the other side of the argument. If he wishes to enlighten himself, I suggest that he reads the argument in *Hansard*.

Whatever the court may decide, or on appeal the Appeal Court may decide, it does not alter the fact that the House has a right and a duty to make sure that its intentions to take from the GLC the correct amount are implemented. If section 49 is defective—and I accept that it is—I have to give the House an alternative way of proceeding which is the only way open to the Government if they are to effect their policy to implement what I told the Committee on the London Regional Transport Act.

When the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) interrupted me, I was talking about the uncertainty. I emphasise the phrase I used—subject to the agreement of Parliament—because the GLC cannot be certain that Parliament will approve the Bill in the form that I have presented it. In order to give the earliest possible element of certainty to the GLC and to LRT, the Government propose that the progress of the Bill be expedited. The House will have seen the motion on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the House proposing that the remaining stages be taken on Thursday. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that, whatever they may think about the contents of the Bill, it is right to decide the issue as quickly as possible.

May I say in passing that the GLC rate will not include any element of funding for the GLC for next year and that it is misleading for the GLC to suggest that ratepayers will be paying twice for public transport. In December 1983 the GLC transferred £300 million of housing debt to London Transport solely in order for the GLC to claim that Londoners would have to pay £69 million in interest on this debt, on behalf of LRT, through its GLC rate in future. London Transport capital has previously always been provided by means of grant on a pay-as-you-go basis, so this is a doubly mischievous and deceptive device.

The cost to London's ratepayers of supporting LRT is indeed down next year by some £50 million. London ratepayers will, with this Bill, be paying less for LRT than last year. However, the GLC's rate-cap is at about the same level as its precept for this year because it chose to spend £200 million of reserves last year, enabling it to hold down its rate for 1984-85, which is why it has to put up the rate so much next year. This, again, is another deliberate device to whitewash the GLC's extravagance.

I shall now repeat briefly how the sum of £258,179,588 specified in the Bill was derived and why it is reasonable for all the parties concerned—passengers, ratepayers and the GLC. I have already given the House a full explanation in the Ways and Means debate, so I shall not repeat it all.

Section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act empowered me to direct the GLC to pay up to £360 million in grants to LRT, deducting any grants already paid by the GLC in respect of 1984-85 before 29 June, when the Government took over responsibility for LRT. When I made my direction under section 49, my information was that the GLC had already paid £78·7 million up to 29 June of last year, which reduced the amount which it could be required to pay for the rest of 1984-85 to £281·3 million; that is, the £360 million less what had been paid.

I directed the GLC to pay that amount. LRT was then forecasting a small deficit for the year, after grants. It seemed clear that it would need the full amount of grants for which the GLC had budgeted and precepted.

After I made the direction, it became clear that some £10·2 million of payments by the GLC in the period before 29 June had been made in respect of 1984-85, not 1983-84 as LT had requested at the time. As I explained to the House, LT had asked the GLC to pay £10·2 million in grants to settle the position for the financial year 1983-84. The GLC duly made the payments, but insisted on labelling them as payments for 1984-85.

In deriving the sum of grant specified in the Bill, I have decided to deduct those payments, which amount precisely to £10,220,412. LRT will have to absorb that reduction in grant. I believe that the GLC should have settled up for 1983-84, but I accept that it would go beyond the Government's original intentions to require it now to do so, and I did not seek to recover that sum of money through the direction when the matter went before the court.

Mr. Tony Banks: The GLC did not give the grant for 1983-84 of £10·2 million, on the ground that London

Transport did not need it. The whole point of precepting and then paying for services is that the council pays only for the services that are required, and LT did not need that money. As I say, that is why it was not paid.

Mr. Ridley: My information is different. It is that London Transport asked for the money, which it needed towards the end of March. The GLC, instead of paying it, although it had it, deliberately held it over until the new financial year for the express purpose of labelling it as 1984-85 money so that it could get out of having to pay it under section 49.

Mr. Tony Banks: It was not needed.

Mr. Ridley: It was needed, and if the hon. Gentleman asks London Transport I think he will find that it was considerably inconvenienced by having to stand out of that money simply so that that clever dodge could be employed to keep it out of the relevant financial year.

As well as that deduction of £10·2 million, I made a further deduction of £12·9 million from the sum specified in the original direction, and I will explain the basis of that figure. At the time I made the direction, the GLC's money Bill for 1984-85 was being considered by the House. The House had passed an instruction to the Standing Committee considering the Bill which invited the GLC to come forward with proposals to reduce its capital expenditure provisions, failing which the Committee was to make reductions of just under 7·5 per cent. across the board.

The GLC did not take account of the direction which I made concerning LRT by bringing forward proposals, with the consequence that, after I had made the direction under section 49, the money Bill provision for LRT was reduced by some 7·5 per cent. The money Bill has recently been enacted in that form and I have, therefore, deducted £12·9 million from the sum which the GLC was originally required to pay to LRT.

Compared with the section 49 direction, therefore, this Bill reduces the requirement for grants from the GLC by some £23·1 million, £12·9 million in respect of the money Act reduction and just over £10·2 million in respect of the additional payments made at the beginning of 1984-85.

The question which the House must decide—as I said, it is not an appropriate decision to ask the courts to make—is whether the residual amount of grant—the £258·2 million specified in the Bill—is reasonable in relation to LRT's requirements. I am sure that the principle that we should adopt—the one I gave in Committee—is that LRT should not be left with a cash deficit or with unfunded liabilities. Indeed, I said in Committee that we should not take more from the GLC than was needed by LRT. The exact phrase I used was quoted often by myself and others in the Ways and Means debate.

The sum of £258·2 million roughly achieves just that. It will leave a cash surplus of some £30 million at the end of the year. But LRT has liabilities of £21 million for voluntary redundancies and a further £15 million for other unfunded liabilities. Thus, the £285 million is certainly not more than LRT needs to balance its books this year.

LRT also needs a reserve to pay off the cost of the buses which the GLC suddenly decided to lease; £20·8 million is included in the sum in the Bill for that purpose. Without it, LRT's needs would most certainly not be met.

I have explained fully the substance of clause 1(1) of the Bill. I will now briefly explain subsections (2) and (3). Subsection (2) provides for the phasing of payments by the GLC. Its intention is to avoid requiring the GLC to pay money to LRT in advance of when it would have had to do so under the section 49 direction.

It allows for two possibilities. If Royal Assent is received before 25 March, the first instalment of grant is payable on the day following Royal Assent. That instalment is the amount which would have been due under the section 49 direction by 25 February, less the two sums of £10·2 million and £12·9 million now conceded to the GLC. A second instalment will then fall due on 29 March and under the section 49 direction this was divided into two payments, due on 25 and 29 March.

Subsection (2) also provides for the possibility that Royal Assent may not be obtained until 25 March or later, in which case the entire sum of grant due under the Bill will be payable on the day following Royal Assent.

Subsection (3) simply provides that interest will be payable if the grant is not paid on time. This simply revises the provision for interest payments in section 49(5) of the London Regional Transport Act to take account of the provisions of this Bill.

Under our control, LRT's revenue position has improved, thanks to better than expected sales of Travelcards, increased tourism in London and the fares increase on 6 January. Also, LRT's management has been able to bring forward cost savings as part of its drive to improve efficiency and value for money.

On the other side of the balance sheet, LRT will have to absorb the £23 million reduction in grants—the £10·2 million and the £12·9 million which I have explained. It has also incurred substantial liabilities; for example, voluntary severance payments which are a direct short-term consequence of its action to reduce costs.

It is unreasonable for the GLC to say that it should pay less grant on account of the cost savings but should not have to cover the related liabilities which will show in LRT's accounts for 1984-85. As with the leasing reserve, if those liabilities are not covered by grant this year, they will fall as a burden on passengers and ratepayers in the future.

Hon. Members should bear in mind that LRT has a turnover of about £1 billion. Even if it got its forecast right to within 2 per cent., it could still be £20 million adrift one way or the other. With that qualification in mind, I am satisfied on the basis of LRT's latest forecast, that the sum of grant specified in the Bill will just about be enough to meet LRT's needs for 1984-85, including its accrued liabilities. Taking account of all the considerations which I have outlined, I believe that the proposal now before the House is fair and reasonable as between the parties concerned.

How can it be wrong to insist that money paid by the ratepayer for LRT should be given to LRT, especially when it is needed? If the Bill were not passed, and if the money stayed with the GLC, that money would have to be found again from London passengers or London ratepayers. Furthermore, section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act turned out to mean something different from what the House expected. I am sure that the House would agree with me that we should give effect to the Government's intentions as explained to Parliament during the passage of the Bill.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman heard me explaining exactly what I thought section 49 would mean. I confess that I gave him the wrong explanation, and I am perfectly prepared to admit that. Having done that, I would expect him to be the first to want me to bring the Bill before the House in order to put matters right.

Mr. Banks: May I point out to the Secretary of State yet again that he said in Committee on 15 March that it was not his intention to create a surplus? The reason why Mr. Justice McNeill found him to have acted illegally was that he set out to create a surplus which reversed the undertaking that he gave in Committee. It is not section 49 that has changed; it is the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ridley: I have extremely bad luck with the hon. Gentleman. I covered that point at some length some minutes ago, and again he was not in his place. On three occasions I have answered the point which he continues to make. It would be much easier if he took the trouble to listen to what I say. If he did, he would not make the point ever again, because it is a totally bogus one.

We have the interests of the ratepayer and the taxpayer at heart.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when it comes down to it, this is an argument about whether money that has been allocated to LRT should be paid to LRT or whether, when there is an alternative to be funded, such as the GLC, it should be paid to that other body? The objective of the Opposition is to give the funding to the GLC to use for whatever purpose it wants rather than for the specific purpose of funding LRT. In fact, Opposition Members are disagreeing with what they claimed in Committee, which was that they had the interests of LRT passengers at heart. They do not. They have the interests of the GLC at heart. Does my right hon. Friend also agree that the basic reason why Opposition Members are upset is that LRT, since it has been funded, is more successful, more profitable, more efficient and more popular than they ever hoped or prayed for?

Mr. Ridley: The debate is concerned with one thing only: should £50 million which was taken from London's ratepayers to assist LRT be taken from them a second time so that the GLC can make a windfall profit of £50 million? That is the crux. If any hon. Gentlemen dared to vote against the Bill, they would be branding themselves as people who thought that it was right to raise £50 million from London's ratepayers to be spent by the GLC on something else, and then to raise another £50 million and soak the ratepayers twice. If any hon. Members believe that, I think that they will be most unpopular with London. That is why I commend the Bill to the House.

4.22 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I enjoy listening the the Secretary of State because his speeches have an endearing imaginative quality: they bear appallingly little relation to the truth.

I should like to remind the House of what has happened in relation to the Bill. Once upon a time there was a Secretary of State who decided that he would create an unelected quango called London Regional Transport. He decided that, in order to do that, he would have to take control of it away from the elected body. He therefore brought before the House, because he has a large majority, a Bill which he thought would enable him to do exactly what he liked. He took the Bill into Committee. He explained that what he was asking the GLC to do was simply to pay the amount of money that was owed to LRT because the change was to come about in the middle of a financial year. He said—and we are getting to the point at which we can almost quote it in chorus—that it was not his intention to take more through the clause—the now famous section 49—than was strictly necessary for running LRT for the year in question so that we should not end up with a surplus.

Unfortunately, however, things then began to go wrong. Without any consultation with the GLC, the Secretary of State when he took over pushed ahead with demanding a sum of money. The GLC told him at the time that it was not in agreement with the figures that he presented. It pointed out to him that it had not been consulted and that it was going to appeal against his decision. The GLC took the Secretary of State to law.

What happened when the Secretary of State found himself in the law courts? He was not, as he may have given the House the impression today, being asked to hand over his responsibilities to a judge so that the judge could decide the amount of money. The GLC was claiming that he was asking for sums to which he was not entitled. The GLC made it quite clear that the Secretary of State was asking for a great deal of money that was not his legal right, and the court found for the GLC.

I remind the House of that judgment because it seems to have got lost in the suggestion that all the Government are doing is putting right a little mistake that was made by the parliamentary draftsman. They are doing nothing of the sort. We are being asked to enact legislation that is retrospective, because a court of law found that the Secretary of State had acted

"unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly in giving a direction which exceeded his statutory powers without consideration of all relevant material and without consultation with the Greater London Council."

I remind the House of what happened next. Four times at the Dispatch Box the Secretary of State said that we could not discuss the matter because it was sub judice and he intended to appeal. Four times he sought to mislead the House, and on four separate occasions he was wrong, because he had no intention of appealing. Indeed, he did not appeal against the judgment which was so damning that many Ministers in any Government but the present one would have felt obliged to resign, but, oh, no, not the Secretary of State—he was not worried by these minor problems.

He then decided that he would present another Bill. Even after the debacle of the legal decision that has handed down against him, he had the power to come to the House with a direction and to put the matter right, but that was not good enough for him. He is not prepared to accept that he was wrong. He simply comes back to the House with another Bill saying in effect that, if he did not get it right the first time, he is going to change the rules so that he gets it right the second time. The House should understand the extent of that, dare one say it, arrogance. The Secretary of State would somehow have us believe today that all he is doing is putting right a small piece of creative accounting.

The Secretary of State told us about the GLC and the way in which it deliberately fixed the books. He suggested that he had to present the Bill to the House to put right the

mistake that he had made because the GLC, by moving amounts of money from one head to another, had managed to change the payments that were due to LRT. The reality is that the GLC, on the basis of providing a service to the customer, has always paid for the operating needs of London Transport. Now it is being asked to do something very different.

Will the Secretary of State tell us whether it is true that LRT made it clear to him that if it went ahead with the famous Travelcard that he is very fond of and tells us about on every possible occasion, it might find itself in considerable difficulty because of the implications of the integration of its services with those of British Rail? Did not LRT tell him that if he insisted on going ahead—because there could be large fare increases for some passengers—LRT would demand a quid pro quo by way of a considerable amount of extra money not only to "deal with voluntary redundancies", as the Secretary of State says, but to make up for costs that it expects in the coming year? Therefore, it is not a question of the Secretary of State providing some marvellously efficient new service. Having told the House of Commons that he had no intention of trying to take extra sums of money to build up surplus funds, the Secretary of State is now bringing forward new legislation that will do precisely that.

We should make it clear to the ratepayers of London that they may not be getting the bargain that, somehow or other, the Secretary of State would have them believe. Most ratepayers are quite capable of understanding that if the GLC gets the money back into the coffers, it will do one of two things—either lower the rates or provide better services. The Secretary of State has just told us at great length that last year the GLC used its own reserves to keep the rates down. I did not say that — the Secretary of State did. Presumably the GLC did that because it was conscious of the need to think about the proper rate that it would levy on the people of London. However, we are now being told that the GLC cannot be given back that amount of money—it cannot be given extra cash because it would spend it not on the ratepayers but on some other, unspecified, subject.

Today the Secretary of State is perpetuating in the House of Commons his nasty, shabby little battle in his war of attrition against the GLC. I think that he misled the House not once but several times. He came here saying that the spare cash that the LRT did not need during the year could go back to the ratepayers in reduced GLC precept, but now he has changed his mind and is bringing forward a Bill that would make that quite impossible.

What we have here is a bit of legislation of which any Secretary of State should be ashamed. The right hon. Gentleman should be ashamed because there are few people who can have been hauled before a court of law and told that they have behaved disgracefully. He should be ashamed because he has not accepted that judgment but just come back to the House with another Bill trying to make good the mistake that he made in the first instance. He should be ashamed because, like so many in the present Government, when he has done something wrong, does he come back to the House and apologise? No, he does not. Has there been a hint or a suggestion from the Secretary of State that somehow or other he was to blame for the mess that he has got himself into? No; the Secretary of State comes here and says, "Right. I asked the GLC—in fact, I told the GLC—how much money I wanted. I did not consult it or concern myself with the needs of the ratepayers of London. In fact, now I shall have to put on an extra levy because of that. What I have done is create a situation that means that the only way that I can get out of the nasty little corner that I have painted myself into is to bring before the House of Commons a Bill that is retrospective in intent." It is a shabby little manoeuvre. It is an embarrasing little manoeuvre. I am appalled that the Secretary of State will use his enormous majority to push through something of which anyone should be ashamed.

4.34 pm

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) rightly referred to the enormous majority that we in the Conservative party will have for the Bill. I remind her that it is not only an enormous majority in the country as a whole or in the House, but an enormous majority that the Conservative party received for the abolition of the GLC in the 1983 general election. It is the enormous majority that Londoners gave us as representatives of London. There are far more Conservative Members representing London constituencies than Opposition Members.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich was outraged about the Bill, but where are all her supporters? All three of them are stuck up at the back of the Chamber, almost trying to separate themselves from her. It is fascinating. There they are, lurking at the back underneath the clock, afraid to be associated with her. The verdict will be given tonight by the House of Commons, but it has been given already by the people at the general election. The hon. Lady knows that well.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that measure was put into the manifesto only about six weeks before polling day, and received little notice throughout London? The hon. Gentleman also referred to the three hon. Members sitting under the clock, as he put it. Does he agree that that is our customary place in the House?

Mr. Eggar: I understand why the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have a great deal of respect, does not wish to be associated too directly with his Front Bench. He has always been an independent-minded Member, and would not want to come too close to the influence of the Front Bench. He referred to the Conservative party manifesto at the election. I had always understood that the hon. Gentleman was on the Left of his party—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend does not seem to agree with that observation. I am sorry to cause dissension between two hon. Members from the same borough. That measure was clearly in our manifesto. It is a manifesto commitment that we have carried out.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will make a speech in his own time, and I do not want to detain the House for too long.

Why are we discussing LRT and the Bill? The reason is, of course, that it was necessary in the last Parliament for us to make the change from London Transport to London Regional Transport. Why? The reason is simple. One has only to look at the record of London Transport over the 12 years before the Act came into operation to see it. Passengers were down by 25 per cent.; there were real increases in bus costs, which went up 67 per cent.;

[Mr. Sydney Bidwell]

In the Alice in Wonderland context I thought that we were looking at the dormouse and that Alice was sitting behind him. He seemed to be having a quiet snooze but I know him better than that. I am sure he had both ears open. He will have to face searching questions.

I have been ploughing through lots of figures about the requirements of London Transport. No doubt the Secretary of State was working out the requirements. We want only to break even. The Secretary of State will have another option when he takes this additional money. He will then be able to boast that at last London Regional Transport is making a surplus.

The Minister might say that under the dual management, as it were, of the GLC and the old London Transport Board, the system managed only to break even, whereas now it has £50 million available. One can think of various reasons why the Bill has been introduced. I believe that it is designed mainly to finance the rundown of the public sector, particularly the bus sector, of the transport industry in London.

We appreciate that policies of what one might call natural wastage will allow for a degree of rundown. At present, there are agreements with the unions — for example, with my union, the Transport and General Workers Union — to the effect that there will be no compulsory redundancies. However, if the compensation is high enough, there will be a degree of rundown in the numbers of staff. That does not mean that people will stop being bus drivers and take up some other occupation. The unemployment scene in London does not allow that to happen; there is no provision for alternative employment.

The Conservatives have been responsible for an awful financial situation in industry and commerce because they have been financing idleness. Whatever the real reasons for their policies, in transport and in other spheres, the Minister must come clean and tell us exactly what the Government have in mind for the future financing of London Transport. What do they envisage as the role of London buses in the future? Over the generations people have learned to rely on the buses. Are we to return to the old days — of 50 years ago and more — that I recall, when we used to wait for the cheap, shoddy bus to arrive? I fear that what the Government are doing is part of a cheap and shoddy policy for the future development of London Transport.

6.22 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It is no coincidence that so far in the debate two speakers have come from Newham. We in that part of London rely more on public transport than perhaps the people of any other London borough. The rate of car ownership is relatively low and even those with cars must take into account the disabled and others who are not fit enough to drive. We want to see increased and improved provision in public transport not just in Newham but throughout London.

It is ironic for us to be debating this subject because until 1933 the corporations of East Ham and West Ham ran their own public transport services. They were run by the borough councillors, whom one could see any evening; otherwise one could go to an advice centre to discover all that one wanted to know about the local publicly owned tramways.

Those transport services were gladly given up in 1933 on the assumption that Herbert Morrison's Bill of that year —taken over by the Conservatives of the time—would provide an integrated public service in the new model public corporation to be known as London Transport. That contract has been broken because under the London Regional Transport Act, passed since the last general election, that structure is up for fragmentation. The co-ordination in the old sense has gone and privatisation will be the order of the day.

The Secretary of State accuses my colleagues at the GLC of being robbers and plunderers. Is the right hon. Gentleman not plundering £50 million from the ratepayers of London in this financial year? For what reason is he doing that? I shall answer that question later in my speech.

The additional £50 million that the Secretary of State has tried to get was adjudicated over in a court of law. The action of the Secretary of State—of this party of law and order — is, therefore, unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper. I cannot help but compare this debate with yesterday's, when we were discussing the verdict of a court in which a person's action was judged by 12 Londoners to have been lawful, rational and proper —the opposite of what the Secretary of State tried to do by order and is now doing in this measure by changing the law.

It is surprising that we should be debating this subject because the Conservatives have all along deplored centralised power and democracy and undue additional legislation. However, since the last general election we have had to put up with the London Regional Transport Act; we now have the Local Government Bill in Committee upstairs, to the proceedings of which the Secretary of State has no doubt had to scurry, and under which only one third of the GLC's functions will go to the boroughs; a few days ago we had the annual London Regional Transport (Levy) Order; we have had the financial resolution which gave effect to the Bill that is now before the House; and today we have Second Reading of the Bill, with the remaining stages and Third Reading to come on Thursday.

All of those measures should not have been before the House of Commons. They should have been in county hall and with the borough councils. All of that has been done by a Government who claim that there has been too much legislation and that Whitehall has too much power. Allthose measures, however, make for greater centralisation in favour of Whitehall. That is why we look on the Bill with a jaundiced eye.

The Capitalcard has received much publicity, and rightly so, because in principle it is a good scheme. Public transport is the lifeblood of London. Without the pulsing of tubes, buses and British Rail trains, much of the social, industrial and commercial life of London would not be possible. Those activities are more possible where those services are cheaper and more frequent, so enabling private cars and taxis to be used to the best advantage.

The Capitalcard scheme which the GLC had intended to introduce—which would have aided that development by, for example, the ease of movement of passengers between BR and LRT—would have cost 37 per cent. less than the scheme which has been introduced under the aegis of the Government. I understand that an additional £5 million in subsidy was to have been allocated to get the scheme off the ground.

It would be a good idea to divert some of the £50 million back to the benefit of London's ratepayers by reducing the cost of the Capitalcard scheme, preferably to the extent that the GLC was planning. In that way, everybody would gain: the ratepayers would get more of their money back in cheap transport, there would be fewer cars on the roads, and more people would travel by buses and trains.

I imagine that many hon. Members listen to the radio programme each morning which comes before and after "Yesterday in Parliament". Just before 8 o'clock this morning a gentleman spoke about what constituted a good deal. He said that when he was in China he found it difficult to understand the claim of the Chinese that there was no necessity to go to lawyers and to the court, because if a deal was good, it would be to the mutual advantage of everybody to keep to it. He was expressing an important principle.

If the principle of the Capitalcard scheme could be instituted in the way that I have suggested, everybody would gain. It would be a good deal for all, including the Government, because they would get more support than they are getting today from their Back Benchers for this legislation. However, we do not have that scheme.

We have others in the five-year plan that LRT is proposing, including an extension of OPO. It used to be called OMO, but we have become more enlightened and it is now OPO—one-person operation. Will a wholesale extension of one-person operated buses in central London be an advantage? Most people who use buses in central London would question that. In suburban services, with relatively long distances between stops, one-person operation may well be an advantage. But is it really believed that in central London it will be useful, and do we want to get rid of conductors everywhere? I suggest that we do not. It may be appropriate on a Sunday morning or in some parts of the day to have one-person operation, but why not retain two people when it is useful and necessary to have the services that the man on the back of the bus provides?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that studies carried out by the GLC and the old London Transport Executive, before it was taken over, demonstrated that the use of conductor-operated buses resulted in shorter journeys and less traffic congestion? On the other hand, one-person operated buses take much longer at every stop, create more traffic congestion and are therefore much slower on the journey, which in turn results in fewer passengers wishing to use them because this is a slower way of travelling round London.

Mr. Spearing: I endorse what my hon. Friend has said. Any individual who travels in London, by one-person operated bus, by car or even, if I dare mention it, by bicycle knows that only too well. That was recognised years ago when LT found that its plans were not working out. One of the reasons why the GLC managed to persuade LT to adopt the Travelcard was that it speeded up one person operation.

By reminding me of that, my hon. Friend also reminds me that the remaining two-crew buses in London are largely of the Routemaster variety—known as RMs—the last real London bus for many people in London. Although some of them are 20 or more years old, they are running well and economically because they do not have the gimmicks, gadgets and electronics that are incorporated in the new buses. I hope that LRT will not dump the lot, because the Routemaster is the best bus that London has ever had. I know of no reason, given judicious capital investment and renewal, why they should not last a good deal longer.

The Government, however, have other plans. It is ironic that in Bromley and other areas in that part of London they intend to introduce privatisation. We shall see how it works out. However it works out, some of the rates imposed on the ratepayer to pay for LRT will go to subsidise the private operators. It may be questioned how one can have private operators in London, and it may be thought that such a service will not pay if it is run throughout the day. The answer is that it is not designed to pay. This operation will be subsidised by the central London regional transport company to the minimum extent that the tendering operation will permit. Even if private buses are run in Bromley and similar areas, they will not make profits, and, should they make profits, they will be at the expense of the subsidy paid by the ratepayers and the Exchequer. That is one of the hidden features of the Bill, but it is difficult for people to understand it until it is fully explained.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend is correct. Does he agree that, once the routes that are likely to make profits are hived off, the ratepayers will be left with the unprofitable routes? The ratepayers will not have those routes on which profits are made to set against the non-profit-making routes, which will result in a higher overall cost to the ratepayers.

Mr. Spearing: If the routes that are privatised are the cream routes, to which my hon. Friend refers, that will indeed be so. Of course, those will be most attractive routes.

I have to say that the speech of the Secretary of State in opening the debate was largely unintelligible. I endeavour to understand London Transport, as he knows, but, although I listened carefully, his speech was so technical and convoluted that I was unable to follow what it was about. That may have been intentional because, as the court found, some of us believe that what he is attempting to do is highly improper and illegal until the Bill is enacted.

I wish to remind the Secretary of State of some of the exchanges that he and I had in consideration of the money resolution on 7 February. I said that the money resolution would permit the Secretary of State to take back from London Transport any surplus revenue. He said that the proceeds from any property development

"had nothing to do with London Transport. Such proceeds would be paid into the Treasury. In no sense would the money resolution power be used for the purposes of paying in the surpluses."

So far, so good. Prior to that, he said:

"The power in the money resolution was intended to cover the unlikely event of the discovery of oil or of a gold mine on LRT property, or of major property development, the proceeds of which had nothing to do with London Transport."

Is the Secretary of State telling the House that he will take an extra £50 million from the ratepayer and that, if there is a windfall of £50 million through some kind of property development—which, with all the property money swilling around nowadays, I imagine is not very

[Mr. Spearing]

big in property terms, but is quite substantial from the ratepayers' point of view—he intends to put that money back to the Treasury?

I trust that I have quoted the Secretary of State in context. When he winds up the debate he will of course have available a copy of *Hansard*, and will correct me if I am wrong. The only interpretation that can be put on reading *Hansard* of 7 February is that, while taking £50 million from the ratepayer, he does not intend to put any revenue that may result from property development at the disposal of LRT, but intends to collar any surplus for the Treasury. That seems to be an inequitable arrangement, if nothing else.

In the same debate, I said:

"I assume that all the additional revenue, over and above the requirements for this year, will be used for improving the service or reducing fares. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman can give us that assurance."

Courteous and helpful as ever, the Secretary of State leapt to his feet and said:

"I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance categorically."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1213-14.]

I therefore went away pleased and happy, as far as one could be after such an awkward debate, that the moneys that were going to be paid in by the ratepayer would be used in a proper way for improving services or reducing fares.

However, what did the Secretary of State tell us today? He told us that that money would not be used for that purpose; it would be used for what he called accrued liabilities. He repeated that later in the debate. What are those accrued liabilities? He said that London Regional Transport has contracted, among other things, future redundancy liabilities. He said that he wants the money for future redundancy payments. We know that under the LRT plan there will be 2,450 redundancies in 1985-86, and just under 7,000 redundancies in a three-year scheme.

Can it be that yet again the Secretary of State has, perhaps unknowingly—I am not sure that he is master of his brief—misled the House? Has he got it wrong? How can he, on 7 February, give a categorical assurance that the money will be spent on improving services and reducing fares, when he says today, on 19 February, that the money will be spent on accrued liabilities — redundancies? That is one of the clues as to what the Government are trying to do. They are reducing the manpower on LRT, irrespective of anything else. That has always been one of their objectives. They are asking ratepayers to pay for that not only out of their pockets, but almost certainly in higher fares and probably in longer waits.

6.41 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is sad that we should be here today debating this rather sordid little Bill with hardly any Government Back Benchers present, few other people present in the House and very little comment about the Bill in the press. I can only think that if this situation was reversed and a Labour Government had to introduce a small piece of legislation to correct earlier legislation the press would be screaming about it and the Conservative party would be screaming about the denial of democracy and so on. However, we have a tame press and a nasty little measure that can be pushed through so that yet again Londoners will be robbed by the Government of a great deal of money.

Today's debate started logically in December 1983 when the Secretary of State introduced the LRT Bill. He said:

"The purpose of the Bill is quite simply to improve London's transport. It marks the end of an unsuccessful 14-year experiment . . . the mixing up of the commercial and the political. It was the age of 'big is beautiful', when everything had to be co-ordinated and integrated with almost everything else, so London Transport was thrown to the mercies of the GLC.

The GLC was given a duty under the 1969 Act to 'promote the provision of integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services for Greater London'." — [*Official Report*, 13 December 1983; Vol. 50, c. 855.]

In his lengthy attack on the GLC during his introduction of the LRT Bill that day, the Secretary of State was putting an end to what had been a successful period of public transport planning in London. When the GLC was given in 1969 authority to run London Transport, that was the start of a much more democratic period of operation. It was the start of local councillors having some say in the way in which public transort was run. It was a move towards a much more efficient and integrated public transport system.

The Secretary of State's main objection was that Londoners had voted to elect the GLC, which was prepared to levy sufficient rates to subsidise the integrated public transport system. That was his objection, which was entirely political. When he talks about making LRT into an efficient, board-like operation, he means that he wants LRT to be run at a profit, and then privatised, but he gives no thought to the consequences for other aspects of transport in London, such as road planning, and the effect on the lives of Londoners. Consistently he has shown himself to be unfit to hold the job that he has and unfit to run LRT. Despite all his other duties and the fact that he represents a delightful part of the country a long way from London, the right hon. Gentleman considers himself admirably suited to run LRT. What a mess he has made of it in a short period.

The right hon. Gentleman, when he introduced the Bill, talked about the start of a golden age and about how LRT would become a very efficient operation, fares would not necessarily rise so much, services would not be cut and nobody needed to be afraid for the future because LRT would be efficient under his stewardship. After only a short period, we now have the reckoning of what he has done.

Let us consider the fare changes in LRT. Fares rose by 9 per cent. on 6 January this year. There were variations in that increase. Nevertheless, it was far higher than the rate of inflation. It falls most on the poorest people in London, and the right hon. Gentleman knew it when he put through that increase. The biggest increase was for short-distance journeys. Short-hop fares, which amount to 30 per cent. of all fares taken, rose by 25 per cent. There have been fare increases, and more are on the way. There have been service changes. There were promises of a better service in London, increased bus miles and better integration with tube services and British Rail. Under the plan that the GLC had put forward when the Bill was introduced, in 1987-88 we would expect to have 170 million bus miles per year. Under the business plan put

forward by LRT, the figure is only 159 million miles. Therefore, the figure gets worse as one goes further into the future.

There is a serious effect for the people who have worked hard for a long time on LRT or its predecessor authorities, many of whom have worked for it since they started their working life. The Secretary of State is bringing in one-person operated buses, so 515 jobs are to go this month and 2,450 jobs are to go during 1985-86. The bus business as a whole is to lose 3,800 jobs within the next two years and total job losses over the next three years will be 6,950.

What do the people of London get in return for all that? Do they get a better transport system, or do they pay lower rates or lower fares for it? No; they are paying more. More money is being taken away immediately by the legislation that is being pushed through today, and they are getting a worse public transport system.

I should like to reflect on what my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said about the effects of one-person operated buses. That might not seem of great consequence to the Secretary of State or his deputy, the Under-Secretary of State, as they have both left the Chamber. Presumably they do not often travel on buses. Presumably they are not particularly interested in what it is like for those who have to wait for or travel on a bus. As has been explained by many others, if one-man operated buses are introduced in London, we shall have slower and more dangerous buses. There will be more traffic congestion and probably fewer passengers on the buses. Thus more commuter motorists will drive through London. There will be a cycle of decline of transport movements in London.

The only way forward for London is to get rid of the ludicrous so-called business plan and bring in a social plan for transport in London aimed at getting the commuter cars off the roads and getting people on to buses, tube trains and British Rail trains. We should end the nonsense of sacking bus drivers, bus conductors and bus maintenance workers, thus increasing the traffic jams in central London. That is all that it will succeed in doing and that is really what is behind the original legislation, last week's levy order and now this amendment Bill.

I hope that the House will consider what the Secretary of State is proposing and will for once think whether it is sensible to allow him to push through this legislation today and, effectively, tell the people of London that money will be taken from them because the Government got the figures wrong in the first place; that because the Government do not like the council that runs London at the moment they will demonstrate their contempt for the electoral process in London. That is what this Bill is all about. I hope — it is a very faint hope — that the Secretary of State will think again and will withdraw this Bill. His record on public transport matters is a very poor one indeed.

In continuing on this path of once a year debating a levy order for London Regional Transport and the Secretary of State's issuing edicts on the way London Transport should be run, what is his long-term aim? Is it, as he outlined on Second Reading, to have an efficient and businesslike London Regional Transport authority that will have been slimmed down and will be making lots of money; or is it really to make it, in his commercial terms, an efficient operation, disregarding the needs of people in London completely, and then sell it off to private enterprise? Is it to privatise the most lucrative bus and tube routes in London and possibly parts of the British Rail network and not care a hang about the needs of people in London, so that we go back to the situation before the first world war and immediately after it when there was competition on bus routes and competition for public transport in London? That is the direction in which the Secretary of State is taking us.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend was on the Committee on the London Regional Transport Bill, as I was. He has just mentioned going back to pre-war times, when there was a private element. Does he recall that it was stated in the Committee that in those times private buses would go to where there was perhaps a football match or some other popular function and pick people up there, but instead of the bus coming back the other way so that passengers waiting to go in the other direction could get to their destination it would ignore those people, turn round and go back to pick up the profits on that route? That was surely against the public interest. Does my hon. Friend recall that and does he think that we are likely to go back to those awful times?

Mr. Corbyn: I do not remember those times because I am a product of the welfare state and I am proud to say that I was born under a Labour Government. That is presumably why I enjoy good health.

However, I well recall the Secretary of State's trips down memory lane during the Committee stage of the London Regional Transport Bill when he was talking with misty eyes about what it was like when there was competition in London transport. That competition meant that there were buses competing for places at a bus stand, picking up passengers where there were many of them and ignoring passengers where there were only one or two of them, so that we had the sort of cut-throat methods that operate in some other countries. Indeed, this is starting in London now. If one goes down the Embankment in the morning and at about 5 o'clock in the evening there are numbers of private enterprise coaches running to the Kent coast, to Surrey and to Hertfordshire, competing for passengers and disregarding the traffic regulations on where they have to stand to pick them up. That is what the Secretary of State's policy will lead to all over London if it is allowed to go on.

During the day when there are not such large numbers of people wanting to travel on London Transport buses there will be fewer buses, and the competition certainly will not be interested in looking after those people. It certainly will not be interested in providing a good bus service for pensioners, even if they are able to continue to have the bus pass, for which the London boroughs have now been forced to pay.

That is the grim future which the Secretary of State has in store for us if the Bill goes through and if his original policies continue to operate in London as a whole. I hope that the Government will at least begin to see the idiocy of the position that they have manoeuvred themselves into, the damage that they are doing to London and to the livelihood of many people who work for London Transport, and the sense of anger and frustration that many of those people feel as they see their jobs being threatened, bus routes being taken away and tube lines threatened with closure, and all because of this ludicrous altar of competition upon which the Secretary of State has set his

Mr. Brooke: It is true that the University Grants Committee in 1981 exercised discrimination between various institutions, but it is also true that Loughborough and Bath, which were previously colleges of advanced technology, were beneficiaries when others were not.

Mr. Stokes: Can my hon. Friend say whether there is any relationship between the amount of money that taxpayers give to Oxford and what comes out of that university?

Mr. Brooke: The late Richard Crossman used to say that Whitehall and Westminster were dominated by Oxford because there was a better train service to Oxford than to Cambridge, but the House will recall the observation of Hazlitt:

"You will hear more good things on the outside of a stagecoach from London to Oxford than if you were to pass a twelvemonth with the under-graduates, or heads of colleges, of that famous university."

Pupils (Expenditure)

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil at secondary schools in England in real terms in 1979 and in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities in England spent an average of £850 per secondary pupil in 1979-80 and £945 in 1982-83, the latest year for which firm figures are available. Both figures are at 1982-83 prices.

Mr. Knox: Do these figures not make nonsense of the Opposition's claims about education cuts? Does my hon. Friend think that the increase in expenditure per secondary school pupil has been accompanied by an improvement in standards?

Mr. Dunn: I am pleased to tell the House that under this Government since 1979 spending per child per year on education has increased in real terms, allowing for inflation. Expenditure per child is at an all-time record. We have not cut spending per child, but have increased it. Much of that increase has gone on improving the pupil-teacher ratio to another all-time record. What matters is how effectively we spend the available money and the standards that are achieved.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister not deceiving himself and possibly deceiving the House when he tries to pretend that things are improving under the present regime? May I remind him that with high unemployment and poverty there are greater demands for free school meals and necessary clothing? Is he aware that last year the cost of books went up by 15 per cent. and the cost of paper by 18 per cent.? In view of all that, how can we be improving education?

Mr. Dunn: I have to remind the hon. Gentleman that Her Majesty's Inspectorate made it clear in its reports on the effects upon education provision of local education authority expenditure policies that there is no simple relationship between expenditure on the one hand and the quality of education and the achievement of pupils on the other. The major message is that better use could be made of available resources, given more efficient management at the level of local education authority and school alike.

Teacher Assessments

7. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends to meet teacher trade unions to discuss the introduction of teacher assessments.

8. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to introduce teacher assessment.

Sir Keith Joseph: Following my discussion with representives of the National Union of Teachers on 21 January the Department is consulting the other teacher associations and the local authority associations to explore the prospects for further joint consideration of the appraisal of teachers' performance.

Mr. Eggar: Does my right hon. Friend notice the almost universal welcome for his proposals on teachers' assessment? Does he not think it essential that annual assessment should be linked to pay increments? Does he agree that the vast majority of teachers would welcome such a move, even if the unrepresentative leaders of the NUT would not?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend that there must be a large number of teachers who would welcome at least discussion of the possibility. I remind the House that the Government stand ready to make available some taxpayers' and ratepayers' money for the carrying out of pilot schemes on the workability of appraisal systems.

Mr. McNair-Wilson Does my right hon. Friend agree that in assessing the quality of staff in schools the head teacher's role is fundamental and that, therefore, the highest quality of head teacher should be appointed, who should then be given more freedom than is currently the case to dismiss those members of staff who are not coming up to scratch?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with the first two limbs of my hon. Friend's supplementary question. As for the third, it is important that head teachers and others concerned should be able more systematically to use in-service training for the benefit of teachers who can be improved in their effectiveness thereby.

Mr. Madden: Why do the Government believe that substantial extra resources should be given to the already well-off by way of tax cuts to make them work more effectively, but that teachers' salaries should be reduced substantially to make them work more effectively?

Sir Keith Joseph: There is no question of reducing teachers' salaries, which have kept pace with inflation in real terms since 1979. The hon. Gentleman is misunderstanding the current emphasis on tax cuts, which many of my hon. Friends believe should go to raise the tax threshold and thus to increase the net earnings of those on all levels of pay.

Mr. Woodall: How does the right hon. Gentleman intend to assess teachers when a late hon. Friend of mine had a brother-in-law who obtained two double firsts in English at Cambridge university and who was employed at his local grammar school, where it was widely accepted that he could not teach for toffee?

Sir Keith Joseph: The assessment would need to be by people who could judge the effectiveness in the classroom

of each teacher, which would mean including the head teacher, the head of department, the teacher's own peers and representatives of the local education authority. The Government propose to run pilot schemes to assess the best way to carry out the appraisal. I hope that hon. Members will remember that there are many callings where assessment is regular and taken for granted.

Dr. Hampson: Will my right hon. Friend consider suggesting to the unions that there are serious problems with the teachers' career structure? Does he agree that with the tremendous collapse of the birthrate and the reduction in promotional posts in schools, it is vitally important to have some form of discriminatory assessment that gives encouragement to the best teachers?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with every word of that supplementary question. Even if the pay factor were not considered, the necessity for some system of appraisal to improve the use of in-service training is itself a strong argument for it.

Mr. Radice: How much extra money will be available to support a new structure system?

Sir Keith Joseph: I have told the world of education and the House several times that if the employers of teachers and the teachers' associations agree on a system that I can fully accept as negotiable, affordable and good for education, I shall be willing to take the agreement to my colleagues, though I have always emphasised that I cannot guarantee that my colleagues will make the necessary money available.

Oxford University

9. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the total income, at 1985 prices, from grants and fees to Oxford university in 1979; and what it is estimated to be in the current year.

Mr. Brooke: The total income of Oxford university, from recurrent grant allocated by the University Grants Committee and from university tuition fees for home full-time students, increased in real terms from £46·2 million in the academic year 1979-80 to an estimated £46·9 million in the academic year 1984-85. These data are in 1983-84 cost terms. The figures are not strictly comparable because of certain changes in funding arrangements over the period.

Mr. Galley: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures, and other comparative figures which are available, suggest a continuing preferential treatment for Oxford university? In view of the declining reputation of that university — *[Interruption]* — is he prepared to reconsider resource allocation in the higher education sector so as to give a better deal to modern and progressive universities in the north of England, such as Bradford and Salford?

Mr. Brooke: In an earlier answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) I explained that the University of Oxford had done less well than the generality of universities. It is now nearly 50 years since we had a Cambridge man in Downing street. If the University of Oxford insists on committing hubris, we run the risk of being visited with the nemesis of another Cambridge man.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister accept that while we, at least at face value, accept his figures, some of us have had our faith in higher education restored by the Oxford decision, and in this case believe that it is money well spent?

Mr. Brooke: I see the rhythm of the questions running. The funding issues are complex. I regret sometimes that they are not quite as well understood in the University of Oxford as elsewhere.

Teacher Training (Report)

10. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, having considered the views of the seven voluntary organisations representing deaf and blind children, he is now in a position to make a statement on the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers' report on teacher training and special educational needs.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales are still considering the report of the committee. When reaching their decisions they will take account of the views of the seven organisations to which the hon. Member refers.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that the ACSET report caused considerable concern among teachers of the visually and orally handicapped? Will he now recognise that he should announce as quickly as possible that special qualifications will continue to be required? Will he further recognise that the move towards care in non-specialist schools should not be used by the Government as a means of downgrading standards, and that special schools and special teachers will continue to be required on a proper scale?

Mr. Dunn: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's sincere interest in this matter. Our aim at all times is to improve standards. I am afraid that he must wait a little longer before my right hon. Friends are in a position to make an announcement.

Mr. Favell: Is my hon. Friend aware that not only those involved in the training of teachers of the deaf but the parents of deaf children are very concerned about the proposals in the ACSET report, and that the sooner the fears that have been raised are laid to rest, the better?

Mr. Dunn: I can only refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave a few moments ago. We have been made fully aware by hon. Members and directly of the concern that parents, teachers and those responsible for the provision of education for the deaf and blind feel about the proposals. Again, the House must wait a little longer before we are in a position to make an announcement.

Mr. Ashley: Will the Minister acknowledge that deaf and blind children have special educational needs, and that removing the mandatory requirement for special educational qualifications for their teachers can be justified only if the special education need is removed? Since, in the nature of the case, that is impossible, it would be quite wrong to remove this specialist qualification for teachers of blind and deaf children.

Mr. Dunn: The House will know of the right hon. Gentleman's deep feelings on this matter. However, I must remind the House that the ACSET report on teacher

training and special educational needs included a wide variety of recommendations on training generally and on the staffing of schools. The House will understand, I am sure, that these recommendations and the comments that my right hon. Friends have received deserve careful consideration.

Mr. Stern: Would my hon. Friend care to count the number of times that he has given a virtually identical answer to this question? While it is accepted that these matters must take some time, would he spare a thought for those teachers in deaf units and deaf schools whose anxieties seem to them to have been held in suspense for a very long time?

Mr. Dunn: I note the views of my hon. Friend, but again I must ask him to be patient. We are fully aware of the uncertainty over the proposals and the need to reach an early resolution of them. We shall do the House and the education service no benefit if we rush into early decisions which might in themselves cause a deterioration of the service provided.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister accept that at present there is great uncertainty in the universities and other places providing specialist courses and that he must make a statement urgently? Is he aware that particular alarm is felt by all those involved in special education, in that the Government's White Paper on public expenditure refers to cutting expenditure on special education by approximately 10 per cent. in real terms, when the number of children involved is falling by approximately only 1 per cent.?

Mr. Dunn: Because opinion was so divided on some of the recommendations that were made, we felt it necessary to take a great deal of time in considering the proposals and their effects on those who teach the deaf and the blind. None the less, I note the views of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

Education Provision

11. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implication of the White Paper on public expenditure, Cmnd. 9428, for education provision.

Sir Keith Joseph: Provision for local authority current expenditure on education in 1985-86 is increased by nearly £300 million over previous plans, when allowance is made for the abolition of the national insurance surcharge and the transfer of some funds to the Manpower Services Commission. For universities, additional resources have been provided for the improvement on a selective basis of science equipment in universities, but planned recurrent expenditure is slightly reduced as a consequence of the revised pay assumption.

Mr. Roberts: Why does the Minister behave like Pontius Pilate in blaming local authorities for his own actions? Surely he is calling the tune because he is refusing to pay the piper. Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that, for instance, in the White Paper there is an 11·3 per cent. cut in revenue for special education provision for those in most need, the disabled and the handicapped, and a dramatic cut in capital expenditure for provision for the under-fives, when only about 40 per cent. of them can participate is such education? Does not the right hon. Gentleman not accept that — [HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] You would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that as honours have been heaped upon me by my school, unlike other hon. Members, they would listen with some respect. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members have raised the subject enough today. Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that the provisions in the Government's public expenditure White Paper mark an attack on education provision?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman is forgetting, while he sits back smirking with self-satisfaction——

Mr. Roberts: I am listening.

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman is forgetting, first, that there is still a fall in the number of children in schools, secondly, that there is an unallocated margin in addition to that shown for education, part of which will be spent on education; and thirdly, that I announced in my answer to him an increase of £300 million.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that much of the money that is set aside in the White Paper for education provision will go to secondary school pupils between the age of 11 and 16 who will not take their places at school because they are hard-core truants? Is there not a link between hard-core truancy and teenage crime? Will my right hon. Friend set about discussing with colleagues in the Home Office how that evil can be stamped out?

Sir Keith Joseph: I accept much of what my hon. Friend says. The Government hope to publish soon proposals to improve the effectiveness of the education welfare service.

Mr. Ryman: Is it not possible to get a sensible answer from the Secretary of State? How does he reconcile the answer that he has just given with his recent decision to refuse permission to Northumberland county council to build a high school in Cramlington?

Sir Keith Joseph: In order to reduce the risks of yet higher unemployment by overspending, the Government are restraining the capital allocations for local education authorities.

Schoolchildren (Statistics)

12. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the number of children in school by 1 January 1987.

Mr. Dunn: By January 1987, some 7·5 million children are projected to be in schools in England.

Mr. Colvin: While accepting that the quality of teachers may be more important than their quantity, may I ask my hon. Friend to confirm that it is the policy of his Department to go on improving pupil-teacher ratios even though school rolls may continue to fall?

Mr. Dunn: We are of the opinion that money saved on taking surplus places out of use can best be spent within the school to improve facilities and the pupil-teacher ratio. In that sense, I agree with my hon. Friend.

Student Finance

13. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he anticipates publication of the Government's discussion document on student finance.

Mr. Brooke: That has yet to be finally decided, but I hope that the consultative paper will be published during the first half of the year.

Mr. Marlow: Is not the present system desperately unfair as between students, in that some get a full grant and some do not get a full grant and do not get it made up? Will the Government consider taking the amount of money that is available and spreading it equally among students and allowing them to make up the difference from some sponsor, from work or by borrowing from the bank, the banks having been spoken to and persuaded by the Government that they should bring forward a loans scheme?

Mr. Brooke: It would be wrong for me to anticipate the terms of the consultative document, but I do not think that my hon. Friend will be disappointed by the breadth of the options that we offer.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister accept that in many parts of the country even highly qualified graduates are facing long periods of unemployment? How would they be able to repay loans with which he may favour them and to which his hon. Friend has referred?

Mr. Brooke: I was not in any way prejudging or prejudicing how the consultative paper will be written, but I am encouraged that prospects for graduates have improved significantly during the current year.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Stern** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 19 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with my ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the TUC. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be leaving for Washington this afternoon.

Mr. Stern: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the steady improvement in the employment prospects of YTS trainees on completing their courses? Does she agree that the success of this scheme is an indication of the major practical steps that the Government are taking to alleviate youth unemployment?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the scheme is a great success. I understand that now, on average, some 75 per cent. of leavers from YTS are either finding a job or going into further education. In some particular forms of training the figure is even higher. For example, in construction and hotel and catering, 90 per cent. are finding jobs straight away.

Mr. Alton: How does the Prime Minister reconcile her statement to the House that British service men were not used as guinea pigs during the atomic tests in the South Pacific in the early 1950s with the evidence given to the Australian Royal Commission that service men were made to lie in and run, walk and crawl through radioactive dust.

The Prime Minister: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman waits until that commission has completed its work. I am sure he is pleased to know that we have done everything to assist its inquiry, releasing as many documents as we possibly can.

Q2. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lewis: When will the right hon. Lady come to the House with a serious proposition to alleviate the plight of pensioners with regard to heating? Will she take into account the new situation that has arisen over the last weekend, whereby poor families are now being exposed to the danger of hypothermia?

The Prime Minister: The scale of help with heating bills has increased considerably under this Government — by 40 per cent. more than the rise in fuel bills. Spending is now £400 million, of which £200 million goes to pensioner households. With regard to the particular case that the hon. Gentleman raised, I understand that the inquest into this tragic case will be held tomorrow, and until the result is known it would be wrong to comment.

Mr. Higgins: In her discussions with President Reagan, will my right hon. Friend stress the need for international contingency plans to deal with the possible short-term collapse of the dollar? From a strategic point of view, will she stress how absurd it would be for the strongest economy in the world to resort to protectionist measures?

The Prime Minister: We shall be putting the latter point very strongly. Such a move would affect the United States' traditional trading partners and it is also true that many developing countries need trade as much as they need aid. With regard to what would happen if there were a sudden collapse of the dollar, I believe, with my right hon. Friend, that the consequences could be very brutal if that happened and we shall, of course, be pointing that out.

Mr. Kinnock: With regard to the right hon. Lady's visit to the United States, I wish, first, to endorse yet again, and very firmly, the condemnation that she has again offered of the supply of arms to Northern Ireland as a result of funding from the United States of America.

Fourteen months ago, when the pound stood at £1·45 the right hon. Lady told us:

"I would rather be in our position, which is sustainable, than in that of United States". — [*Official Report*, 8 December 1983; Vol. 50, c. 462.]

As she changes her pounds for dollars today, is that still her view?

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his support—I had expected nothing else—on the Noraid matter. It will help me in my discussions in the United States of America to be able to say that all parts of the House are united on this matter.

On the right hon. Gentleman's latter point, having heard the previous question and answer, he should realise that I would still say yes. I think that we are in a much more sustainable position—*[Interruption.]* Clearly that goes down well in all parts of the House.

Mr. Kinnock: I am beginning to think that the right hon. Lady is not the President's No. 1 fan after all. In the 14 months since she made the statement that I quoted earlier, unemployment in the United States has gone down by 1·1 million while in Britain it has risen by 150,000; its industrial production has risen by more than 6 per cent. while ours has gone down by 1·3 per cent.; our interest rates have risen by 55 per cent. while those in the United

States have gone down by 10 per cent. If the right hon. Lady is a real fan, does she not realise that, in these matters at least, emulation might be the sincerest form of flattery?

The Prime Minister: President Reagan is fortunate in one respect — there is no danger of Socialism in America. Secondly, that country has never had the extent of nationalisation or regulation. Thirdly, there is an enterprise culture. Fourthly, America has never had the union problems with which we have had to deal.

Mr. Latham: When my right hon. Friend meets the President, will she stress that while there is very strong support within the House and country for the deployment of missiles in the United Kingdom to meet our NATO commitments, we nevertheless look forward to a constructive outcome of the disarmament negotiations in Geneva?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is our strength that has brought back the Soviet Union to the negotiating table. We are greatly indebted to Secretary Shultz for his excellent diplomatic skill in getting negotiations going again. We share my hon. Friend's wish for a reduction in the number of nuclear arms.

Q3. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Prime Minister have regard to the problems facing many old people and widows throughout the country, but especially in the north of England, and give a commitment that heating allowances will be adequate to maintain warmth in homes? Will she take on board the example of people like Kathie Berrie, a widow in my constituency, who receives an additional 30p a day heating allowance to heat a three-bedroomed house? Will the right hon. Lady stop fudging the issue and provide heating allowances commensurate with the needs of the people?

The Prime Minister: This Government have not fudged the issue—they have provided 40 per cent. more for heating bills over and above inflation, more than any previous Government have done. That is a record of which we are very proud.

Q4. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Freeman: When my right hon. Friend meets the President of the United States later today, will she commend the United States Administration for their effective intervention recently in the foreign exchange markets to stabilise the dollar? However, will she also respectfully remind him that the only permanent solution to the problem of the high dollar is to solve the American federal budget deficit?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, that intervention was pursuant to the Williamsburg agreement from the economic summit held at Williamsburg in 1983. It was also pursuant to the agreement reached between all G5 countries. It is there to make certain that speculators never know whether there will be an intervention, and therefore to help with preventing the resurgence of the dollar as strongly as might otherwise happen. I agree that the deficit is a fundamental problem and I fully support the views of those in the Congress and the Administration who earnestly want to take action to reduce it.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Prime Minister bear in mind as she travels today with a message about Noraid that, in Northern Ireland today, many people are mourning the death of a brave prison officer who was brutally murdered on Sunday? Will she tell those who support the IRA that that is the result of their support? Will she bear in mind that many Roman Catholics are serving in the security forces at various levels and are paying the price for so doing?

The Prime Minister: I shall gladly convey that message with all the strength at my command. That was a particularly cruel and brutal murder, which should be a disgrace in any part of the world.

Q5. **Mr. Fox** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fox: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the large majority in favour of the Second Reading of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill? Does she agree that there is widespread public support for that measure and that the sooner it reaches the statute book, the better?

The Prime Minister: It is a significant Bill and a significant majority. The Government took a neutral position to enable the House, in the customary way in these matters, to express its view according to conscience. I believe that that was absolutely right.

Q6. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: As the Prime Minister goes to North America on her expenses-paid trip—*[Interruption.]* She is surely not paying for herself. When she reflects on her 10 years as Leader of the Conservative party, which of her Government's policies will she think is most to blame for the 3·5 million unemployed?

The Prime Minister: I really do not think that the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question warrants an answer. Everybody in the House who travels on duty or as a member of the Government justifiably travels on expenses, but the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that I am staying the minimum amount of time. As to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I believe that we have been prepared to tackle fundamentally issues which other Governments have shirked.

Q7. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: What is the Prime Minister's assessment of the possibilities of a settlement of the pits dispute, following her discussions this morning?

The Prime Minister: We put out a brief statement after those talks, which it might be helpful for me to read to the hon Gentleman. It states:

"The Prime Minister, accompanied by the Lord President and the Secretaries of State for Energy and Employment, met representatives of the TUC led by their General Secretary Mr. Norman Willis for one hour today. The TUC reported on their efforts to promote a settlement of the coal dispute. The Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the TUC's efforts. She said that a settlement was long overdue. The Prime Minister said that the views of the TUC would be conveyed to the National Coal Board by the Secretary of State for Energy. The Government wanted an early resolution of the strike but any agreement must deal clearly and unambiguously with the central point of the dispute."

Q8. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. MacKay: When my right hon. Friend visits Washington, will she stress to the American people that the whole House condemns the IRA? Will she illustrate to those foolish Americans who fund Noraid that it leads to the murder of Irishmen by Irishmen, as was the case with Mr. Patrick Kerr who was savagely murdered in front of his children while going out of the Catholic cathedral this Sunday?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. I shall try, once again, to do all of that. I shall try to do as much as I can to prevent any money coming through Noraid. It is also important to stress that the IRA does not represent the Republic—indeed, the organisation is banned in the Republic—and that it is fundamentally against democracy.

Q9. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Prime Minister aware that I would have been disappointed if my question had not been reached? In view of the talks that started today in Vienna, is she worried about the increase in the flow of arms to the middle east and about the fact that military expenditure is costing £300 per person in that region, which is three times as much as it costs in the rest of the world? Will she use her influence when she meets the President to ensure that stability is restored in that part of the world and that the flow of arms is reduced?

The Prime Minister: The middle east is one of the subjects that I must and will take up with the President. The occasions when an initiative can be taken are comparatively few. I believe that this is one of them and that it is the President's intention to take up the initiative that he announced in a famous speech in December 1982.

Rate Limitation

3.30 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House will know that last Wednesday the Secretary of State for the Environment laid before the House the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order, which seeks to prescribe the rate limits for 14 authorities. The order is due to be discussed by the Scrutiny Committee this afternoon and to be debated by the House tomorrow afternoon. We have just learnt—I appreciate the Secretary of State's courtesy in telling us this at the earliest possible moment—that the order is to be withdrawn, and a different order substituted for it. For the London borough of Haringey that will have the effect of replacing a rate limit which would have reduced the rate by 3 per cent. or 7p, with an increase of 17 per cent. or 39p. Obviously that affects the borough of Haringey, but it also affects all other authorities. In a letter dated 30 January the Secretary of State told my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham):

"I have of course acted with consistency between authorities."

You will know that we have been deeply concerned that the Secretary of State has not produced the assumptions on which he claims to have acted consistently. Is it in order for the House to be expected to debate what amounts to an entirely fresh order at only 24 hours notice? Does the Leader of the House believe that that is in order? Should not the business be moved so that the House has a proper opportunity to digest the order before it debates it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me, but something which would normally be dealt with through the usual channels.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Biffen): I am happy to confirm that we wish to look at that through the usual channels.

BILL PRESENTED

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Donald Coleman presented a Bill to improve the welfare of animals: And the same was read the first time; and ordered to be read a Second time tommorrow and to be printed. [Bill No. 90.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Ordered,

That the draft Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Protection of National Energy Resources (Coal)

3.32 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide that mines with workable reserves of coal are exploited until exhaustion.

One of the reasons why I wish to introduce the Bill is an answer given to me by the Secretary of State for Energy on 22 October 1984. He said of the National Coal Board:

"The board has never moved from the basic suggestion that it is crazy to continue to invest money in something that is totally uneconomic when one can invest money in other collieries and coal faces, with good results for the industry." — [*Official Report*, 22 October 1984; Vol. 65, c. 452.]

That statement does not take account of all the considerations that it should do. The long-term effects of different Governments closing coal mines has and will have a major effect on our energy for years to come. To close collieries with workable reserves means that we shall lose that coal for ever. What is uneconomic today may be economic in 20 years. With the country's present energy resources, the House fails to realise that coal is and will be for the foreseeable future the major element of energy not just in this country, but in the world energy market.

Coal production cannot be easily stopped and restarted. The coal industry is an extractive industry. It is working a non-renewable asset for which at present there is little substitute for most major coal users. It is undoubtedly the fuel of the future.

I should like to read a small passage from a book called "Small is Beautiful" — words are often used by Conservative right hon. and hon. Members. Small shopkeepers in my constituency, however, have believed over the past 11 months that Conservative Members who use the theme "small is beautiful" are rather hypocritical. Shopkeepers and others in my area feel that they have been let down over the past 11 months.

The book's author, E. F. Schumacher, was economic adviser to the National Coal Board for more than 20 years. He is a well-read man and he has been quoted on many occasions on different issues by hon. Members on both sides of the House. The book starts with a statement from the working party report on the control of pollution that was given to the Secretary of State for the Environment in February 1972, when the Conservative party was in office. It states:

"There is a deep-seated unease revealed by the evidence sent to us about the future energy resources, both for this country and for the world as a whole. Assessments vary about the length of time that will elapse before fossil fuels are exhausted, but it is increasingly recognised that their life is limited and satisfactory alternatives must be found. The huge incipient needs of developing countries, the increases in population, the rate at which some sources of energy are being used up without much apparent thought of the consequences, the belief that future resources will be available only at ever-increasing cost and the hazards which nuclear power may bring in its train are all factors which contribute to the growing concern."

That passage was included in the document given to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Underneath, Schumacher wrote:

"It is a pity that the 'growing concern' did not show itself in the 1960s, during which nearly half the British coal industry was abandoned as 'uneconomic' — and, once abandoned, it is virtually lost for ever — and it is astonishing that, despite 'growing concern', there is continuing pressure from highly influential quarters to go on with pit closures for 'economic' reasons."

There is the same pressure for pit closures today. What we read in that chapter written in 1972 can be read in Britain in 1985. It was Schumacher's warning. It was wrong for Labour and Conservative Governments in the 1960s to run down the coal industry. The 1974 oil crisis showed everyone how wrong it was.

It is as wrong to run down the coal industry in the 1980s as it was in the 1960s. Great store is being laid by Conservative Members on the present prospects for coal development in fields such as Selby and Vale of Belvoir. Everyone knows that there is sufficient coal under Britain to last for about 300 years. Hon. Members do not accept, however, that the Vale of Belvoir and Selby are limited to about 50 years of mining. Those coalfields do not have the life of the collieries in which I worked whose shafts were sunk in 1908. The lifespan of the new coalfields is limited. We are not taking into account the likely demand for coal in this country and elsewhere in 50 years' time.

Conservative Members would like to see some of the new coalfields further developed. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) might like to see the Witham valley project developed so that he could have some miners in his constituency. The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) might like to see some new coalfields developed in Oxfordshire because there is coal there. The Home Secretary might like to have some miners in his constituency of Richmond, Yorkshire, which has substantial coal reserves. I am sure that some miners would like to go to his surgery to discuss some aspects of his speeches during the past 11 months.

In a paper delivered to a study conference on Britain's coal in 1960 Schumacher said:

> "I suggest that the only principle that is defensible on grounds of long-term expediency as well as morality would be the principle that (within reasonable limits) all existing collieries will be worked until the coal is gone. I am, however, bound to add at once that this principle, derived from considerations of *national* interest, cannot be implemented by the coal industry without *national* support. To put it differently: I suggest that what is needed is a clear recognition of the principle of conservation. This principle, however, is not always compatible with the most profitable operation in free competition; it therefore needs to be supported by *national* policy."

Under my Bill, the coal industry would be examined rationally and we would seek reasonable limits for the contraction of the coal mining industry, taking account of all economic considerations — not just the short-term considerations of this Government or, for that matter, any other Government.

The House has not given serious thought to the potential for job losses in the coal mining industry. I intend in this Bill to do exactly that. This measure will protect the national interest, and rightly so. Subsidies are needed to protect the national interest. During the last year for which we have figures, £1·3 million of subsidies went into the coal industry. Not all that money was designed to keep open what are called "uneconomic" pits. The money went towards developing collieries that already existed and new coalfields that would be needed in the future. I believe that the same type of subsidy that applies to agriculture should be given to a major industry such as energy.

The Bill has major implications for the coal mining industry, but its prime aim is to make the Government more responsive to energy conservation and the sensible use of our national energy resources. I commend it to the House.

3.42 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the motion?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I oppose the introduction of this Bill because, if I did not do so, it would be a dereliction of my duty to the people I represent. The Bill is a recipe for disaster for those who work in the coal industry and for the country generally. As a nation, providence has given us vast exploitable reserves of coal for 250 years at current extraction rates and men who have faced danger daily to dig that coal for others. We have not been given a union leader of vision and foresight to lead those men to prosperity by taking every available market opportunity. Only yesterday the greatly respected Lord Tonypandy said the same.

The Bill will finally convince those companies which were considering converting their oil and gas boilers to coal to do so knowing that for ever and a day the price of that coal would be charged at the level of inefficient production and market loss. Eighteen months ago, I and six hon. Friends met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board and pleaded with him to convert oil-fired power stations to coal. The CEGB does not keep its lights burning with promises; it requires a guarantee that coal will be delivered without fail. Scargill's actions, and this Bill, would finally kill any chance to convert those oil-fired power stations to coal. That would be another lost market. We have examples of potential markets requiring 5 million tonnes of coal and providing jobs for 10,000 miners. Markets, not Socialist dogma, keep pits open.

This Bill has a Sheffield Marxist hallmark stamped all over it. It demands, for the first time in the history of coal, that uneconomic pits must remain open until the last ounce of coal is extracted. It would give credence to the nuclear power lobby's argument that the coal industry is going into the sunset. This lobby has predicted that the upward graph of energy produced from nuclear power will cross the downward graph of that produced from coal-fired power stations 20 years sooner than would otherwise have been the case.

Socialist France ditched its coal industry in favour of nuclear power and reduced the number of its miners to 25,000 and now relies on nuclear power for 70 per cent. of its requirements. Has the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) heard that France produces electricity at 30 per cent. below the cost of ours? Let him ask the pensioners suffering from the cold weather, or the business men closing their factories because of energy costs being unproductive, about it. I shall not stand idly by and watch my constituents' jobs being given to the nuclear industry on a plate.

Betrayal by others will never be forgotten or forgiven. The coal industry cannot fight back, let alone survive, while handcuffed to Scargill's demands. Why did he not have a ballot? The hon. Member for Rother Valley wants a compulsory ballot for everybody—that is what he said last week.

Given freedom to manage the industry with continued investment in viable pits, we can beat the opposition. The hon. Member for Rother Valley asked for our support to keep the loss-making pits in production at taxpayers'

[Mr. Stewart]

expense, because, he says, it would be cheaper than reopening mines at a later date. Is he so removed from the industry that he has not heard of underground gasification, which will soon remove those last deposits without men going underground?

If the Bill is passed into law, it will be known as the Scargill Act—the Scargill Act of Lunacy—which would mean the working of every pit to exhaustion, whatever the cost. This Scargill Act, which has already been rejected by men such as Jimmy Reid, Lord Wilson and Lord Chapple, would be the death penalty for the coal industry. No one who cares about this great industry could contemplate such an act of folly. I ask right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to reject the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 140, Noes 259.

Division No. 112] **[3.50 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, [illegible] *(Ravensbourne)*
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert

Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Hannam and
Mr. Andy Stewart.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House has already had an opportunity to debate the purpose of the Bill, on 7 February, when I moved the Ways and Means resolution under which it was introduced. At that time I gave a full explanation of why the measure was needed and of the justification for it. Inevitably we shall be going over much of the same ground in this debate and, no doubt, in future debates on the same subject. No doubt there will be the usual crop of adjectives from the official Opposition which we heard in the Ways and Means debate.

I must return to the substance of the matter because that is what the House should consider. As the House knows, a court judgment went against us, as a result of which £50 million is in dispute. If we did not bring this Bill forward now and if the money remained with the Greater London council, the money would have to be found either from London Regional Transport's passengers or from the ratepayers in future years. I wonder whether that is really what the Opposition want.

No one in the Ways and Means debate felt sufficiently confident to claim that the GLC would use that £50 million to reduce the rates. It would probably go to Capital, TRAFIC, the public transport campaign unit or another of those propaganda fronts that the GLC sets up and funds. Is that what the Opposition want—that the ratepayers should pay twice to fund the GLC's policies? Whatever may be the answer of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), the central point is that where that £50 million goes must be a policy decision for the House.

It is not for the courts to determine how much grant should be paid by the GLC, nor have the courts presumed to do so. That is a matter of policy and it is right that the Government, with the approval of Parliament, should determine it. It would not have helped LRT or the GLC if we had gone through the process of appeal, only to end up without the correct amount having to be paid and facing further legal disputes and uncertainty. After studying the High Court's interpretation of the existing statutory provision in section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984, I concluded that the risks of that happening were too great. I have brought this measure before the House so that the House itself may decide.

I want to stress the need to end the uncertainty which the GLC and, incidentally, LRT face as a result of the High Court decision on 11 January, which put into limbo the amount of grants which the GLC should pay to LRT for 1984-85. Unless this matter is resolved quickly and beyond doubt, the GLC's annual budgeting and rate precepting processes will have to proceed without the GLC knowing for certain what the payments to LRT for this financial year will be. LRT also needs a firm basis on which to plan ahead for 1985-86 and beyond.

[Mr. Eggar]

underground costs increased by 48 per cent.; and subsidies that in 1970 were £6·5 million were about £379 million in 1982. It is a poor record by any standards.

It was right that, having made the changeover to LRT, the Government should place importance on improving the efficiency of LRT. That is why I particularly welcome the Government's decision to reduce the revenue subsidies to LRT while at the same time rightly increasing the capital subsidies. After all, it is investment that we need within the London network.

I particularly welcome the impetus that the Act gave to co-operation between British Rail and LRT. Many of my constituents have benefited from the Capitalcard and the improved communication that it gives to where many of them work at the centre of London.

However, let me refer to the precise terms of the Bill. It was quite clear—as anyone reading the Committee reports must realise—what the Secretary of State was trying to do in this Bill. But as my right hon. Friend has said, section 49 was incorrectly drafted. There is no dispute about the fact that the intention of the Secretary of State as expressed in Committee had not been put into legal form in the terms of section 49. Therefore, it is not at all unreasonable that the Secretary of State, having had a clear majority in Committee and on Second and Third Readings of the Bill, should say that the intention to which he gave expression in Committee had not been put in correct legal form and that he was coming back to the House to clarify the position.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich said that she was disturbed that there had been no consultation. Obviously, she has had her head in the sand for a very long time. I know that she is not a London Member so perhaps she can be forgiven, but she is clearly not aware that the GLC has had a policy of non-co-operation with the Government ever since these measures were introduced. To accuse the Government of refusing to consult when the GLC has instructed its officers on almost every occasion to refuse to give information to departmental officials is to mislead the House.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: Of course I will give way to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I thought the hon. Gentleman might, particularly in view of the difficulty he is having in addressing himself to the Bill. I would point out to him that a court of law found that the Secretary of State had not consulted and had gone beyond his powers. It was not the Opposition; it was a court of law. He might like to address himself to that point.

Mr. Eggar *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Eggar: Of course.

Mr. Ridley: There is nothing in section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act which requires consultation with the GLC over the making of the section 49 directive. The court confirmed that the GLC had no statutory right to consultation.

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for correcting the hon. Lady. The hon. Lady does not realise that what has been happening in London over the past two to three years has been a deliberate attempt by a small Labour majority on the GLC to frustrate the work of central Government, democratically elected in 1983, on a plan to abolish the GLC. I know that the hon. Lady is not a London Member and does not bear direct responsibility but I think it extremely serious that the Labour party should support — nay, instruct — officers in local government to take on central Government and not to co-operate in the time-honoured fashion always followed previously, when local government officers have accepted that they should co-operate with a democratically elected central Government.

I shall be delighted to give way to the hon. Lady if she will explain why the Labour party has gone along with the Left-wing antics of Ken Livingstone, and so on, in forcing officers to take up a political stance.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I do not want to keep interrupting the hon. Gentleman. I should be happy to make another speech altogether. However, let me point out to the hon. Gentleman, since he does not seem to have it right, that there could have been consultation with the GLC had the Secretary of State made the slightest attempt to ask for it. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to understand that it was the judge, not the Opposition, who said that the Secretary of State had not consulted. We are looking at this Bill only because the judge said that the Secretary of State failed to consult.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Lady misses the point again. There is no obligation to consult under the terms of section 49. Furthermore, the Secretary of State and all London Members on both sides of the House know very well that when the Government attempt to consult on any matters with the GLC, the response is a policy of complete non-co-operation. Even if there had been an obligation under the terms of section 49, what would have happened? There would have been a complete stone-wall, and no information would have been provided by the GLC, the officers of which are under strict political instructions from Ken Livingstone and his mob.

The subsidy which the ratepayers paid, the £50 million, some of which was paid by my constituents, should have gone directly to London transport to subsidise its operators. That is what my constituents thought they were paying for. They would bitterly attack me if they saw any of that £50 million disappearing to support the women's committee, the police committee and other exercises run by the GLC to squander ratepayers' money. My constituents endorse my support for the Bill.

4.45 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I propose to be brief because, although the figures in our discussion may be complicated, the principles are very clear. I shall begin, as many other hon. Members have, with the question of the legal judgment. It is a fact, no matter what we say in our discussions across the Floor of this Chamber, that on 29 June, only three days after the Royal Assent was given to the London Regional Transport Act, the Secretary of State directed the GLC to pay London Regional Transport £281·3 million. That was under section 49 of the Act, and there is no dispute between us that he did that without consultation with the GLC.

The terms of the famous judgment by Mr. Justice McNeill in January 1985 were not quite as mild as the hon.

Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) said. What Mr. Justice McNeill said was that the Secretary of State had acted

"unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly in giving a direction which exceeded his statutory powers without consideration of all relevant material and without consultation with the Greater London Council."

The hon. Member for Enfield, North may have a very fair point when he says that the GLC was pledged to a policy of non-co-operation with the Government and that if the Secretary of State had sought to consult it he might have got a dusty answer. The fact is that we simply do not know, because he did not consult. From my point of view, and from that of many reasonable people, had the Secretary of State sought to consult the GLC to obtain all the detailed information it had available and had been refused, he would be in a very much stronger position than he is today.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I am advised that, in case the Secretary of State had decided to consult the GLC, the GLC had already got a draft letter prepared in response to the consultations that the Secretary of State should have undertaken. The fact is that he did not, and it is absurd and untrue for the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) to come out with the remarks he has just made about the GLC not co-operating in this matter.

Mr. Cartwright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us that information, to which, of course, I am not privy, and I do not for one moment dispute it. However, even if it were not the case, the point I am making is that the Secretary of State, as far as we understand the matter, did not seek to discover whether or not the GLC was prepared to co-operate. He did not even make the initial approach to see whether it would provide the information. That is why, I assume, the judge—whatever is contained in section 49—made the comment he did, to the effect that one of the reasons why the direction was faulty was that it had been made without any attempt to consult the Greater London council.

The second thing that brings me down against this Bill is the question about its necessity. Clearly, the terms of the judgment require the Secretary of State to issue a direction to the GLC requiring it to pay sufficient grants to London Regional Transport to enable it to meet its operating needs in 1984-85. I do not wish to repeat the commitment from the Standing Committee debates on the London Regional Transport Bill, which has dominated this debate and previous debates on this issue, but it is clear that the Secretary of State gave an absolute undertaking that it was not his intention that London Regional Transport should end up with a surplus as a result of the sums of money that the GLC was to be directed to pay to it. Yet, from all the evidence available to us it seems clear that that is what will happen. Some £50 million will be surplus to LRT's operating needs in 1984-85 and will therefore go into reserves.

Conservative Members argue that it would have been quite wrong if that £50 million had been left in the hands of the GLC because it would have been used for other purposes. But, however the GLC had used that money, the ratepayers who contributed to it through the rates would have had some benefit. I do not necessarily dispute the argument of the hon. Member for Enfield, North that that money might have been spent unwisely. I will not defend the spending policies of the GLC—I disagree with many of them. I might have been opposed to the way in which it spent the £50 million, but that is not the issue. One of the problems of our democracy is that we have governments and local authorities for which we do not care. If they are democratically elected, we must accept that they have power to levy and spend rates. If that £50 million had not been used in the GLC's normal spending pattern, it would have been available to offset the rate levy in 1985-86.

When Conservative Members argue that it would be improper for the GLC to obtain that money on the understanding that it would be spent on the London regional transport system and then to spend it on other services, it shows that those hon. Members have never been involved in local government. It is not unusual in local government to make the best possible estimate at the time that the budget is produced and to raise a rate on the basis of spending estimates, and then to find that during the course of the year situations vary and money is switched from one vote or one service to another. If the GLC has the use of £50 million originally raised for London regional transport purposes there is nothing improper in using it for another purpose in the interests of Londoners.

Like many hon. Members, I have considerable objection to the retrospective element of the Bill. It retrospectively requires the GLC to pay a sum that would have been unlawful under the legislation as it now stands. The Bill goes well beyond the original intention of section 49 of the Act.

I find unacceptable the suggestion that the Bill is only a marginal tidying up on the edges; a clarification of a piece of the original Bill that was not wholly clear. As I read the judgment, it was not concerned mainly with interpretation of section 49 — it was directed at the Secretary of State's action in setting a direction under section 49. The judge found that the Secretary of State did not have his facts correct, that he had not taken account of all the relevant available information and that he had failed to consult the GLC as the appropriate authority.

We are dealing not with a tidying-up measure — a correction of bad drafting in the original legislation — but with an attempt by the Secretary of State to avoid the consequences of his action in administering his law. I regard the Bill as a shabby, shady and hole-in-the-corner measure, which I shall have great pleasure in voting against tonight.

4.53 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): We should at once stamp upon the false impression given by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) about the proposals before us. They are not retrospective; they apply to the tax year ending April 1985 and to a levy on the current tax year. Therefore, it is nonsense to talk about the legislation as being retrospective when it refers to something current.

I see the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and Leyton (Mr. Cohen) in their places. I became immensely familiar with their faces when we sat through hours and hours of discussion on the original Bill a year ago. It is a great pleasure to see them in the Chamber today. They will no doubt join in the debate and reiterate the arguments that they put in Committee. For the benefit of those who were not members of the Committee, such as the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs.

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

Dunwoody) who has unfortunately left the Chamber, I shall give a brief outline of the reasons why the London Regional Transport Bill was enacted.

The Government's purpose was to restore a stable framework for public transport planning in London—something that had clearly not existed previously. I do not make a party political point, and while Opposition Members do not make such points I shall refrain from doing so. While the Greater London Council had control of the London transport system, its running was incompetent and not in the best interests of Londoners, tourists or other users. That applied throughout the time that it was administered by the GLC, whether Conservative or Labour-controlled. As has been proven by facts, it is wrong to allow politicians to try to take direct control of the overall day-to-day running of a large and complicated business. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich has returned.

While under the control of both parties, the GLC benefited from subsidies that rose thirteenfold in real terms between 1970 and 1982. From the comparatively reasonable figure of £6·5 million in 1970, they rose to £369·8 million in 1982. That is a staggering increase in the running of any business and a wholly unreasonable tax upon both the general central taxation revenue and the London ratepayer.

It was essential that my right hon. Friend acted to ensure that that appalling increase did not continue and multiply. It was abundantly clear that, had matters been left to Mr. Livingstone and the current GLC administration, that increase would have risen time and time again. I cannot say that if political control had altered, the figure would have come down; I do not believe that that would have happened. Looking at the GLC's history, I accept that both parties were guilty of the increase. It could not be allowed to continue.

It must be right that something as complex and difficult as the London regional transport system—both buses and underground—should be run properly by business men. That is what the Government set out to achieve, and I believe that that is what they are achieving. Looking at the London structure, it was important, and it remains important, that the system should be brought fully into line and cohesion with the commuter systems that surround our city. One of the instructions given to the London Regional Transport Board is to look at ways of improving co-operation—and even going further than that in the longer term in its liaison with British Rail. That is an important and significant part of the way in which we should set about running our city's central transport system. That can be done only if fully professional management is in control, not the politicians. I believe that that will be achieved.

I say that with greater confidence having looked at the way in which the 1985-86 plan has been laid out. Most of the targets that the Government should be setting are contained in that plan and can be fulfilled provided that no radical change is made. One way in which a radical change could have been made would have been if the original funding plans had not been fulfilled. The result of the court action would have been precisely that—£50 million, a significant part of the funding, would have been removed from the London transport system and would have been put to use by the Greater London council heaven knows where.

I do not know what the GLC would have done with the money, but I know that it would not have benefited my constituents because they come within a Conservative-controlled area. Most GLC funds during the past two or three years have been funnelled towards Labour-controlled areas in one of the most party politically biased pieces of gerrymandering that I have seen in this country.

The underground mileage will remain unchanged, despite the waffling and wailing in Committee last year when the Opposition suggested that the Government's intention was radically to slash the capital's underground and bus systems. Bus mileage will decrease by 2 per cent. overall, which reflects a change in population shifts. An increasing number of people are able and willing to use their own transport, and there are changes in ownership and the way in which people are living. Two per cent. is not a significant change, and it reflects entirely the system in which it is carried out.

Average fares will be held down so that they increase only with inflation. That is obviously a correct approach. The one matter for which I wish to give credit to Opposition Members and the GLC, although they did it for the wrong reasons, is for standardising fares on the London underground system. For a long time many Conservative Members had longed for the leadership of the GLC to do that. It was a brave step, which was amply proved to be correct because far greater numbers of people use the London transport system now that one can travel a long way on the single fare of 40p than one did previously. It also proved, probably to Opposition Members' surprise, to be an extremely sound commercial act. Because of the increased numbers using the system, the revenue returns increased. I only wish that British Rail could take a leaf out of the book of London Regional Transport, and standardise and lower some of its ordinary fares, which are driving people from the railways to the roads.

The measure will bring about two major changes in the way in which London Regional Transport is run. The first relates to the way in which the unions have managed to prevent changes in the man hours worked. That will be examined, and efficient manning of the system achieved. It is sad to reflect that we have been employing far too many people. We have been using four people per station compared with one person per station in Hamburg, which is directly comparable with our underground system. We have been achieving only half the mileage per man of the Hamburg system and most other foreign systems. It is no good giving ourselves the luxury of overmanning in such an industry. It is necessary to change to an efficient system if we are to provide the required services.

Secondly, to assist with that change, the Government will increase the amount of capital invested from £155 million under the plans of the GLC to more than £200 million. We are increasing investment in the system, which in the long run must be to the benefit of Londoners and tourists who visit London. The reasons for the Bill have already been proved to be valid. The change from political to proper business control will have great benefits for the users of the system.

I shall now deal with some points on which the Government have been criticised. As I said, this is not retrospective legislation but corrective legislation to reintroduce that which those of us who served on the

Transport Bill Committee originally intended. Section 149 of the Bill was challenged successfully in court, and by the Opposition. It is wrong to say that the Bill seeks to undo the courts ruling, and that we seek to put back in new legislative form a matter on which the Secretary of State sought, but was not entitled to legislate. We seek to make the Bill what it was originally drafted and intended to be by those who gave it a majority vote. We seek to ensure that the funds that we intended to be made available under that Bill are produced.

I accept the court's judgment because there has not been time to appeal against it and, therefore, that the court order stands, and that the Government acted mistakenly. It is not the first time that they have been wrong, and I accept that. However, that does not mean that we must allow the consequence of that to be that LRT is deprived of the £50 million that we intended it to have. As Opposition Members know, when a court makes a judgment, it is not allowed to look behind the wording of an Act to find out what the intention of Parliament was. That is specifically excluded. I have practised as a lawyer for 10 years and have often found that immensely frustrating when I was arguing a case and knew that the statute was not being interpreted as intended. For that reason a court comes to conclusions on the effect of a statute which do not always reflect the intentions of Parliament. Today we have an opportunity to ensure that the original intention of Parliament is replaced before it is too late, before the legislation becomes retrospective and before there are good reasons why we should not do so. That is why we are debating this matter, and why I am absolutely confident that we shall have a majority when we vote.

I close by apologising to the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) because I cannot be present to hear his reply. I shall certainly read his speech with great interest. The Bill is absolutely correct, and I endorse and applaud what my right hon. Friend is doing.

5.6 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), who, unfortunately, has now left the Chamber, made many points about the reasoning behind the Government's intentions to remove London Transport from the control of the Greater London council. At the time he was talking about the abolition of the GLC, which he said was in the election manifesto and won many votes for the Conservative party in June 1983. We are discussing the matter elsewhere and will undoubtedly continue to discuss that claim during the next 12 months or more.

However, the hon. Gentleman did not say that the policy to remove London Transport from the GLC was not in the Conservative party manifesto of 1983. The only reason why London Transport was taken from the GLC was to make the abolition of the GLC more acceptable to critics on the Conservative Benches. Clearly, the more services that the Government could take from the GLC, the greater the strength of their already weak case. Clearly, the administration of London Transport was an essential feature of the council's activities, and to make abolition more acceptable, London Transport had to be the first casualty. Therefore, Conservative Members need not lecture us about London Transport being used as a political football. The Government blatantly attempted to use, and succeeded in using, LRT in a wholly party political and partisan way.

The hon. Member for Enfield, North read out some statistics. I do not know where he found them. Unfortunately, he would not give way to me, and now he has left the Chamber, so I shall have to find other ways to find out from where he got them. The figures made little sense to me, and certainly did not accord with reality as we appreciate it. It is nonsense for a Conservative Member to say that the GLC was not running London Transport efficiently and in a way that was popular with the electors of London. I remind the House that the "Fares Fair" policy, which the Labour party in London put at the centre of its 1981 manifesto, undoubtedly secured a great deal of support. The policy was undoubtedly successful in terms of the numbers of extra people who used London Transport while that policy was being followed.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The hon. Gentleman's party gained support from the "Fares Fair" policy because it was supported by people who live in London and do not pay rates. There are vast numbers of such Labour voters. It is obvious that they would support something that took from the fares and put on the rates the charge for their travel.

Mr. Banks: If my memory serves me right, the hon. Gentleman and I crossed swords on this issue many times in Committee on the London Regional Transport Bill. It appears that I must make the same point again. The hon. Gentleman says that the policy was especially popular with those who did not pay rates. All businesses in London pay GLC rates but the cost of travel in London for their employees was reduced. The policy was, therefore, popular with such ratepayers. Conservative Members speak volubly about business and commerce — they benefited enormously from the "Fares Fair" policy as London's business and commercial sector draws large numbers of employees from outside Greater London. In terms of social cost benefits, we at county hall considered that policy to be appropriate. It benefited people who live in London, and commerce and industry in London. One of the reasons why the London weighting allowance was able to be stabilised was the GLC's "Fares Fair" policy.

In economic terms, it is silly and short-sighted to insist that the only people who benefited from "Fares Fair" were those who were not ratepayers. There is no such thing as a free system. We at county hall believe—the figures seem to bear us out—that "Fares Fair" was popular with London ratepayers and economically beneficial to London's commerce and industry. I should have thought that, instead of criticising the GLC for that policy, the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir. N. Bonsor) would have been one of the first to applaud it.

The "Fares Fair" policy increased the Labour party's popularity—no one would expect me to shun that—and led to significant increases in the use of bus and underground services. There was a 10 per cent. reduction in cars coming into central London. That also benefited commerce, as it reduced travelling time, congestion and road accidents. There were 3,000 fewer accidents during the operation of "Fares Fair". Moreover, LT was able to produce a £36 million surplus in 1983. How can any Conservative Member say that the GLC did a bad job when it was responsible for administering LT, when all the statistics prove the contrary?

I had hoped that there would be a reasonably free and objective discussion of the statistics and facts and that Conservative Members would have accepted them with

[Mr. Banks]

some grace, but there are times when Conservative Members allow their predjudices to prevent them from acknowledging that the GLC ever did anything worthy of London ratepayers. We maintain that the GLC did an excellent job with LT. All the facts bear that out.

Since LT has been taken from the GLC and nationalised —that is a strange thing—can Conservative Members say that London ratepayers have benefited? In the short time since the Secretary of State has had control of London Regional Transport we have had fares increases of twice the rate of inflation, cuts in services and a proposal for 6,950 job losses in the next three years. We now hear that there is to be a 35 per cent. increase in the rate precept over last year's GLC precept for London Transport. How can any Conservative Member argue that that represents a good deal for London ratepayers?

The Conservative-controlled Westminster and Sutton councils have made representations to the Government expressing deep anxiety about the policies that the Government are pursuing in London's transport. One would have thought that the Secretary of State would have second thoughts about his policies when Conservative-controlled councils begin to complain.

The Secretary of State has reprimanded me for being absent from the debate on the Ways and Means resolution on 7 February. I apologise to the Secretary of State and the House but, as I have explained, I was occupied in the Committee considering the Local Government Bill—the abolition of the GLC Bill. If the Government would only lay off the GLC for a while, I might be able to stop rushing around the Palace trying to plug the gaps as the Government assault the GLC from all sides. I have the same problem again this evening. No doubt the Committee is progressing in stately fashion in Committee Room 14, and my name will be missing from the Division list.

That is just one of the burdens that we have to bear as the Government drag the whole House into the day-to-day affairs of local government. I look forward, as I am sure do all hon. Members, to a week in which we are not preoccupied with local government matters. I look forward to a week in which locally and democratically elected councillors are allowed to get on with the job that their ratepayers and electors voted them in to do—to run local services. It is not our place to be so preoccupied with the day-to-day affairs of local governemnt. We do that only because of the general style of the Government. The Prime Minister will not allow anyone, it appears, to take a decision without reference to her. The consequence of such centralised and authoritarian government is bad for the country and bad for the House.

The Bill is unjust and would be wholly unnecessary if the Secretary of State were a man of his word. The Bill arises from another piece of characteristic bumbling by the Secretary of State who, quite uniquely, manages to combine incompetence with breathtaking arrogance. The best description of the Secretary of State is that given by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), who said that the Secretary of State is the only man he knows who can strut while he is sitting down.

The transfer of control of London Transport took place part of the way through the financial year 1984-85, and after the GLC had approved grants to London Transport and set its precept. Section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984, which is the central provision on this, empowered the Secretary of State to direct the GLC to pay grant to LRT for the remaining part of the year after transfer of control on the appointed day under the Act.

The Secretary of State rushed through the transfer of control of LRT on 29 June, only three days after the Royal Assent. On the same day, he directed the GLC to pay LRT £281·3 million under section 49. He did that without consultation with the GLC. As we all know, he exceeded the maximum permissible sum under the Act by some £10·2 million. He later conceded that error.

The GLC informed the Secretary of State, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, in July of that year that it thought that the direction that he had issued with unseemly haste was unlawful. However, the GLC continued to make payments to LRT, without prejudice, to enable LRT to maintain its operations. Accusations coming from the Conservative Benches that the GLC was not worthy of its control of London Transport, that it had tried to embarrass the Secretary of State, or was trying to sabotage the operations of LRT do not bear examination.

The Secretary of State chose to ignore the GLC and to press ahead. As we are all now aware, the GLC rightly took the Secretary of State to court and Mr. Justice McNeill held that the Secretary of State had acted, in those famous words

"unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly in giving a direction which exceeded his statutory powers without consideration of all relevant material and without consultation with the Greater London Council."

Whatever the hon. Member for Enfield, North might think, that was the judge's opinion. The consultation process did not take place. The GLC had been promised that there would be consultation, but the Secretary of State, in what can only be described as his usual high-handed, arrogant fashion, chose not to have that consultation. He got himself into the mess in which he now is. He is now, with no shame, asking the House to dig him out of the hole into which he dug himself. He deserves no sympathy from any hon. Member.

The Bill is unnecessary because, as I said in an earlier intervention in the Secretary of State's speech, he could issue a new legal direction under section 49 after consultation with the GLC. He could have issued a new legal direction after the High Court judgment. Returning to the point about me not being here on 7 February, the Secretary of State said that I should read what he said in the Ways and Means debate. His words are all but engraved on my heart. They are emblazoned within my mind.

In case I should forget them, I have a closely annotated copy of what he said during the debate on 7 February. I should like to remind him of what he said, because he seems ready to try and forget some of what he said. He has forgotten, disowned or reinterpreted what he said in Committee. I have the feeling that if we do not remind him of what he said on 7 February he will conveniently forget that as well. He said:

"As I told the House, I intended to appeal against the High Court judgment. But, having studied the judgment, I concluded that it was the Act itself that did not correspond with our intention, which was clearly stated at the time when it was passing through Parliament."

The Secretary of State's first point was:

"As I told the House, I intended to appeal against the High Court judgment."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich said, the Secretary of State deliberately sought

to mislead the House when he was asked questions about the judgment on 7 February by saying that it was sub judice. That was accepted by Mr. Speaker. It was not sub judice at the time. If he does nothing else, the Secretary of State could apologise to the House because he misled it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich said, the Secretary of State at best was thinking that he might appeal. He did not appeal, because he did not have a leg to stand on. That is what it amounted to. To claim that the matter was sub judice and therefore divert Parliament's attention when it should have been discussing the matter was a cruel deception. It was a deliberate attempt to mislead the House. The Secretary of State should apologise to the House.

The second point that the Secretary of State made in that quotation on 7 February was:

"But, having studied the judgment, I concluded that it was the Act itself that did not correspond with our intention, which was clearly stated at the time when it was passing through Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1198.]

The Act, of course, allows the Secretary of State to require the GLC to pay sufficient grant to LRT to meet its operating needs for 1984-85, but not to create a surplus. I remind the Secretary of State that in Committee he said about section 49:

"It is not my intention to take more through the clause than is strictly necessary for running LRT for the year in question, so that it shall not end up with a surplus."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 15 March 1984; c. 1114.]

The Bill seeks to do the reverse. Why has the Secretary of State changed his mind? That is the question that he has yet to answer.

Mr. Ridley: It has been answered.

Mr. Banks: The Secretary of State says that it has been answered. It has not been answered to the satisfaction of Opposition Members and the explanation does not equate with the words that the Secretary of State used in Committee. The Secretary of State might say that it was some other Secretary of State who said it, but we believe that it was this Secretary of State who said that he was not going to create a surplus. This Bill creates a surplus. Where do I have it wrong? I should gladly give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to tell me.

Mr. Ridley: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's point on three occasions. LRT has accrued liabilities for which it needs to have funding in relation to the year in question. He will find the matter set out at some length in the two speeches that I made on the Ways and Means resolution, for neither of which he was present. He will find that I repeated the point this afternoon, when he had left the Chamber. How can I be expected to go on answering the hon. Gentleman's point if every time I do so he rushes out of the Chamber so as not to hear?

Mr. Banks: I do not feel that that was fair. I do not rush out of the Chamber. I find little appealing in the Secretary of State but he does not have that effect on me. I am capable of sitting here listening to him. I am just as capable of reading the words that he speaks. I read the words that he used in Committee and in the Ways and Means resolution debate on 7 February. There is no doubt that what he is seeking to do is the complete reversal of what he said he was going to do when the London Regional Transport Bill was in Committee.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State does not understand what this Bill is all about. He did not seem —he has accepted the fact—to understand what the LRT Bill was all about. If he cares to cast his eyes over some minutes of a meeting held on 6 June between officials of the Department of Transport and London Transport he will see that those officials were planning a surplus in 1984-85. It is on record. The officials were planning a surplus by increasing fares in January by 11 per cent., when the GLC had originally budgeted for a fares freeze. One understands from the minutes that LRT wanted the increase to be 6 per cent., but, in fact, the fares went up by 9 per cent. Despite what the Secretary of State said in Standing Committee, his officials and LRT officials were planning to create a surplus in 1984-85. Mr. Justice McNeill said that the Department's officials seemed

"more concerned with creating a surplus in 1984-85 to be carried forward to enable much smaller revenue to be required in 1985-86 than with careful appraisal of all the relevant facts."

How does the explanation by the Secretary of State now stand? His officials were clearly discussing with LRT officials the creation of a surplus in 1984-85. That is contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman said in March last year in Standing Committee. That was certainly the reason why Mr. Justice McNeill concluded that the Secretary of State had acted unlawfully. The Secretary of State will not be able to get away with this. His actions will follow him for a long time yet.

The London Regional Transport Act corresponds with what the Secretary of State said he intended last March. It does not accord with what the right hon. Gentleman now wants, because he has changed his mind. The right hon. Gentleman has decided to break the undertaking that he gave to Parliament. The London Regional Transport Act requires the GLC to pay over to LRT some £50 million in grants that are surplus to LRT's operating needs in 1984-85. Our information is that only about half that sum is required in 1985-86 and in the case of the leasing reserve, the money will not be fully utilised until 1996. How can the Secretary of State explain that this money is now necessary? It is not necessary. If his brief tells him that, he has been badly briefed—in much the same way as he was badly briefed during the passage of the London Regional Transport Bill.

The Bill is retrospective in its effect. It is designed to allow the Secretary of State to escape the consequences of his

"unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper"

action. The hon. Member for Upminster should have though about this aspect as well. Retrospection is not merely about raising money in a particular tax year. It is about getting a Secretary of State off a hook upon which he has impaled himself. In many ways, that makes the Bill even more objectionable.

The Secretary of State is getting around the law. He is abusing his position of power and using the Government's great majority to escape the legal consequences of his action. I remind the Secretary of State that in 1971-72 some decent-minded Labour councillors in Clay Cross decided, in defence of their services and council tenants, to defy the Housing Finance Act 1972. Many of those councillors are still barred from office. They are prevented even from holding positions such as school governor because of the legal action taken against them and because they were bankrupted following the surcharge. Those councillors do not have the power of the Secretary of State to stumble into the House and say, "I have got myself into

[Mr. Banks]

a bit of trouble down at the courts, lads. You have to get me out of it. We need another Bill so that we can escape the consequences of my unlawful actions." The Secretary of State by doing that is abusing his powers and undermining democracy. The Bill is therefore especially repellent to us.

The Secretary of State has maintained in Parliament that the court's judgment was about the interpretation of section 49. That is not so. The right hon. Gentleman made that statement again today and was briefly supported by his hon. Friends. Contrary to the assertions of the Secretary of State, the judgment of Mr. Justice McNeill was not primarily concerned with interpretation. It was concerned with the action of the Secretary of State in setting a direction under section 49. The judge found that the Secretary of State had got his facts wrong. The right hon. Gentleman had not taken account of all the relevant factors and had failed to consult the GLC, despite the fact that he had promised to do so.

The Bill is not about correcting bad drafting, but is about the Secretary of State avoiding the consequences of his action in administering the law that he was responsible for piloting through the House. Despite what the Secretary of State says, the Bill is not in the interests of London ratepayers. In speaking on 7 February about the Ways and Means resolution the Secretary of State said:

"In laying this resolution, I have at the front of my mind the interests of travellers, LRT and London ratepayers. All stand to lose if we do not legislate. The GLC, through creative accounting and legal action has tried to deprive LRT of substantial sums of money which ratepayers paid specifically for public transport".

The Secretary of State went on:

"It is the London ratepayers and the London traveller whom the GLC is seeking to rob."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1199.]

I am capable of reading the right hon. Gentleman's words, even if I was not present to hear such little gems.

The Secretary of State said that the GLC precepted for the sum in question specifically for LRT so that it should be paid over. The payment of precepted grant regardless of performance and need is absurd and contrary to all past practice between the GLC and LRT. For example, in 1983-84 budgeted grants were £235 million but the GLC paid over only £173 million and the balance went to offset the 1984-85 precept, the ratepayer receiving the full benefit.

Can the Secretary of State give another example where the Exchequer pays over to a Department of State money for services that were not rendered? If Social Security payments fall short of the amount for which the Exchequer has budgeted — that is pretty unlikely, given the Government's economic and social policy—would the Secretary of State for Social Services award a bonus to all recipients of social security payments? Of course he would not. The money would go back to the Exchequer and would later be used, we hope, to lower tax demands.

The Secretary of State for Transport is suggesting that, despite the fact that LRT does not need the money, the GLC should still pay over money to LRT, thus creating a surplus. Where is the financial or economic sense in that? Where is the natural justice? If the GLC retains the full £50 million now being demanded in the Bill, the ratepayers will get the full benefit of that money either in a reduced rate precept or through improved services.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) rightly said that it is not for the Secretary of State to say to a democratically elected council, "You will not get that money because I do not like the type of services upon which you are likely to spend it." The fact is that the GLC is an elected body. It has a perfect right and duty to spend money on behalf of ratepayers. If the money were left with the GLC, the ratepayers would get all the benefit of that £50 million. If LRT received grants surplus to its needs, the ratepayers would get only two thirds of the benefit.

How can the GLC rob the ratepayers by not paying to LRT money that is surplus to its needs in 1984-85? How on earth can the Secretary of State say that this is robbing the ratepayers? It defies both logic and orthodox accounting. The only real beneficiary of this Bill will be the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I have another quote to give the Secretary of State, as he seems to think that I do not pay attention to his words. Again, this comes from the debate on 7 February, and refers to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich. He said:

"The hon. Lady will doubtless seek to argue, as her amendment implies, that payments of grant by the GLC should be further abated in respect of the improvements in LRT's financial position, which have developed since control was transferred to the Government. That is an intolerable suggestion. It would mean that additional income, which has resulted from improved productivity, better than expected sales of Travelcards and from LRT's decision to raise fares earlier this year, would all be handed over to the GLC. It would mean that the benefits from the efforts of LRT's management and work force since the GLC lost control of LRT would go to the GLC, and not to LRT, its passengers, and London's ratepayers."

There are a number of peculiar statements in that quote. First of all, the GLC is not some sort of corporate body that exists offshore somewhere in the Cayman Islands. It represents ratepayers, so if it is get any money back, the ratepayers of London will directly benefit from the way that the GLC spends the money. The quote is nothing more than a nonsensical self-deception by the Secretary of State.

The improved financial position of LRT is almost entirely due to the success of Travelcard—which was introduced not by the Government but by the GLC—the increase in fares after the GLC had budgeted for a fares freeze, and the introduction of Capitalcard, with its higher charges, when the GLC had planned for integration with British Rail at no extra cost to travellers. None of the changes that the Government have effected in the policy of LRT since seizing control of it from the GLC could be described as

"benefits from the efforts of LRT's management and work force since the GLC lost control of LRT". — [*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1200.]

Even the Secretary of State would appear to be capable of putting up fares without making a bodge of it, but he should not claim in the House that it was some sort of miracle, for which he was responsible.

The Bill is nothing more than an attempt by the Secretary of State to legalise his previously illegal position, a position into which he got himself when he refused the help offered by the GLC. It is nothing more than nasty retrospective legislation for which the Secretary of State is responsible. He has misled the House, he is misleading us again and he should have the honour and decency to get up and apologise. He should then drop the Bill.

5.43 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The Secretary of State praised his handling of LRT. It is not unexpected for politicians to praise their own policies, but in this case it is a bit like Inspector Clouseau praising his policing powers. The Secretary of State has Inspector Clouseau's incompetence, but he does not have his charm. His handling of LRT has been and still is abysmal. It has been announced that rates are to go up by 35 per cent. mainly because the Secretary of State is lumping on an additional £69 million of debt charges which would have been spread over several years if LRT had still been with the GLC. That is despite the Secretary of State's repeated promises in the Committee on the London Regional Transport Bill that his policies would keep rates down.

On top of that, fares are to go up. They have already gone up by an average of 10 per cent. from 6 January. There are variations on that average. For example, short distance journeys, which represent about 35 per cent. of all fares, and which are made by many people such as shoppers and disabled people who need buses for short journeys, went up by about 25 per cent. Children's bus fares rose by 50 per cent. At the same time, fares to Heathrow airport were either kept the same or, in some cases, went down. The Secretary of State's policy is impose fare increases for the ordinary people, while jet-setters get reductions.

The direction of LRT under the Secretary of State has to be taken into account. I shall now quote an article in *The Guardian* on 21 November 1984 about the direction of LRT. I hope this will make the matter clear to the Secretary of State. It says:

"There's a document circulating within LRT called 'Meeting the Challenge' which they are loth to show the public. The 'Challenge' is to reduce the transport budget from £190 million to £95 million over the next three years and LRT will achieve that by cutting services (by 11 million bus miles, which means you wait longer) axeing 6,000 jobs, putting up fares and eventually converting the whole bus fleet to One Person Operation."

That is where the Minister is taking transport for Londoners. I shall quote a little more of this article, which has some interesting points about one-person operation. It says:

"OPO buses are a must. They enable LRT to dispense with thousands of conductors and they're the buses that you climb on to with your children, buggy and shopping, balance it all on the steps or platform, and while you grovel for change the passengers inside and the ones queueing outside wait and wait, cars and more buses queue up behind, while upstairs out of sight, thugs, vandals and robbers are busy attacking fittings and women passengers, and when they've finished up there, they can always have a go at the driver because there is no conductor to see or to run for help."

The Secretary of State is proud of the direction in which he is taking LRT, of which that is an example.

I have asked a series of questions about what LRT is supposed to be doing for disabled passengers, for whom the Secretary of State claims to have such regard. I asked how much was being spent on the unit for disabled travellers and was given a cover-up answer. Unless I get a more detailed answer, I can only believe that LRT is spending either nothing or next to nothing on the unit. That point needs to be followed up.

An undemocratic element is involved. People have no say in the rates and fares going up and the services being cut. The Secretary of State cannot be proud of his record, or of the early days of his creation of LRT. On top of that there is a court judgment against the Secretary of State which I shall read again, because the House, the Secretary of State and the public should hear it over and over again.

"Mr. Justice McNeill held that the Secretary of State had acted unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly in giving a direction which exceeded his statutory powers without consideration of all relevant material and without consultation with the Greater London Council."

It is the Secretary of State who, according to that judgment, is in the dock. The Secretary of State said today that the Bill is needed because acceptance of that judgment would provide a windfall profit for the Greater London council. It is not a windfall profit that the GLC wants. It wants its money. The judgment makes it clear that the Secretary of State took this money illegally from the GLC.

Another claim made today by the Secretary of State's Back-Bench supporters was that throughout the GLC had not co-operated with London Regional Tranport. That is not the case. It is patently untrue. The actions of the GLC have been impeccable throughout. It was the Secretary of State who refused to consult the GLC. The GLC has been available for consultation throughout. The Secretary of State could have avoided the judgment going against him if he had consulted the GLC, in particular about the £10·2 million for leasing. The GLC made it clear throughout that although it believed that the Secretary of State's direction was ultra vires—and it was proved to be right—it would continue to provide money without prejudice for the operational needs of London Regional Transport in order to maintain a transport system for London. That is exactly what the GLC did. Far from being unco-operative, the GLC has acted impeccably. It sought to get the court case resolved as speedily as possible, but the Secretary of State has continued his vendetta against the GLC. Last week in this House he called the GLC robbers and tricksters, yet, according to the judgment of Mr. Justice McNeill, it was the Secretary of State who was found with his hand in the till.

The Secretary of State is not concerned with London's transport system. I do not know whether he regularly uses the buses and tube. He is not concerned with the good management of LRT, with its users, with its employees or with those who have to pay the bill—the ratepayers of London. The Secretary of State has effectively taken control of the London's transport system, but he has no real interest in its users or in the ratepayers of London. His actions are coloured by his obsession with the GLC. He follows his master's voice — the Prime Minister. He bashes the GLC whenever he can. It is especially convenient for the Secretary of State to bash the GLC in order to cover up his own incompetence. It is the Secretary of State who has been shown to have acted illegally.

The Secretary of State received a nasty shock in court. Conservative Members are not here to hear me say this, but they will feel the repercussions. There is a very nasty shock on the way for the Tories, in London and elsewhere, at the next general election. The obsession of the Secretary of State with the abolition of the Greater London council will not go unnoticed. Londoners will realise that the Secretary of State is ruining London's transport system. I remind the Secretary of State that 74 per cent. of Londoners are now against the Government's attempt to abolish the GLC. Many Conservative Back Benchers are not in the House now, and they will not have the right to be here after the next general election.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Does my hon. Friend accept that on the strength of those hon. Members who are attending this debate, it appears that the Liberal and SDP parties are also unlikely to be in attendance after the next general election? Certainly they are not here for this important debate.

Mr. Cohen: That is a very important point. After the next general election Labour Members will be on the Government Benches in vast numbers, and then we shall be able to make sure that the transport system for London and, indeed, for the rest of the country is run properly.

On the Secretary of State's comments about section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act, in Committee, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"It is not my intention to take more through the clause"—

that is section 49 of the Act—

"than is strictly necessary for running LRT for the year in question, so that it shall not end up with a surplus."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 15 March 1984; c. 1114.]

The judgment of the court went against the Secretary of State because the decision was that the Government were creating a surplus. Was the statement in Committee by the Secretary of State a deception? I ask the Secretary of State to come to the Dispatch Box and deny or accept that he has deceived the House. We have the right to know whether or not he deceived the House. If the Secretary of State deceived the House, he should admit it. If the Secretary of State did not deceive the House, he ought to admit that he made a mistake, and the House ought to be told why he made the mistake. Was it the result of incompetence? Was it because the Secretary of State did not understand the provisions of his own Bill? I suspect that the Secretary of State knew throughout that the Government wanted a surplus to be created and that that was his intention, despite his words in Committee. I note that the Secretary of State is not prepared to come to the Dispatch Box and deny it.

The House was again deceived when my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked parliamentary questions after the judgment of Mr. Justice McNeill about the intentions of the Secretary of State. In reply, the Secretary of State said that he was not going to answer those questions because the matter was sub judice; an appeal was pending. Yet the Secretary of State did not intend to appeal, and he has now admitted that no appeal will be made. He knows that he would lose such an appeal. Therefore, the House was further deceived so that the Secretary of State could avoid answering the parliamentary questions that had been asked by my hon. Friend. Those are very grave charges. They are every bit as grave as those which were made and debated yesterday. Even though the House may be sparsely attended today, whereas it was full yesterday, the Secretary of State should not be allowed to get away unchallenged with that kind of deception.

The Bill is retrospective. That must be bad. Its intention is to try to circumvent and thwart the judgment of the court. If everyone found guilty in our courts could do the same as the Secretary of State, our prisons would be empty. The right hon. Gentleman does not have to go to prison, but he should accept the judgment of the court, because it contained the important principle that he should not abuse his powers as a Minister of the Crown. Neither should the right hon. Gentleman use retrospective legislation to get himself off the hook created by his own legislation.

The Secretary of State has said that the Bill is necessary in the interests of ratepayers. That is patently untrue as well. Under the Bill, the GLC will have to pay £50 million more than it need do so to cover LRT's operational costs in 1984-85. The court judgment does not affect LRT's operations this year, because it has sufficient finances to continue its operations. The judgment will affect forthcoming years, yet the Secretary of State is altering the financing of LRT this year.

Originally, future financing meant that two thirds of the total would have come from London's ratepayers and the other one third from the Exchequer. By forcing the Bill through, the right hon. Gentleman is ensuring that the entire 100 per cent. of that £50 million will come from London's ratepayers. That is why he wished to create the surplus in the first place. Yet, even now, when he has been found out, he is still forcing it through via the back door. It is a sleight of hand to ensure that London's ratepayers, instead of the taxpayer, foot the bill for that one third of the £50 million. In effect, this is yet another fiscal tax on Londoners, when it should really be borne by taxpayers as a whole. Consequently, the Secretary of State is robbing the GLC, and his Bill is against the interests of London's ratepayers.

The right hon. Gentleman justified the Bill by stating:

"The GLC precepted the ratepayers of London for the express and explicit purpose of passing the money on to LRT. How it can then be said that because it rated the money it should not give it to LRT baffles me."—[*Official Report*, 29 January 1985; Vol. 72, c. 171.]

The Minister is arguing that, just because the money was included in the GLC budget, it should be handed over to the LRT. That is not the way in which public administration works in this or many other countries; nor is it the way in which private companies, nationalised industries or central Government work. An organisation may well include something in its budget, but if circumstances change and a shortfall arises, the money does not have to be spent. If the right hon. Gentleman is baffled by that, it really puts his competence in doubt.

What is contained in a budget is only an indication of the grant that may have to be paid over. If services and fares policy relating to that grant alter—and we have heard that they have — if the financial requirements change — and we know they have — and if the wider interests of the ratepayers change, that money does not have to be paid over to LRT, as the Secretary of State seems to think.

Indeed, Mr. Justice McNeill was specific about this point in his judgment. He found that the Secretary of State had failed to take account of all the relevant facts. Once again, the Secretary of State's comments reveal the paucity of his competence.

Another justification for this bad Bill is that if the money is not paid over to LRT, there will be disruption to the service. The right hon. Gentleman gives no justification for that claim. It is false, because, as the judgment made clear, this does not affect LRT's plans for the current financial year.

When the House of Lords judgment on the "Fares Fair" case went against the GLC, legislation was refused by the Government. As a result, fares doubled and services were drastically cut. In this instance, we know that fares and rates have aready gone up substantially. They cannot be affected again this year, and the situation can be rectified next year. Although the Government refused to legislate

as a result of the "Fares Fair" case, in this case, where the urgency is not so great, they are rushing the Bill through. There seems to be one rule for the Government and another for the GLC. When any Government act like that, they bring the law into disrepute, and it ill-behoves them to tell councils—as the Secretary of State for the Environment is doing—that they must obey the law.

The GLC's officers are highly professional. They are not politically motivated; they are strictly professional and have the interests of London's transport system at heart. In a report which they submitted to GLC councillors, they concluded:

"In the officers' view, new legislation as proposed by the Secretary of State is not necessary and his reasons for introducing it do not stand up to detailed examination. It will inevitably have serious financial and other consequences for the Council and will present considerable difficulties and uncertainties to the Council in preparing and approving its 1985-86 budget and making its precept."

It is obvious that the Secretary of State does not care about the GLC, as he made clear in his speech. The officers also state:

"Consideration of the detail of the statement by the Secretary of State though should not detract from the basic objection in principle to the proposed legislation. Mr. Justice McNeill found that the Secretary of State had acted unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly in giving a direction which exceeded his statutory powers without consideration of all relevant material and without consultation with the Greater London Council. The Secretary of State has not appealed against this judgment, but now intends to introduce new legislation that is retrospective and goes beyond the original intentions of the Act. Such action is in our view contrary to any principles of fair or reasonable public administration, and contrary to the interests of the London ratepayer."

That sums up the Bill in a nutshell.

The whole debate should be regarded like yesterday's debate. It is a mini-Belgrano for the Government because there are shades of deception. When they are found out, they try to cover up. In both instances they were found out in the courts. The deception of the House and the country arises because of the attitude of Ministers and of the Prime Minister herself. An arrogant and ignorant approach, throwing up smokescreens, is the Prime Minister's style of government. She and her Ministers are prepared to ride roughshod over all opposition, even if that opposition is clearly shown to be in the right. They are also prepared to ride roughshod over public opinion if it does not suit them, regardless of the law.

So much for a party that claims at election after election to be the party of law and order. What a sham. The electors of London and elsewhere are becoming increasingly wise to the attitude of the Government. They are increasingly aware of the Government's nasty, squalid little policies and they do not want them. They will torpedo this terrible Transport Minister and this intolerant Tory Government at the first opportunity.

6.11 pm

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): I did not hear the Secretary of State make his announcement about the direction he would take in regard to the legal judgment against him. I did not have the privilege of hearing him at first hand, neither was I a member of the Committee that considered the Bill. However, I speak as a member of the Select Committee on Transport. I am seriously disturbed about the transport system, as planned in the Transport Bill for which the Minister is responsible and in this Bill. In both cases the Government are making a crude attempt to attack the conditions of transport workers in the country as a whole. They are attacking wages, conditions, pension arrangements and decent standards through privatisation of bus undertakings. In some cases services are falling to bits, as has been shown in the Worcester and Hereford experiment about which the Select Committee took evidence when we went to the area recently.

The Bill has an Alice in Wonderland content. I have been reading the figures of what could reasonably be expected to be the revenue requirements of the new London Regional Transport Board. Usually the GLC met its requirements. I cannot understand what the additional requirement is. We have not got many details. It is an elementary duty of Ministers to inform the House about what is required.

I do not want to repeat arguments already made because the case has been well aired, but I must refer to the way in which the Secretary of State led hon. Members up the garden path by suggesting that he would go to the Appeal Court against the legal judgment, and then shied away. When a Minister announces that he is going through a further judicial process, that effectively stops searching questions. During the past two days the Chamber has been occupied in debating the relationship of the law courts with the Cabinet, a Cabinet of excesses and of revolutionary change.

Last Thursday there was a walk-out at my local bus garage, which affected bus services, because that garage is scheduled for closure. How many other bus garages in London are scheduled for closure? How many other bus workers are scheduled for the dole? There are procedures within London Regional Transport to discuss redundancy but redundancy is no substitute for jobs. The people of London require jobs and bus services.

What has all that to do with the Bill? I think that the £50 million extra is required to finance redundancies. The Minister must tell us clearly. Now that London transport services have been nationalised, we cannot ask detailed questions in the House about them, as we could in the past question members of the GLC. The public in London are being denied the opportunity to question representatives on fares and other policies. Fares have gone up but at the same time people are facing a reduction in bus services.

Many people are puzzled about why, if the Transport Bill is so good, its provisions are not being applied to London. It is because London bus workers would fight it every inch of the way. It would mean a total shambles for London traffic. If this madness goes on, that legislation may be applied to London.

We have yet to hear the real reasons why the additional money is required. It is ratepayers' money. In effect ratepayers are being robbed. I think it is to offset what would otherwise be required in taxpayers' money from the Exchequer. We know the Secretary of State hates to part with taxpayers' money. His whole political record has been based on this kind of philosophy right from the days when he was sacked by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) for his handling of disputes with Upper Clyde Shipbuilders.

I do not know whether the Secretary of State knows much about transport. I doubt whether he does. He is a very good water colour artist. We used to be joint conveners of the annual art exhibition. He is accomplished in that direction but in regard to transport he seems to be the extreme amateur and very clumsy. He is absent at the moment from the sparsely attended Government Benches.

[Mr. Deakins]

officials responsible to officials in Whitehall. No Minister, however much grasp he has of detail, can keep a grip on the whole of local government.

We are supposed to have in power the party of law and order. I shall not repeat the content of earlier speeches, except to say that we have in this measure a sorry tale of haste and arrogance on the part of the Secretary of State, which last year led to the Court's view to which reference has been made.

One issue in the court judgment was the fact that there had been no consultation with the GLC. Why, when sums as enormous as £250 million and more are involved, was there no such consultation? While there may not have been a statutory duty to have consultations, one would have thought that they would have taken place. It would have been prudent of any Government to consult an authority as large as the GLC, whatever the council's politics, as part of the democratic process in London, especially between one elected body and another.

Mr. Dicks: Will the hon. Gentleman say why, with the abolition of the GLC just around the corner, the GLC is refusing to talk to Conservative London boroughs about the arrangements that must be made? If consultation is good one way, it should be good the other.

Mr. Deakins: When one is under threat of abolition it is a different matter. I am talking about consultation between the Secretary of State as the Minister concerned and the GLC. The circumstances are different and circumstances alter cases. As part of the democratic process, the right hon. Gentleman should have consulted the GLC. I grant that Parliament is supreme, but the GLC represents the interests and needs of Londoners, particularly in relation to their travel arrangements.

We are talking about the future of London Regional Transport and it is clear that the Government are moving towards privatisation. We are bound to wonder what the future holds for those who use the buses and tubes in London. Already competition is in prospect. The management of LRT has taken that on board, but it seems to be over-sanguine about the effects of competition.

It is one thing to have competition which, on routes which are not at present served by LRT, brings feeder flows of people on to main bus and tube routes from which LRT then benefits. It is another to have competition directly between so-called pirate buses — or private buses, as I suppose we shall have to learn to call them — and LRT buses. That prospect should appal Londoners, and I hope that it will appal LRT as well.

The background to the Bill lies in the Government setting unrealistic financial targets for LRT. That is typical of this Government, who are setting financial targets for many public sector bodies which are not merely unrealistic but which are designed to raise prices to the consumers so that the Government can cream off profits from those public sector bodies.

That has happened in the gas industry, in which domestic consumers are having to pay a tax. Some days ago we debated the water industry and it was made clear that consumers in London will be paying a 10 per cent. increase in their water rates this year when the board of the Thames water authority wanted only a 3 per cent. increase. That 10 per cent. increase has been forced on that authority by the Government in their determination to tax one of the basic commodities of the people.

The setting of external financial targets in an arbitrary fashion, of which the Secretary of State for Transport is an ardent advocate, is one more means by which the Government are indirectly taxing the British people on commodities which have not previously borne a tax. The electorate will bear that in mind at the next general election.

The money with which we are concerned tonight—or at least £200 million of it—may be necessary under the Transport Bill for the operations of London Transport. However, it has already had a 9 per cent. fares increase and one hopes that in future LRT will restrict its increases to the rate of inflation.

The Government are interfering more and more in the public sector. This measure interferes with the rights of the GLC, whose actions in this matter have been backed up by a decision of the High Court, and the Bill must be regarded as a piece of retrospective legislation.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman hopes that future fares increases will be linked to the rate of inflation. Does he intend to encourage his trade union friends to restrict their pay claims to LRT to the rate of inflation?

Mr. Deakins: I have never interfered, as a Member of this House, with pay claims. In any event, the hon. Gentleman should accept that what matters are not claims but settlements, and settlements are made between managements and unions. I am not here as a surrogate GLC Member debating the internal affairs of London Transport. I am here as a London Member questioning the Secretary of State about the overall operations of London Transport and the affects of the Bill on those. Whether or not we have an annual debate on the operations of LRT, as I hope we shall, I trust that we shall not go into the nitty-gritty of the type of matters raised by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) but will debate the major issues of policy concerning the future of bus and tube services in London.

I will not refer to certain remarks made by the Minister because other hon. Members have dealt with those. Suffice it to say that the Minister has misled the House. He is a Minister in an authoritarian Government, and yesterday we debated the actions of Ministers in misleading the House of Commons. With such a large majority, they think that they can get away with it. There was a time—before I arrived in this place, in the 1950s, 1960s and earlier—when it was considered honourable for Ministers to resign on matters of principle or when they had misled the House. I fear that, under this Conservative Government with their large majority, those days are past and that we can no longer expect Ministers to resign, either on matters of principle or when caught, so to speak, in flagrante delicto.

The Bill is not necessary. The ratepayers and taxpayers of London will be paying for no better service, a service which will be under increasing financial pressure from the Government in their effort to reduce the amount of public subsidy to LRT. Indeed, that has been admitted by the Government.

What does the future hold for LRT? Are we to have higher fares, lower subsidies and gradually worse bus services? There are some signs of that happening already.

I hope that they are not early warning signs and that we shall be able to retrieve the situation. Or will it be a future in which fares rise roughly in line with inflation and in which bus services, in particular, improve—remembering that many people, particularly pensioners, use bus services for local journeys—as happened when the GLC was in control?

The remarks of the hon. Member for Ealing, North were a travesty of the true position of four years of GLC control of London transport. We should retain the GLC, restore control of LRT to it and, above all, have a different Government so that we are never again faced with a squalid little Bill such as this.

8.39 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I support the Bill. I am one of those hon. Members who was much maligned earlier in the debate. However, I have been largely, if not totally, dependent on London Transport public services for most of my life, certainly since I was aged six or seven. I speak perhaps with a longer perspective than some Opposition Members who have addressed themselves to the subject.

In recent years I have noticed a distinct deterioration in the service provided by LT. There has been increased uncertainty about the schedules of buses and tube trains. Passengers have experienced long waits and frequent cancellation of services without any warning and, the ultimate insult, having waited for an hour or more for a bus, of three or four ariving in convoy. This has been common in the past four or five years. I admit that there have been improvements in the last two or three years. However, over a period of 10 years the public transport service in London has been unsatisfactory and passengers and potential passengers have rightly made their feelings known.

When I was a member of the GLC, although I did not serve on its transport committee I received innumerable representations from my constituents in Dulwich who live in a part of south-east London particularly ill-served by public transport services. Coupled with the general sense of uncertainty, long delays, cancellation and bunching, was the low morale of the staff and lack of confidence of the passengers. To an observer this would have appeared to be a thoroughly demoralised service. The record of GLC involvement in recent years has done nothing to improve the situation; in fact, the reverse is the case. The GLC in the last few years has been Luddite and reactionary in its approach to any innovative ideas. Indeed, I think that this has helped to intensify the downward spiral of demoralisation in the service.

Against this background, in the 1983 general election I found myself fighting in an area in which there was a great desire for some change in London Transport arrangements for public transport in that part of London. The opportunity that the Government have taken to make improvements to set the public transport arrangements on a proper line has been welcomed.

With the formation of LRT there has been a realisation of the necessity for an integration of transport services in London. We have noted a greater co-operation between British Rail and LRT in ensuring that those who make use of their services in a single journey enjoy a better integration than hitherto existed. There is the will to integrate, and that goes a long way towards making a more effective and efficient travel organisation.

Secondly, there is a realisation of the necessity for a greater flexibility in the provision of transport services. My constituency is served by a bus which is very dear to those who use it, the P4 bus. This bus fulfils a social as well as a practical role. It provides transport for many who would not otherwise be able to reach the major shopping centres such as Brixton from the more remote parts of the area. The bus provides an important and necessary social service. However, for most of the day the bus has only a handful of passengers. The service could equally well be provided, not by the single-decker 53-seater bus, but by something smaller and more adaptable which can stop with greater ease to pick up the elderly on a difficult road without causing a major hold-up or pile-up. It is a question of the will to take the opportunity to respond to the need, to recognise the need of people to make use of public transport in London and to provide an adaptable and flexible approach to meet that need. That is something that London Transport has not done satisfactorily in the past but which I see it doing in the future.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Is the hon. Gentleman urging that the P4 bus route, which runs through both our constituencies, should be privatised? Does he not understand that the quite large P4 bus is provided for reasons of economy, because it helps neither London Transport nor any other transport system to duplicate the number of buses, and the bus that runs on the route in question is perfectly satisfactory?

Mr. Bowden: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is my personal friend and neighbour, for making that point. However, I cannot accept that to run a big bus carrying a handful of people is more cost-effective and cheaper than to run a small bus carrying the same number of people. Such economics bedevilled the London Transport Executive in the past and the GLC members who were responsible for giving it guidance and direction. The bus is a much valued and needed facility in the locality. I cannot say that I think that it was provided as the result of direction from the GLC. It was rather a response by the professional management of the London Transport Executive which brought the service into being.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. Those feeder services were introduced as a requirement by the GLC.

Mr. Bowden: They were introduced by the London Transport Executive, which I agree took its guidance from the GLC, in policy directives at the time. If we follow the line taken by Opposition Members that there was some semblance of democratic accountability by the members of the GLC, then they were responding to a need and there was some element of need, which was recognised in that case.

Mr. John Fraser: When Mr. Sam Silkin was the Member for Dulwich, a proposal was made by London Transport Executive to cut out the P4 service. It was saved only by the pressure put upon a willing GLC. The hon. Gentleman's constituents and my constituents have to thank the GLC for that and not the LTE.

Mr. Bowden: I am grateful to the hon. Member for making that point because I was the GLC member for Dulwich when Mr. Sam Silkin was the Member for Dulwich, and I led the pressure from Dulwich to ensure that the P4 service remained. I was conscious at that time

[Mr. Bowden]

that there was no unwillingness on the part of the LTE to accept the point. It was prepared to investigate any such issue and was receptive to the representations which were made by me at the time.

Perhaps we have exhausted the possibilities of making political capital out of the P4 bus, although I am grateful for the opportunity that the hon. Gentleman has given me to expand on the matter.

I welcome the Bill because it clarifies an obscure passage in the Act. When the Bill was considered in Committee, there was a clear indication and determination of what the will of Parliament was to be. Sad to say, by some slip or an unanticipated amendment, this was not made crystal clear in the drafting of the legislation. I am conscious that the GLC, by creative accounting, has sought to exploit a technical inadequacy in the Act and therefore has attempted to deprive the ratepayers of London of the money that has been contributed to LRT and of the transport services which that payment represents. The Bill seeks to clarify that point and to ensure that the will of Parliament and of the electorate is properly reflected in parliamentary legislation, and that the deficiency, if deficiency there be, in the High Court ruling on the Act can be eradicated and rectified.

For this reason, I give wholehearted support to the Bill, recognising that in the ultimate it will improve public transport services for those who live and work in London.

8.49 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I apologise to the Secretary of State for not being in the Chamber at the beginning of the debate when he spoke. I had other pressing business to attend to. However, I have checked with colleagues as to what he said, and I am assured that I did not miss very much.

I should like to correct one or two errors of fact by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who is not here, and the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan). The hon. Member for Ealing, North talked about pensioners' bus passes. That issue was also raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins). The fact is that right from the time of the last general election, there was enormous concern by pensioners all over London about what was to happen to their bus passes in the event of the GLC and London Transport going the way that the Government wanted them to go. That pressure worked. It obviously worked on one or two Conservative Members, because they realised that their seats were in danger and responded to that pressure from their pensioners.

Mr. Dicks: With respect, the hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. We were aware that the Secretary of State wanted to give responsibility to the boroughs. The reason for the change that was made in Committee was that we were not convinced of the strength and ability of the London boroughs to meet what the Secretary of State thought would be their responsibility. It is for that reason, and that reason alone, that the clause was introduced to make the change. The change was not made in response to major pressure from pensioners, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, although, of course, we were aware of such pressure.

Mr. Dubs: It is difficult to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument, because I was certainly aware of enormous feeling on the part of pensioners all over London. If the hon. Gentleman says that he and his Government were prepared to ignore the feeling of pensioners and brought in the change for some other reason, so be it. However, the fact is that that was an excellent example of how the feeling of and pressure from pensioners brought about a change in Government thinking. The original commitments that were obtained from the Government were pretty weak and, as the pressure mounted, the Government felt that they had to do something. That is my interpretation.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Does my hon. Friend recall that on Second Reading of the London Regional Transport Bill two Conservative Members asked the Secretary of State for Transport to write a clause into the Bill to safeguard concessionary fares for pensioners in London, and the Secretary of State categorically refused on both occasions?

Mr. Dubs: I thank my hon. Friend for reminding me and the House of that important point.

The second thing that the hon. Member for Ealing, North said that was surprising—he did not allow me to intervene when he said it and now he has scarpered—was that he felt that when London Transport came under the GLC, it was not responsive to pressure from hon. Members, and since it has ceased to be under the GLC, it has suddenly become very responsive. What he said does not reflect my experience, nor does it reflect the experience of anyone to whom I have spoken.

Of course, over the years we always wanted London Transport to be more responsive, but I have detected no increase in accountability since London Transport was taken away from the GLC; indeed, rather the reverse. There is now no longer the possibility of political pressure being exerted on the GLC which, in turn, would reflect itself in the nature of transport policies. Political pressure means the wish of people in London to have a better and more efficient transport system, which we began to achieve while the GLC was in charge of London Transport. Such pressure is no longer possible since the change in arrangements.

Mr. Moynihan *rose*——

Mr. Dubs: I shall give way just once more, because other hon. Members want to speak.

Mr. Moynihan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. It is not my experience that no political pressure is being applied. On the contrary, on several occasions I have intervened as the political representative for my constituency to improve a service. On one occasion a bus stop was placed outside the house where a disabled person in my constituency lives, and it was highly inconvenient for that individual, who came to see me. I made representations immediately. LRT's sensitivity was put into practice straight away. That bus stop was moved within not months but hours of that complaint being made.

Mr. Dubs: The fact is that the present set-up in London Regional Transport is not democratically accountable. When the GLC was in charge, the system was democratically accountable. There seems to be a world of

difference, even if the hon. Gentleman and others can exercise influence over cases of particular bus stops or shelters.

An error of fact was expounded by the hon. Member for Lewisham, East when he referred to two council by-elections in Lewisham. He was talking about the reaction of Londoners to changes in the GLC and London Transport. If he looks at the facts of local government election results throughout London since the last general election, he will see that his party has been consistently losing out and that we in the Labour party have been doing better. I refer him to election results in Lambeth, Wandsworth and even in the London borough of Barnet, in the Prime Minister's own constituency, when a safe Conservative seat was won by the Labour candidate. I invite the hon. Gentleman to look at the results over the past year and a half and then he will see——

Mr. Moynihan: What about Lewisham?

Mr. Dubs: I invite the hon. Gentleman to look at the results. It may well be that in one London borough there were two results that went against the general trend, but overall the hon. Gentleman cannot substantiate his case, even if he wants to go on shouting at me.

I am concerned about the Bill and the basis on which it is being put forward by the Secretary of State. I am reminded of many years ago when there was a poster campaign. I cannot remember the context, but the poster went something like this, "It is not your fault that Britain"——

Mr. Jessel: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dubs: I shall not give way now.

The poster said, "It is not your fault that Britain's going down the drain. It's the person standing next to you." Members of the Cabinet could well take a leaf out of that book and, when they go to the next Cabinet meeting, might say, as no doubt they have been doing, "Prime Minister, it's not my fault that the Government are going down the drain. It's the Minister next to me."

A series of disasters is striking the Government and a series of excuses is being given. If it is not one Minister blaming another, it is Ministers blaming civil servants. Yesterday was a pretty unedifying spectacle, when two senior Ministers were saying that it was not their fault but the fault of one individual civil servant. The Secretary of State has made a monstrous error in his legislation, or his interpretation of the legislation, and he is pretending that he is not culpable. He has quite a lot to answer for.

The Secretary of State individually seems to have blundered from one disaster to another. There are more important things for us to debate in transport matters than a Bill that should never have been introduced because it was unnecessary. I should like to remind the House of the more important transport matters that should be before us rather than this measure. There is the question of Stansted airport, which is still unresolved. There is the quality of London transport, the increasing fares that are now being introduced and the effect that that will have on Londoners. There is the enormous concern throughout London about schemes to trunk roads in London. In my constituency, there is a proposal that the south circular road should be trunked, meaning that extra traffic would be sucked in through residential areas. There is even discussion of a new bridge across the Thames. I doubt whether that will happen, but it is being contemplated. That bridge would take the extra traffic created by the Secretary of State's transport schemes across from Chelsea and Kensington, through my constituency and on southwards. We have the whole question of the competence and integrity underlying the measure now before us.

Other hon. Members have already referred briefly to the history of events. If the Secretary of State had not been in such great haste to introduce the order under section 49 despite the warnings from the GLC—that GLC that was not consulted by the Secretary of State — all the difficulties today would have been prevented. Indeed, the basis for the £50 million which the Secretary of State is seeking to get back from the GLC would not have applied had the original fares structure been maintained and had there not been anxiety to impose extra fare increases on Londoners, plus some reduction in bus mileage. It seems to me that both elements have contributed to this £50 million.

If London Transport had come directly under the GLC it would not have been a problem because money that was raised by the GLC from the ratepayers of London could easily have been used for other London purposes. But now that is not going to happen.

The real tragedy for Londoners is that this is what is occupying the House and the Secretary of State rather than the fact that London transport is under-funded and when most major cities in the world are improving their public transport systems we in London are seeing attempts to increase fares and drive passengers off the buses and tubes, so that we are going back to ever lower standards of public transport. Heaven knows, my constituents complain enough to me already about the infrequency of public transport in London.

Turning to a matter which was covered partly by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) — the need for the safety and security of passengers travelling on London transport and the security of the staff of London Transport, whether drivers, or conductors or at London underground stations—I and other hon. Members know just what the difficulties are for the staff and how the shortage of staff at London Transport stations, for example, means that those on duty are vulnerable to the attacks of criminals and other wrong doers.

One particular difficulty that faces London Transport staff is what happens at football matches or on the way to and from football matches. I note that by a mischance for London Transport staff tomorrow evening Wimbledon are going to be at home to West Ham United in a fifth round FA cup replay and that Chelsea are going to be playing Sunderland in the return leg of the semi-final of the Milk cup. This means that some parts of the London transport system, particularly the District line and Fulham Broadway station, may have as many as four different sets of football supporters travelling through that station at the same time. I shudder to think what the consequences will be.

Tomorrow evening may be an exceptional occasion —I hope that it is—but the safety and security of ordinary London Transport passengers are prejudiced by the pressure on the system on occasions like this, and also by the staffing shortages, the sheer lack of numbers of staff to cope with the situation.

London Transport is not the sort of transport system that Londoners wish to have, or can be proud of. Years ago we

[Mr. Corbyn]

mind, while devastating so many other areas of British industry and so many other areas of service in this country. That is the direction in which he is taking us.

In my constituency the majority of households do not have access to a car and even in those households which do have such access usually only one person drives, so the majority of people in that household do not have access to a car either. In the 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. of households in my constituency that do not have access to a car the people rely entirely on public transport. They are not particularly wealthy people. They are not the sort of people from whom the Secretary of State's slimmed-down, privatised, super-competitive London Transport network would be particularly interested in attracting trade. They are the people who will suffer through his Bill, his policies, and his levy order, for they will have to pay for this whether they like it or not because he and his friends will push this Bill through the House tonight.

The future of London is very grim indeed while the present Secretary of State continues to be in charge of public transport because the other side of the coin is that in his other hat as so-called transport planner he is preparing plans for major motorway networks through London. He is employing consultants to discuss the possibility of creating a further motorway network through east London, another down to south London to join the M23 and others in other parts of London. The only term of reference of those inquiries is not whether the road can be built or whether it is sane to build a road, but when, where and how it should be built. The Secretary of State is trying to drive these motorway networks through London and, in his other hat, taking public transport away from London.

In 10 years' time London will be a very different place unless we get rid of the present Secretary of State. It will be a very grim city. It will have poor public transport, it will have more through roads and more commuter motorists, and it will provide a miserable life for the poorest people who cannot afford or hope to afford a car, as they struggle to travel on a very inefficient, outdated public transport system, as the super-coaches fly to and from the Kent and Surrey suburbs. That is the future which the Secretary of State plans for London.

This amendment Bill is a disgraceful little measure which is robbing Londoners of money which they desperately need for the running of London. It is before us because the Secretary of State was so incompetent in introducing the original Bill, in the levy order debate last week and in every aspect of transport planning that he has espoused. He has shown himself to be a failure in every job that he has had. He has created redundancy after redundancy all over the country. He is now planning to do exactly the same to London transport workers and to those people in London who cannot afford a car and who rely entirely on London Transport to get around their own city. He is an enemy of the people of London, he is an enemy of public transport in London, and he is an enemy of rational transport thinking in London.

6.58 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): It is odd that this measure should have attracted no contributions from the Tory Benches, involving, as it does, substantial sums of public money and affecting the capacity, or incapacity, of London Regional Transport to do its job for the people who use it daily. What is being proposed will have considerable effects on the financing of the Greater London council, which the Tory party hates so much that it is seeking to abolish it. For that reason, if no other, I would have expected that we would have heard speeches from the Tory Benches, although as the Benches are incapable of speaking themselves, it is necessary for hon. Members to stand up——

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman had been here he would perhaps have heard two contributions from the Benches behind me.

Mr. Dobson: They were the statutory Back Benchers and the Secretary of State, who recited his Ministerial brief —not, as they say in the divorce courts, for the first time. It is extremely difficult for the Government to muster any of their London Members—of whom there are more than 50 who should have been present today, but who are not—to come to the House and support this squalid measure.

I am happy to acknowledge that everyone can make a mistake. I am as capable of that as the next person, and no doubt many would say that I am even more capable.

Mr. Corbyn: Of course, my hon. Friend is much less capable than most of making a mistake. While commenting on the lack of Conservative Members, perhaps my hon. Friend will reflect on the absence of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who usually has so much to say at enormous and legalistic length. Perhaps this shows that the Liberal and Social Democratic parties do not give a damn about money being stolen from Londoners by this incompetent Government.

Mr. Dobson: I must not be tempted by my hon. Friend to cast aspersions on the Liberal party, or even on its peculiar ally the SDP. However, its members are spectacularly noticeable by their absence. In view of the value of the contributions that they normally make to our debates, we will not miss them and there will be more time for other hon. Members to speak.

From time to time the House has sympathy with people, even Tory Ministers, who have made mistakes. I recall the occasion when the Secretary of State for the Environment — presumably shortly not to hold that office — was Secretary of State for Social Services. Without the necessary statutory provision to back him, he dismissed certain members of the Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark health authority because they would not carry out every word of his bidding. It then turned out that he did not have the power to dismiss them, so he quickly introduced a Bill that was referred to at the time as the law of Jenkin's cock-up to put right his little mistake.

Although there was a certain arrogance in the way that the right hon. Gentleman dismissed those people without having the statutory right to do so, people felt that it was the sort of mistake that Ministers in a hurry might make. He took the power to set aside the court's decision. That is exactly what the Secretary of State for Transport wants to do tonight. However, there will be little sympathy for him because his major characteristic, acknowledged even by his hon. Friends, is one of overweening arrogance. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr.

Flannery) once summarised it perfectly. He said that the right hon. Gentleman was so arrogant that he was the only man in the world who could strut while sitting down.

We know that the right hon. Gentleman comes from an ancient and distinguished Northumbrian or Durham family—I am not sure which. It might be that they are descended in part from people who were prominent in the religious life of this country during the reign of Bloody Mary. I am told that Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley were educated at Cambridge and burned at Oxford. They suffered for their Protestant views. In the dispute with the Catholic divines before their demise, it was said that Master Cranmer leant upon Master Latimer, and Master Latimer leant upon Master Ridley, and Master Ridley leant upon the singularity of his wit. It is a pity that the witty branch of the family was snuffed out at such an early stage.

The right hon. Gentleman is definitely one of the north-eastern Ridleys. While sculling around in my mind, I remembered an immortal line from "The Blaydon Races." It was said that people were going to the races

"to gan on' see Geordie Ridley's concert in the Mechanics Hall at Blaydon."

It is extremely unlikely that the right hon. Gentleman is a descendant of the Ridley in question, especially as the Library supplied me with a reference which shows that that famous song was written by someone described by the rather pious producer of the reference work as a crippled pub comedian.

This is a rather crippled Bill coming from a crippled activity by the Secretary of State. We must be straight about this matter—the Secretary of State gave certain undertakings when the London Regional Transport Bill was in Committee. He put them into operation and the courts—not the GLC or Mr. Clive Ponting—found that he had behaved unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly. The court might also have added that he behaved characteristically, but it is not unlawful for him to do so. It is not right that he should behave unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly. Tonight he is trying to put right what he did wrong—a form of legislative Tipp-Ex, trying to cover the slip-up. But it was not a slip-up—it was a deliberate effort by the right hon. Gentleman to do what he did not have the power to do.

The right hon. Gentleman cannot claim that he was not warned. When he put forward his proposals, the GLC told him that he was wrong before it took him to court. It said that he had his figures wrong and that he should do them again. But the right hon. Gentleman persisted, in the hope—no doubt in the knowledge of the prejudices that prevail in the British courts—that he might get away with it. On this occasion, he did not.

We debated in a rather curious manner the Ways and Means resolution flowing from the Bill. We discussed it before we saw the Bill. The right hon. Gentleman told my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that he would remind her of the Travel Concessions (London) Act 1982, which was the result of the Bromley case. He said:

"The House of Lords decided that the Greater London Council did not have the power to allow concessionary fares to be paid, although it had been doing so."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1222.]

So the Government introduced a Bill to put that right.

That is a complete misrepresentation of the position. The fundamental reason for the Secretary of State losing this case was not his interpretation of the law but his administration of it. The Law Lords in the case to which he referred did not rule that the GLC's concessionary fares scheme was unlawful, but that the GLC's "Fares Fair" scheme was unlawful. The detailed terms of the judgment raised doubts about the pensioners' concessionary fares scheme. I can say that because I was one of the first hon. Members to raise those doubts.

It is therefore legitimate for me to remind the House what the Secretary of State's predecessors said when I raised doubts about the continued validity of the concessionary fares scheme. On 17 December 1981, the Prime Minister said:

"I welcome the clear and unanimous judgment from the House of Lords and congratulate Bromley on having taken steps that have clarified the position for London's ratepayers."—[*Official Report*, 17 December 1981; Vol. 15, c. 447.]

On 18 December 1981 the Minister for Health, then the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, said:

"There is no doubt about the validity of the concessionary fares policy. The GLC and London Transport have clear authority, under section 138 of the Transport Act 1968, to grant concessionary fares to pensioners."

In case people had not taken that on board, he continued:

"I have scotched one fear already, that the judgment affects concessionary fares to pensioners. They are not affected by yesterday's judgment because concessionary fares are covered by different legislation."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1981; Vol. 15, c. 562-80.]

On 21 December, the then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"There is no threat to London pensioners' free fares. These are expressly provided for in a separate statute. My hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport made that clear . . . Therefore, there is no question of frightening London's pensioners into thinking that their free fares are at risk."—[*Official Report*, 21 December 1981; Vol. 15, c. 804.]

The next day, there was a slight shift, when the aforesaid Under-Secretary of State for Transport said:

"But a week after the judgment the first shock horror stories in the newspapers or the more reasoned comments in this debate have not persuaded us that anyone has yet established any basis for rushing into legislation."—[*Official Report*, 22 December 1981; Vol. 15, c. 926.]

In other words, the idea that there was a threat to pensioners' concessionary fares was a nasty, stupid smear being put about by the Labour party. That is presumably why, on 24 February 1982, the Government introduced the Travel Concessions (London) Bill to reaffirm the right of the GLC to provide concessionary fares for pensioners. To suggest that there is any comparison between the judgment of the House of Lords on the "Fares Fair" campaign and the Government's introduction of a travel concession Bill with what the Secretary of State is doing is utter and unremitting twaddle, and exactly what we would expect from the Secretary of State.

If, after the House of Lords' judgment on the "Fares Fair" policy, the Government had introduced a Bill that did what this Bill is supposed to do—turn the law to what the Secretary of State says that he thought it was—the Government should have been doing the decent thing by making lawful the GLC's "Fares Fair" policy. But they did nothing of the sort. Far from it. To use the Prime Minister's word, they rejoiced at the GLC's embarrassment, rejoiced that the "Fares Fair" policy had been stopped by accident by the vandals in ermine and rejoiced that, without any change as a result of an election in London, they could change London's transport policies. The Government relished what happened. That also is typical.

[Mr. Dobson]

It is worth considering what the Government's creature —London Regional Transport— has been doing since what might be described as the successful, clear, up-to-date and legally unchallenged part of the London Regional Transport Act has come into effect. Before considering what LRT has been doing, we should put down a proper basis for comparison. To make a proper comparison we must compare LRT with what the GLC intended doing with transport, fares and the movement of Londoners about this great city had its duties not been snatched away and handed over to the Secretary of State's faceless quango, which is known as LRT. I remind the House that it is a quango that levies rates on Londoners.

The GLC planned to increase bus services to 170 million bus miles a year, instead of the current 166 million, to increase rail services to 30 million train miles per year, instead of the current 29·3 million, to have no increase in fares in real terms, to integrate LT and British Rail ticketing at no extra cost to passengers, to provide from ratepayers, who have done that thing which ratepayers sometimes do to the horror and indignation of Tories—voted in favour of it—broadly the same level of subsidy in real terms during the next three years and to seek a 1·5 per cent. improvement in productivity per year for three years.

The first results of that general policy from the 1983 fares cuts and simplification proved its success. By the third quarter of 1983-84, there had been a 10 per cent. increase in bus passenger miles, a 25 per cent. increase in underground passenger miles, a 10 per cent. reduction in car commuting into central London, no less than 3,000 fewer road accidents on London's roads and a £36 million surplus for London Transport.

Under LRT we have had a 9 per cent. fare increase at the beginning of the year, cuts in services and the threat of further cuts. The result of reductions in subsidies is increases in fares and cuts in services. We are getting back to the barmy old spiral that LT had gone down for years. There had been fewer people travelling, less income from the travelling public and a deteriorating service, leading to fewer people travelling, less income and a further deterioration in service. The reintroduction of that deterioration has been the Government's policy objective, using their faceless creature, LRT, to put that policy into effect.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Is my hon. Friend aware that the board of LRT was, by and large, in office when the GLC was running LT, and that it worked well for the GLC on the policies that the GLC put forward on behalf of ratepayers and the travelling public? The fact that the board now has a different view of the future of London's transport must be the result not of the board changing its view but of it being instructed to undertake different policies, which are less in the interests of the travelling public of London than those put forward by the GLC.

Mr. Dobson: I am sure that there is a great deal of truth in that. There have been and still are a considerable number of thoughtful and talented people who are members of the board of LRT and who were previously members of the board of LT. But it all depends on what the gaffer says. If he tells one to run down the services, and provides less money for them, as the Secretary of State does, the board will do it because it is its job to follow the instructions given.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my hon. Friend reflect that the primary purpose of LRT authority legislation was not to provide good public transport for Londoners but to make an efficient businesslike operation of LT services? As a secondary consideration, the number of passengers it carried depended on how much money it could make from them, and not on whether the passengers were satisfied with the service.

Mr. Dobson: I am sure that that is the case, whatever the Secretary of State said in the interminable debates that took place on the London Regional Transport Act 1984. It is clear that the last consideration to enter the minds of the Government was the standard of service that LRT should provide for Londoners in future. Their first consideration was to wrest control of LT from the elected GLC. That was their primary, vindictive objective. It was followed by their desire to reduce the amount of taxpayers' and ratepayers' subsidies to LT and, if possible, to get their people to run LT in such a way that certain readily identifiable profitable aspects of the business could be sold or handed in the usual squalid way to their mates, who could make money from them while the rest of LT suffered from the disappearance of the income from the profitable parts. That is a typical Tory attitude to a public body.

I move from general comment to the question of the proposed reductions in the staff of LRT by a figure approaching 7,000 during the next few years. Whatever the policies of the GLC and the trade unions involved in LT may have been, I have always been opposed to shedding jobs in public transport in London, because, whenever jobs are shed, services suffer. It will not be those who travel on one-person operated buses who decide whether we shall have them, but those who are driven in one-chauffer operated cars. They will also decide whether we travel from tube stations that are denuded of staff and on tube trains that have few staff, whether ordinary ticket collecting staff, ticket inspectors or transport police.

Every time there has been a reduction in the staff working at London transport's stations, on buses or British Rail's trains that carry commuters into Greater London, there has been an increase in violence, hooliganism and vandalism. They are a major deterrent to people who travel by bus, underground and train. People like to feel safe. Those who work on the buses, the underground and trains also like to feel safe when they are doing their jobs and helping the public by providing a decent public transport service. The more we reduce staff at stations, on buses, trains and the underground, the more violence there will be. If that violence were suffered by the decision makers, they would not reduce staff. There is not a recorded case of a board member of London Transport being assaulted while on duty, but there are innumerable instances of assaults on people who drive buses, collect fares, sell tickets and check whether travellers have tickets. As far as I know, no member of management nor a Minister has had that experience.

In the middle of last year I went to a funeral at Seven Kings. The only crime of the deceased was that he had asked three vile people for their tickets. They picked up a piece of metal, poked it in his eye and killed him. That

is what is happening in our capital city, and it must be stopped. But the only way to stop it is to ensure that there are sufficient staff at work on the transport system.

Mr. Corbyn: What my hon. Friend described was a sad but apt example of what is happening in London now. I know that he is a regular user of buses. Would he describe what it is like travelling on a one-person operated night bus in London? Such buses are often full of drunks and extremely violent people, but the driver is the only person from LRT on the bus. He has difficulties in controlling those people without assistance and, in some cases, he has not even a radio contact to ask for help.

Mr. Dobson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The reason why nothing is done about such matters is that none of those responsible for making decisions ever travel on those buses. It is not only that they do not drive the buses, but that they do not enter them as passengers. So long as the rich and influential do not use our transport system, that system will be unsatisfactory for everyone else.

I am told by constituents, especially women, that they do not like to go out at night, especially on London transport. They do not like arriving at Mornington Crescent or Camden Town tube stations because they are frightened. They fear that if someone tries to rob or assault them, there will be no one to help them, because of the policy of getting rid of staff. They are right. There is no case recorded of a ticket vending machine coming to the aid of a member of the public or a member of staff who has been assaulted. Automation spells a reduction in safety as automatically as it spells a reduction in staff.

If we are to have a humane and safe transport system for the capital city—people deserve it—we must return to having people working on the system. I utterly reject the idea that we can measure the standard of services of LRT and improvements in what is called efficiency solely by saying that we have got rid of another 2,000 or 3,000 members of staff. What is the cost of getting rid of those members of staff? What is the cost in fares evaded, people who are put off travelling, and damage from vandalism, which we then all have to bear? None of that is borne in mind when the cost accountants are working out the cost-benefit analysis of sacking a few more underpaid LRT and British Rail workers in London. That is the last consideration to arise.

Violence manifests itself on our transport system in various ways. The first is associated with fare evasion. If someone who is possibly drunk decides that he does not want to pay his fare, he may well start beating up someone whose job it is to ask for that fare. If there are two or three such people and they feel secure that there is only one member of staff, they are on a good thing, are they not? They are likely to succeed in not paying the fare, if necessary by threatening violence, or carrying out a violent act against the person who is trying to get that fare from them.

Mr. Deakins: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that as the staff are reduced on tubes and buses there will be an increase in fare evasion on LRT because there will be greater opportunities to get away with it? My hon. Friend, I and hon. Members from both sides of the House often travel on the tube late at night after Sittings of the House. It is appalling to find that when one arrives at one's destination there is usually only one person left. The ticket office is usually closed because of staff shortages and there is just one forlorn ticket collector — usually a man although not always. On numerous occasions I have seen young people threatening the ticket collector and going through without paying their fare. Such behaviour will increase. It is the result of running down facilities.

Mr. Dobson: That is right. Over the years it has become easier to evade paying a fare because of destaffing late at night. It leads to more violence. People are taken by surprise if someone asks them to pay their fare. They feel frustrated and angry. It may be that when they went to the amusement arcade, boozer or whatever, they decided that they could safely blow their last few bob because the chances were that no one would stop them and ask for their fare. When someone does they are upset because they have no money. That is related also to the fact that the fares are going up. The higher the fares, the more people will wish to evade them. People will find it less and less easy to afford the fares.

The issue all boils down to whether there will be anyone to help. Will there be anyone to go to the aid of the person who is doing his job? If one passenger starts beating up another during a row will there be members of staff to do anything about it?

Will alarm systems be installed in our public transport? I am glad to say that there has been an increase in the number of buses in which alarm systems are installed. We need more. We need them on the underground and on British Rail's London suburban services. If their existence were well known; if cameras and alarms were readily recognisable; and if there were a few spectacular cases of people getting nicked and punished for what they were doing, the alarms would be effective and people would be deterred. The alarm itself would deter an assault or threatened assault, but no alarm system will work if at the same time we get rid of the people who would respond to it when it goes off. If there is no one to respond to the alarm that is worse than not having an alarm. Destaffing would again lead to increases in violence.

Considerable efforts should be made — they might have been by the GLC but are not likely to be made by LRT and British Rail—to go into schools and colleges to persuade young people not to be violent on our transport system, and that vandalism should be reduced. We need co-ordination between the various responsible bodies in London. We need co-ordination between London Transport and British Rail because at the moment their approach on how to stop people lobbing rocks over a bridge is different. One of them fences off the line, the other does not. "Daft as brushes", to quote the Tory party chairman from yesterday. That is unsatisfactory.

We need also a greater commitment from Ministers, including the Home Secretary who, when he is not deploying Metropolitan police in the coalfields, might remember that his primary responsibility is to deploy the Metropolitan police in London, where we pay their wages. We also pay the wages of the transport police in various ways. The Home Secretary had a well-publicised conference on violence in May 1980. It was then proposed that the number of transport police employed by London Transport should be increased from about 200 to about 500. We believed that that was a massive commitment from the Tory "law and order" party even if not many Conservative Members listen or take part in debates such as this one. There has not been much commitment towards increasing the number of London Transport police. There

[Mr. Dobson]

are now about 300. That is still considerably short of the figure of 500 which was talked about and which obtained considerable Government publicity in May 1980.

That is one of the problems with this Government. They think that if they can have a press conference, two press statements, and an appearance on TV on law and order the problem is solved. It is rather like their short, sharp, shock treatment, which has been a complete failure. We want a steady and consistent commitment to improve the safety of people who travel and work on London's transport system. We are not having that commitment.

There has been a reduction in the number of British transport police deployed on the railway. That is not what we want. We want an increase in the numbers. I do not believe that the problems of violence and vandalism on our transport system are likely to be resolved simply by deploying many more police. That is not my normal approach to any such matter. To reduce violence to its previous low levels, when the lack of violence was a source of pride and provided a sense of security to those people, including women, who worked on and travelled on our public transport system, we need more people working on the buses, the stations and trains. The sooner we recognise that that is the only way to a secure and sensible system, the better.

Mr. Corbyn: I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis of the problems in providing security on London Transport services and safety for passengers because of the LRT's destaffing policy. The Conservative party—the party of business efficiency and private capital—is killing many businesses and enterprises in London by its public transport and road planning policies. By continually destaffing London Transport and throwing more traffic on to the roads as commuters, the Conservative party is increasing public congestion and thus slowing the journeys of delivery and commercial vehicles. Businesses are therefore disinclined to invest and operate in central London.

Mr. Dobson: I am sure that that is the case. Certain employers, including those in the service and leisure industries, are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit staff, especially women, unless they provide private transport to bring their staff into central London and, particularly, to take them home late at night. Civilised life in other countries and other capital cities requires that people should feel safe and secure, whether in their homes or travelling from their homes. Until a sense of security returns to our city, we shall be failing in our task.

I believe that the GLC had taken that fact on board. The GLC was vilified by the Conservative party for recruiting more staff for London Transport. It is a fact that some of the staff who were recruited were London Transport police and that more people were put to work on the trains, buses and stations. All that has come to an end. To save a few measly million quid, LRT, under this Government, is going all the other way.

I end——

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Before my hon. Friend ends, may I raise one point? My hon. Friend has made an excellent analysis of the deterioration in safety because of lack of staff, and I fully agree with him. Will he reflect on the fact that many dingy and badly lit stations are a paradise for the violent person? Such places encourage violent people. The GLC had a major programme of refurbishment of stations. That would have helped to reduce violence. This Bill is about cutting LRT's budget, and that means cutting the refurbishment programmes. That will increase violence.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend must have some sort of sixth sense, because I proposed to end on that very point. A place that is well lit and well staffed gives people a sense of security. If some Cabinet members, instead of travelling to and from their offices in chauffeur-driven cars, travelled late at night—for example, to the Mile End or Bethnal Green stations——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: May I just finish this passage, as the Secretary of State for Defence would have said yesterday. If Cabinet members travelled to such places late at night, they would recognise that people do not feel safe in places that are dingy, ill-lit, wet and full of puddles. Such places do not engender a sense of security. What comes to mind is a sense of Dickensian London. There are still far too many Dickensian premises in our transport system. We have to spend some money now. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) so acutely pointed out, the GLC proposed to improve the conditions in all these rundown stations.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my hon. Friend help us, and perhaps give way to a Conservative Member, if one cares to rise, by telling us the last time that the Prime Minister travelled on a bus or used any other form of public transport? When did the Secretary of State for Transport or Under-Secretary of State last travel on a bus or train? Minister have the most expensive form of public transport available to them—a chauffeur-driven car, from which they can view the buses travelling around them. Does my hon. Friend agree that if Ministers lecture people about the efficiency or otherwise of London Transport and London Transport workers the least they can do is come to this place and travel home at night by bus to find out what it is like?

Mr. Dobson: I have no means of inquiring into the Prime Minister's transport habits. In so far as it was possible within the rules of order of the House, I asked the right hon. Lady a couple of years ago whether she had travelled by train while she was Prime Minister—first class, second class, in the guard's van, or Bob's your uncle. The answer was that she had not. As far as I know, the only time that the right hon. Lady had been on a train was on the first day of the general election campaign when she came to my constituency, without telling me—breaching the usual courtesies—to name a locomotive at Euston station. That is the nearest the right hon. Lady has got to travelling on a train since she became Prime Minister. Those who have been to Euston station will recognise the fact that it is very different from, and less Dickensian than, the places I described previously.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Was not the intervention by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) totally foolish? It is obvious to everyone that a Prime Minister or any other Minister is so intensely busy that he or she must set about saving every five or 10

minutes. It is idiotic to say that people should be egalitarian about queueing for buses. Everyone knows that that is ridiculous.

Mr. Dobson: I have sometimes been accused of egalitarianism, but I am not suggesting that the Prime Minister should necessarily travel from No. 10 Downing street to the House of Commons by the 29 bus.

Mr. Stott: A 77A bus.

Mr. Dobson: I travel on the 77A bus. I would not want the right hon. Lady on that bus, because it might disturb me in the morning.

I am not saying that such people should necessarily travel all the time by public transport. I suggest that they might take some time to do what the rest of us have to do —the people who pay the taxes and the rates to enable London Transport and British Rail to carry out their spending programmes.

Mr. Stott: I am interested in what my hon. Friend is saying. To dispel the myth created by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), does my hon. Friend recall the days when I used to work for a former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan)? During his term as premier my right hon. Friend often travelled on public transport. He used the railways constantly and therefore had a good knowledge of the railway system.

Mr. Dobson: I am sure that that is the case. I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) had a good railway service to Cardiff of which he made use. The Prime Minister should make use of the railway system now.

A point needs to be kept in mind, for example by the Conservative Members who took part in the GLC money Bill, when there was a revolt of Tory Back Benchers from London that was about as spontaneous as the crowds in Red square in Moscow. They put forward a proposition to reduce, for the first time in its history, the GLC money Bill totals below the level that the GLC and the London boroughs wanted. Several items in that Bill were lopped away. One was the money to provide for LRT to improve some of the rundown stations.

The GLC had made proposals to help British Rail finance improvements to some of its stations, no doubt in the commuting constituencies of many Conservative Members. These were positive proposals to make the stations decent again, so that people could take a pride in their job, so that people did not sit in ticket collecting boxes with water running down the back of their necks, so that they did not have to talk to members of the public who were standing in great puddles of water on a platform, and so that people could keep dry and warm while waiting for a tube or British Rail train. There was nothing startling —no proposition that London ratepayers should send people to the moon. All that was being proposed was that the standard of all LRT stations should be raised to the level of the best.

As part of my basic political philosophy, I believe that if a good standard of station is right for any person, community or neighbourhood in London, it is right for everybody. There should not be nice stations in nice areas and rundown stations in rundown areas. There was a commitment from LRT when it was controlled by the elected GLC. Now we have an acceptance by LRT of the limitations imposed by this private transport Government trying to make sure that the improvements that Londoners have consistently voted for will not be carried out.

Mr. Cohen: It looks as though my hon. Friend will leave the point of the refurbishment of stations, with which he has dealt excellently. Before he does so, I have one more point to draw to his attention. At this time of extreme cold, many people are homeless. They should be found homes, but, in the meantime, many of them die from hypothermia because they are outside——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I must remind the House that we are on Second Reading, not in Committee. On Second Reading, hon. Members are allowed to speak only once and should not make further speeches under the guise of interventions. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be brief.

Mr. Cohen: I shall be brief. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who is in his place, and the GLC have urged LRT to use stations to accommodate homeless people. Therefore, those stations——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) should allow the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to reply to him on the points that he has made so far.

Mr. Dobson: I accept my hon. Friend's point. Parts of the underground system are warmer than places where people doss down on the Embankment, in a park or on a street corner. I have never seen the primary function of our transport system as being a place for the homeless. If there is to be a commitment to a transport system about which we are not ashamed, there should also be a housing system of which we are not ashamed so that we do not feel embarrassed when we see people who are reduced to going down to underground stations because it is the only shelter that they can get and the only place where they can get warm in the capital city of what is still one of the most prosperous nations in the world.

Many aspects of our great city are a source of profound grief and shame to many of us, and something should be done about them. The trouble with this squalid little Bill and this squalid little Government is that we are not getting even a proposal to do something about transport. We need a much greater commitment to ensure that the services that Londoners have made clear at the ballot box they want will be provided, particularly when they have also made it clear at the ballot box that they are prepared to fund the improvements and the standards that they desire.

The trouble with this Government is that they are not prepared to accept any decision. Today we are expected to set aside a decision of the High Court. Yesterday, with a rigged jury of 400 Tories, the Secretary of State for Defence decided that he could set aside the judgment of 12 good men and true at the Old Bailey. It will not wash. The British people, including the people of London, will not tolerate this attitude towards what the courts have decided. They will measure and judge those who wish to set aside, in a cavalier fashion, the decisions of the courts. I am confident that it will not be long before a vast majority of Labour Members of Parliament in London will be battling away to ensure that Londoners have not just the transport but every service that they want and deserve and that their children deserve. That is what we are here for. We know that the Government do not subscribe to any of those views—but then they are a Tory Government.

7.58 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I shall not go down the many avenues traced by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I frequently use the bus, underground and rail services. However, whenever possible, I use my bicycle — a bicycle presented to me by the pupils of the school that I left to come to the House. When I am on that bicycle, I notice that the GLC, of which the hon. Member has spoken with such tenderness, has seriously failed to maintain the roads of London, because I get many ghastly jolts caused by potholes every few yards. The hon. Member talked of going to the funeral of somebody who was injured on the public transport, and that was a sad story. However, not long ago, I had to go to the funeral of a constituent who had had a fatal accident on an unmaintained road.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: That road was totally unmaintained by the Greater London council. It led to a fatality—a very serious matter.

When the hon. Gentleman referred to Bethnal Green and to east London underground stations and said that they were bad, I wondered whether he had ever been there. I lived in east London for a few years and I taught there, too. Bethnal Green station is a very fine station and the people of Bethnal Green are very fine people. They would not be very pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman speak in the way that he did about them. He spoke disparagingly. That was both unacceptable and unfair to the people and underground stations in east London.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No, not when the hon. Gentleman asks me in those arrogant terms.

Mr. Dobson: Will the distinguished Member for Ealing, North give way to the humble Member for Holborn and St. Pancras?

Mr. Greenway: I cannot accept the obsequious attitude of the hon. Gentleman. There is no place in this House for obsequiousness of that nature.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras also spoke of Ministers travelling in chauffeur-driven cars and castigated the Prime Minister for doing so. The hon. Member ought to go to Ealing and see the Leader of the Opposition regularly whisked away in his chauffeur-driven car—and he is not the only one. So what is the hon. Member talking about? He is talking a lot of nonsense and he knows it.

For the LRT board to be running London's transport is a breath of fresh air for Londoners, after the GLC's abortive attempts of the past four years in particular. We must remember exactly what happened and look at the facts. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, who tried to intervene twice in such contrasting ways, spoke of Mornington Crescent station. I am able to speak from personal experience, having worked very near to Mornington Crescent station for a period of 12 years and used that station every day. The hon. Member said that people were afraid to use the station at night because no staff were on duty there. There never were any staff at Mornington Crescent station, and for a very long time no trains stopped there. The hon. Member needs to learn a little more about his constitutency and also about a number of other aspects of transport in London.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: It is only right to answer some of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman, especially since I have such personal knowledge of and acquaintance with the area and of the people the hon. Gentleman mentioned. The group that ran the Greater London council since 1982 —the group that is particularly near to the heart of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and to the hearts of so many of his hon. Friends—was responsible for doubling the fares of my constituents and of other Londoners in 1982 and 1983. At the same time it doubled rates for Londoners. One had a hell of a time under that beloved GLC.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: Either one paid double rates and double fares, or, if one did not use public transport, one paid double rates anyway. That is what we have had to endure from this particular GLC.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: I cannot see the hon. Member. He might just as well sit down.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: To have had the London Regional Transport board take over—*[Interruption.]* I am just looking to see which hon. Member is chiacking from a sedentary position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are getting a bit too much of this chiacking from both sides of the House and too much hand waving, too. I hope that the hon. Member will be allowed to continue his speech.

Mr. Greenway: I am very grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of what you have just said, I think that I should continue.

Mr. Corbyn: You are talking nonsense.

Mr. Greenway: I hear it said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you are talking nonsense. I think that you are entitled to rebut the hon. Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have a hearing difficulty in my left ear.

Mr. Greenway: I can inform you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of what I heard. I have very acute hearing in both my right and left ears, whether the hon. Member speaks in a low voice or in his usual mellifluous tones.

According to my experience, during the short hime of its existence London Regional Transport has produced a quite new attitude towards London's transport. I shall give instances. In my constituency the busy A40, which many people use regularly, has five bus stops. Large numbers of my constituents have to stand at those bus stops in draughts, rain and great discomfort. When the GLC ran London Transport, I tried for many years to get bus shelters for my constituents at those five bus stops. Did I have any success? I am afraid not. However, as a result of my right hon. Friend's Act, London Regional Transport was created and within six months I was able to persuade that body to provide bus shelters for my constituents. There is a whole new atmosphere of reasonableness and helpfulness in LRT. It has been caused by the removal of the heavy hand of the GLC, with all its political pressure, on the body running London's transport.

There are other examples of ways in which the LRT is being helpful. A bridge close to the Hoover factory is used by some of my constituents when they alight from buses on the eastern side of Western avenue in order to reach the other side of the road. There is no other way to cross the road. I have persuaded LRT to create an extra bus stop by the bridge. That request was refused by London Transport under the GLC. Why, I do not know. Elderly and disabled people had to walk or be pushed long distances from another bus stop to the bridge in order to cross the road. Now, because of the new bus stop provided by LRT, buses stop at the bridge. That is very helpful.

In Mandeville road a new bus stop is needed for the No. 187 at the point where a number of disabled people live. I was unable for many years to obtain approval for a bus stop. However, I have succeeded in persuading the LRT to establish a request stop for a trial period of three months. It was established two days ago, and the trial period is to begin soon. Helpfulness of this kind is such a new phenomenon of transport in London, in particular for buses, that it is worth mentioning. I welcome it warmly. These are solid, true examples. I am not mucking about, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras did.

Mr. Corbyn: That is a shocking allegation.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member mucked about at times during his speech. For most of the time it was a serious and important speech.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I have not given way so far, and I do not intend to do so on this occasion. I may give way in a moment.

There is another important aspect of London's transport to which I should like to draw the attention of my right hon. Friend—the point at which children are charged adult fares. Last week I spoke at a brains trust for young people. They asked the important question, whether full fares should be paid at the age of 14, as now, or at the age of 18 when young people become adults. I believe they made a reasonable point when they asked whether the full fare could be deferred until the age of 18, when they pass into adulthood in legal terms, although I appreciate that they may take up a full fare seat.

There have been leaflet deliveries from the GLC—as usual, at the expense of the ratepayer and taxpayer—trying to frighten people into believing that fares have gone up by more than is the case. It is clear from inquiries that those leaflets have been totally inaccurate. The GLC must answer for that sort of inaccurate political advertising on the rates, because it is absolutely deplorable.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to level charges of serious inaccuracy against a public body such as the GLC, and then pass on to another subject without stating where such inaccuracy occurred and what it was based upon?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Allegations of inaccuracies in relation to all kinds of organisations are regularly made in this place. I have heard nothing out of order so far, tedious though it may be.

Mr. Greenway: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Having slept through previous speeches, I take your point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I may have found the speeches very tedious and may have been inclined to drop off, but I assure the House that I did not.

Mr. Greenway: I was referring not to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but to other hon. Members. I am reminded of Lord Harcourt—thought to be a very good speaker—of whom it was said that he got so bored during his own speeches that he yawned. I fancy that there have been one or two yawns this evening.

Mr. Jessel: Has my hon. Friend heard tell of the noble Member in the other place who dreamt he was making a speech, woke up, and found that he was?

Mr. Greenway: Yes, I have heard of that noble Lord, but I do not know who he was. He has never been identified.

LRT's current ban on smoking ought to be considered carefully. I am a non-smoker, and have been for many years. However, there has been a substantial number of protests from smokers and non-smokers alike, who feel that there should be some provision for people to smoke if they wish to do so, even though they should realise that they are injuring themselves. People should have the right to choose whether or not to smoke. The fact that LRT has adopted the GLC's autocratic attitude over this matter has, I know, caused considerable irritation to many travellers.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure it was not the hon. Gentleman's intention, but he has misled the House. It was the new LRT authority, not the GLC, which banned smoking on London Transport trains.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The House is regularly misled about all kinds of things.

Mr. Greenway: I understand that the GLC introduced a partial ban, which is what I said, and that LRT has introduced a 100 per cent. ban, which is also what I said. I do not think I was inaccurate, and in no way did I intend to mislead the House.

Many things in relation to London Transport ought to be looked at, and I hope that they will be. The bus service continues to be irregular. Fleets of buses come at once, and as a result people face long waits. That problem ought to be tackled. It has occurred for many years, although it has improved slightly recently. I hope that yet more work will be done to solve that problem.

The irresponsible and disgraceful GLC campaign on pensioners' passes is now behind us. However, I remind the House that the GLC spent £5 million of ratepayers' and taxpayers' money——

Mr. Corbyn: It was successful, though.

Mr. Greenway: —alleging that pensioners and the disabled would lose their passes when the GLC was abolished. It was never intended that those passes would be lost. I remind the House that, for the first time ever, pensioners' passes and passes for the disabled and blind have been guaranteed in law by this Government. No Labour Government ever did that, and neither did any Lib-Lab pact.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: Socialist Members should remember that this Conservative Government have guaranteed pensioners' passes. The Labour Government did nothing like that, and Labour Members are now jealous.

Fraud on London Transport is now being tackled, and it needs to be tackled. I welcome that.

Mr. Bidwell: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that under the new LRT body we shall see more buses in our area? Has he been acquainted with the proposal to close the Southall bus garage, which serves his area, and the fact that many workers fear that they face the sack? Are any of the hon. Gentleman's constituents involved? I imagine they are.

Mr. Greenway: In fact, under LRT there have been more buses in my constituency. There is a problem in that the No. 187, which will be known to the hon. Gentleman, has been re-routed—unhelpfully, from a constituency point of view. Some of that unhelpfulness has been overcome by the LRT board, but given its current helpful attitude, I hope that we shall get things completely right in the end. I believe that we shall.

There is also a need to look at ticketing. LRT should look at the possibility of introducing the French carnet, so that tickets are interchangeable between bus and underground transport. That is enormously helpful in France. Perhaps the possibility of flat-rate fares could be looked at again. Much progress has been made in that direction. I hope that even more can be made, because it will be helpful to the people of London.

8.17 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I hope that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) will forgive me if I do not immediately take up his remarks, but in a moment I shall comment on what he said about pensioners' bus passes. I apologise to the Secretary of State for the fact that I was not in my place during his opening speech. I spent two hours this afternoon with a constituent and was unable to be in the Chamber.

I thank the right hon. Gentleman for the fact that I have already heard from the chairman of LRT in response to two issues that I raised in our recent debate on the Ways and Means resolution. I said that a bus service in my constituency, which connected with a large mental hospital in the neighbouring area of Redbridge, was to stop running on Sundays. That is still happening, but I have been assured by the chairman of LRT, Dr. Bright, that the position could be reviewed in due course. He said that he would keep an eye on it. That will be of some comfort —although not as much as would be the case if the bus service were restored—and I am delighted to have heard from Dr. Bright in those terms.

I also spoke of the use of one-man buses in London. Again I have received a reply from Dr. Bright, and it is praiseworthy that it should have come so quickly. I do not altogether agree with the direction that LRT is taking, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) pointed out, one-man operation carries dangers for people using such buses, given that only one LRT employee rather than two will be on duty. We shall have to watch this carefully.

The Secretary of State, and indeed the Leader of the House, should note that we ought to have an annual debate on LRT. Had the GLC continued to control London Transport, there were ways and means whereby the democratically elected GLC councillors could discuss the problems and raise issues in a public forum at least once a year, if not more frequently, when they debated the reports of the transport committee. That will not be possible now that the Secretary of State is in control of London Regional Transport unless the Government are willing to allow an annual debate which will at least give London Members—some of whom have taken part in the debate, but by no means all; they number 83—a chance to air the views of their constituents about the services provided by London Regional Transport, about fares and so on. That would be only one day in the parliamentary year which would be far less time than was devoted by GLC councillors to the control and discussion of the affairs of London Regional Transport, but it would be something. At the moment we have no guarantee, as I understand it, of having a regular debate on London Regional Transport.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North gave a distorted view of what happened about pensioners' bus passes. I remind him and the House that the pledge to abolish the GLC was inserted in the Conservative party election manifesto in 1983 not long before the campaign started. We know that from a speech made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in a debate before Christmas. That pledge had not been thought out and had not been through the proper policy committees.

The pledge said nothing about the future of pensioners' bus passes. Indeed, I was tackled by a pensioner couple in my constituency in the first week of the campaign who said that the Conservatives intended, if re-elected, to abolish the GLC and they wanted to know what would happen to their bus and tube passes. I did not know. I read the Conservative manifesto, but there was nothing in it about that. Pensioners were entitled to be alarmed about the future if and when the GLC was abolished.

No statements were made by Government representatives on that issue during the 1983 general election campaign. In the following six to nine months, pensioners, aided by the GLC, organised protest meetings, deputations and petitions. This may not have happened in Ealing, North, but it happened in most other parts of London. Pensioners were worried stiff that they were likely to lose their bus and tube passes, that they might have to pay a lot of money for them or that they might be made more restrictive and would not be of as much use. As a result of all that pressure, the Secretary of State was forced to concede. It is nice for the hon. Member for Ealing, North to make a virtue of necessity, but the statutory provision was forced on the Government by pensioner power from outside. It was not given gratuitiously.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): The hon. Gentleman has got his facts wrong. The facts are clear. Three or four of my hon. Friends brought pressure on my right hon. Friend during the Committee stage of the London Regional Transport Bill in 1984 to make this concession. It was not made as a result of pressure, although most right hon. and hon. Members received petitions and letters from pensioners. I assure the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) that the concession was made not because of that but after careful consideration by my right hon. Friend who, after

consultation with his civil servants, decided to bring in the scheme. With great respect, the hon. Gentleman has his facts wrong.

Mr. Deakins: The hon. Gentleman has made an important political point. He has said that the Government ignored pressure from pensioners in London——

Mr. Dicks *rose*——

Mr. Deakins: Other hon. Members on both sides wish to speak. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman and I may give way to other hon. Members in due course, but I wish to make some other remarks.

I was just taking up the remarks of the hon. Member for Ealing, North and putting the record straight. Without the pensioner pressure, in my view and in the opinion of most people of London, the concession would not have been made to put the scheme on a statutory basis.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has described this as a squalid Bill. The deteriorating economic position is affecting the background against which we must consider the £250 million which is being transferred compulsorily from the GLC to London Regional Transport. The country is in a devastated economic state. In spite of all the Government's promises and optimism, the economic position is deteriorating greatly, as evinced by the exchange rate not merely against the dollar but against other currencies. The fall in the exchange rate has led the Government to push up interest rates drastically. They have admitted that, so I am not making a point that people could disagree with. Interest rates have gone up substantially in the past few months because the exchange rate has deteriorated as a result of the country's general economic performance under this Government.

High interest rates are likely to be around for some time. They affect the GLC and LRT because both are public bodies and they have to borrow money. In both cases it is the ratepayers of London who will have to pay the economic consequences of the foolish monetarist policies of the Government. Interest rates are higher in real terms than they have ever been. That will affect the ability of LRT and the GLC, certainly until 1 April 1986, to conduct their business efficiently and effectively. No public body could operate effectively in the economic climate that has been created by the Government.

In passing, I mention that the cost of the miners' strike is likely to be £4 billion to £5 billion. That is the background to this squalid little Bill. The economy is getting out of control. There are a number of examples. The Government are rapidly losing grip. They are grubbing around in this silly little Bill to find an extra £50 million from the GLC to fund not merely this year's operations of LRT but other parts of its activities in future. Against the cost of the miners' strike and the high interest rates that are a burden on the economy it is almost footling to be talking about all stages of the Bill, Second Reading, Committee stage, and Third Reading—I am not sure whether it will have to go to the House of Lords; I assume that it may not because it is a money Bill—having to go through urgently because the Government got their sums wrong last year.

This squalid little Bill is part of the Government attack on the GLC. The Government are planning to get rid of the GLC, as we all know. They are also robbing the citizens of London of the chance, through the GLC, of controlling the operations of London Regional Transport. I have already said that we need an annual debate. This has been an unexpected debate because the Bill was not foreshadowed in the Queen's Speech, even under the heading of other legislation, because the issue had not arisen. Once this Bill has gone through, there will be no future occasion, unless the Government or the Opposition give up a half day, to debate the affairs of LRT, one of the world's greatest passenger transport authorities which is of great interest to the 7 million people in London.

Not content with attacking the GLC by removing control of London transport, the Government are planning to abolish that very popular democratic body. The Government have done themselves a disservice because they have made the GLC the popular democratic body that it is. Indeed, I think they will see an adverse reaction from the people of London—obviously I cannot speak for the rest of the country, because people there may not be interested in the affairs of London—in the local council elections in London boroughs next year and in the general election, when it comes.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): How can the hon. Gentleman equate what he has just said with two substantial swings to the Conservative party in by-elections to Lewisham council in recent months, including a major swing to the Conservatives in a strongly held Labour ward in December of last year?

Mr. Deakins: I know nothing about the internal politics of that council. I assume that it is a Conservative council.

Mr. Moynihan: It is Labour.

Mr. Deakins: I am afraid I cannot answer that, because I know only north London. Although I once lived at the Elephant and Castle, affairs south of the river are much stranger to me than those north of the Thames.

In spite of the hon. Gentleman's optimism about Lewisham, there can be significant local factors in wards in by-elections, as we all know. When the elections take place in London next year issues such as the abolition of the GLC and the removal of democratic control of London Regional Transport from the people of London through their elected representatives will figure largely in the way people vote.

The Bill is only one part of the Conservative attack on local government. Rate capping will be debated again tomorrow. We have seen rate support grant cuts which will once more raise rates in London in particular, but also in the Tory shire counties. It will be interesting to see how people vote in the shire county elections this year. It would also have been interesting to see the way in which the people of London would have voted in GLC elections this year had not the Government abolished those elections because they feared the results, whatever they may say to the contrary.

There is more to come in this attack on local government. Indeed, if they are not careful the Government will soon be running local government. They say that they do not want to do that, but the effect of their actions in strangling local government and imposing an ideological and bureaucratic stranglehold on it will be to ensure that local government is run not by elected councillors with officials responsible to them but by

[Mr. Ridley]

I think that my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), and for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) had the best of the debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North for the way in which he answered the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras at less length but with concrete examples of the way in which the service has improved since LRT was set up. That is what matters, not some vague concept about whether the GLC is co-ordinating or is being democratic. What matters is whether the bus stops are built, or whether the P4 bus, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich referred, is fulfilling the function that it should fulfill.

I should tell my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North that LRT carries school children free until they are 16, after which they become adults, as 16 is the age at which compulsory education ceases. He might like to take that point up with the chairman.

For the record, I must recall that underground mileage has not been cut. However, bus mileage will be cut slightly —by 2 per cent. The LRT board has put up fares by 9 per cent. They were last put up in May 1983, and during that interval the increase in prices has been 7·75 per cent. Therefore, this increase is just a tiny bit above inflation.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) alleged that prices had been put up twice. He is wrong. London Transport fares are 10 per cent. lower in real terms than they were when the present Labour GLC came to power in 1981. So much for all the rubbish from Labour Members about high fares. I do not accept what has been said and I never will. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West must get his facts right and become more accurate. The hon. Gentleman said that London rates had gone up by 35 per cent. for London Regional Transport. That is not the case. The rate for LRT is lower than it was under the GLC. It will be £50 million less next year than was taken from London ratepayers in the last year of responsibility of the GLC. How the hon. Gentleman could make that argument, I do not know. He was trying to conceal the GLC's excessive spending on matters other than transport.

To show how enormous an improvement the present board is making, I should point out that the revenue subsidy this year to London transport is £190 million. In two years' time the board hopes to get it down by half, to £95 million. That is against the figure of £245 million which the GLC was planning to pull out of the pockets of London ratepayers and give to LRT. There are crocodile tears about looking after the interests of London ratepayers. Who is looking after their interests? Is it the Government, who will take £95 million in revenue subsidy in two years' time, or is it the GLC, who wanted to take £245 million? Let us have no more nonsense of that sort.

Some points have been made in a desultory fashion about the Bill. It has hardly been argued at all. The ritual points of criticism which we have heard this afternoon and which we will no doubt hear again at a later stage are that the legislation is overturning a decision of the court and that it is retrospective. Those two points have been made over and over again, but, interestingly, without being developed by any Opposition Member.

The Bill is not overturning a decision of the court. We accepted the decision and have not appealed against it. We have decided that the original legislation was defective in that I told Parliament what its effect would be but I turned out to be wrong. If the House wants an apology, I apologise for having been wrong. I am sure the House will agree that, since I was wrong, I should give the House an opportunity to put the legislation right. That is what the business is today.

There are plenty of precedents. In the debate on the Ways and Means motion I cited one which hon. Members tried hard to debunk, but without success—the Travel Concessions (London) Act 1982. If hon. Members do not like that one, let me give them another. In 1955 a Birmingham ratepayer successfully challenged a scheme run by Birmingham corporation for travel concessions for elderly people. Following the Appeal Court ruling that Birmingham was in breach of its fiduciary duty, the Travel Concessions Act 1955 was passed to give local authorities which run transport undertakings the power to give travel concessions.

When the Government of the day passed that Act, were they behaving illegally or retrospectively? We have heard many terrible adjectives. The adjectives used by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) are not nearly as good as those used by her hon. Friend. She must get better adjectives. She is short on argument and long on adjectives.

There are good precedents for giving the House an opportunity to change the law where it has been found to be different from what the House thought it was. Often the House has decided to put right earlier legislation.

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: No; I have a lot to say and there is not much time.

Retrospection was mentioned by the hon. Members for Crewe and Nantwich, for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and by many others. They used various adjectives in passing and then moved to the next point. On the Ways and Means motion the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich said:

"The GLC will be charged for services provided by another authority in a period of time pre-dating the enactment of the Bill, and it was never warned at any point that this might happen."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1204-5.]

It was strange for the hon. Lady to say that the GLC was not warned at any point. It was warned in December 1983, when the London Regional Transport Bill was published, that the figure could be £360 million. It was warned again by what I said in Committee. It was warned again when the direction was made. And when it won the High Court case, it was warned again that I had the intention of appealing. Thus, at no point throughout that saga did it have the slightest reason for believing that it might not need to find the full amount. In fact, the GLC's liability under this measure is £23 million less than it was under the original section 49 direction, so in no way can it claim that it was never warned or that it was not fully under notice that that was the amount of money that it might have to provide and for which it should make provision.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich said that I never intended to appeal against the decision. I must put her right. I did intend to appeal, and if I temporarily made a slip at Question Time—*[Interruption.]*—and said that the matter was sub judice, it was sub judice to me—*[Interruption.]*—and that is what I said.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Really!

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady knows that I said that. If I am considering an appeal, there is no way whatever that I shall answer questions on the substance of the matter. I made that absolutely clear at the time of the point of order being raised——

Mr. Tony Banks: Come off it.

Mr. Ridley: —and if the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich had taken the trouble to read the *Official Report*, she would have known what she was talking about. *[Interruption.]* In fact, the Government decided not to appeal—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot quite hear the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ridley: The Government decided not to appeal because it was necessary in this matter to get the right answer.

I return to the parallel that I gave. If it had been decided to appeal against the Birmingham judgment to which I referred, and if the appeal had given the answer that Birmingham corporation was not allowed to grant travel concessions to elderly people, would Labour Members have suggested that that should simply be accepted? Surely it is not a matter ultimately of leaving it to the law. It is a matter of this House being able to decide what is essentially a political issue and to prevail in achieving that political end.

I come to an issue that was dealt with by the hon. Members for Woolwich and for Wigan (Mr. Stott), and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West might benefit, for the first time, from hearing the fourth speech that I have made on this subject. I refer to the question of what LRT needs for this year, and let us first get the facts right, which the hon. Member for Wigan did not do.

The expected current cash surplus at the end of this financial year is not £50 million, as he said, but £30 million. As I said, it is necessary to provide for the needs of LRT, and they are, including the accrued unfunded liabilities, the following sums: £21 million for voluntary severance payments already agreed and accepted; £6 million for insurance claims against LRT, which it will in due course have to pay; £4 million for claims outstanding on the Jubilee line; £5 million in relation to development land tax which it owes and will have to pay; and £1 million for land compensation claims. That makes a total of £37 million which its auditors will certify as being due and having to be covered in this year's accounts. Thus, far from there being a surplus, there is a small deficit of £7 million—£37 million less £30 million—which is the cash that it has available.

The hon. Member for Wigan said that nothing had gone to the GLC and that everything that the Government are claiming should go to it. I repeat that £23 million less is being taken from the GLC than under the original direction. That is something which the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, because I have little time remaining and the hon. Gentleman has had his say.

The judgment on the question of consultation, a matter that was raised by many hon. Gentlemen, stating that although there was no statutory right to consultation, the GLC had a legitimate expectation that that would take place. I am not sure what "a legitimate expectation" means in a judgment, but it is odd that during the passage of the Bill the Opposition did not seek to insert a statutory right to consultation. If they feel so strongly about it now, they would surely have done so. We carefully did not include such a right in the original section 49 because I do not believe that it is necessary to consult on this matter.

Opposition Members have made a complete mess of this part of the argument. As my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North and for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) have pointed out, it seems to be the policy of the Labour party that one forces people to consult on matters when it is to one's advantage, but when it is not to one's advantage, one does not consult, one will not consult and one will not discuss it. It is this partiality that I find so unpleasant.

The consultation is irrelevant. It is Parliament, not the court, that should decide how much money should be paid by the GLC to LRT for 1984-85. The court did not set out to decide that; the court did not decide on any sum of money. It is our job to make that decision. I thought that section 49 gave us the power to do that, but it turns out that it does not. Therefore, LRT will be some £50 million short if the Bill is not enacted and the GLC will have £50 million surplus which it did not expect to have.

The hon. Members for Wigan, for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) and for Newham, North-West used the ingenious argument that it is not necessary to have the Bill and that I could have made a new direction. Indeed I could have made a new direction, but it would have been £50 million short of what is needed.

Let us consider what that £50 million is. It is £50 million of ratepayers' money. The hon. Member for Wigan let the cat out of the bag. He said that I could have made a bigger levy on the ratepayers next year and that I could have got the money back by increasing the levy. What the hon. Gentleman is saying is that not only should £50 million have been taken from London ratepayers last year, but that he would like the Government to take another £50 million from them this year—to pay twice for one lot of subsidy to LRT. The ratepayers will know on whose side the Government are. The Opposition are not on the side of the ratepayers. Through sleight of hand and deceit they seek to cheat London ratepayers if they oppose the Bill.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 266, Noes 197.

Division No. 113] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Bevan, David Gilroy
Alexander, Richard	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Amess, David	Blackburn, John
Ancram, Michael	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Arnold, Tom	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Bottomley, Peter
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Baldry, Tony	Bright, Graham
Batiste, Spencer	Brooke, Hon Peter
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bellingham, Henry	Browne, John
Bendall, Vivian	Bryan, Sir Paul
Best, Keith	Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.

Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshi/e)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.

Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Committee tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Water (Fluoridation) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Business of the House

10.13 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement. Following the point of order raised by the Opposition today, and after discussions through the usual channels, the business for Wednesday 20 February will now be:

Remaining stages of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, and of the Trustee Savings Banks Bill.

Motion on the European Community document No. 4421/85 on the milk supplementary levy scheme.

The business on Thursday 21 February will be:

Debate on the Royal Air Force, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Motion on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order.

The debate on the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order has been postponed until Monday 25 February.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House will know that this late night business statement arises out of the incompetence and muddle of the Secretary of State for the Environment, who once again has managed to confuse not only himself but the whole of the House of Commons by the sheer incompetence and maladroitness with which he handles the business affairs of his Department.

Will the Leader of the House convey to his colleague how dissatisfied we are with these constant difficulties that face the House through the sheer continuous incompetence of what was once a great Department of State? I wish also to convey the great dissatisfaction of the Opposition at being forced to make yet again sudden changes in our business and, above all, being forced to have a two-day diet of retrospective legislation put to the House because of the additional incompetence of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Biffen: I note what the right hon. Gentleman has said. He is a touch less than characteristically generous, because aspects of the order which the Opposition thought gave rise to great difficulties were raised earlier today and we have tried to meet them by the arrangements that I have just put to the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that, as it has taken the Government two goes to get a rates order for the House to debate, they will have got it right by Monday, or will it be withdrawn again when yet another error is discovered?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman must learn, like me, to travel hopefully.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Now that the Government's fingers in the till have engineered a bit of flexibilitity in this week's business, instead of the business now set down for Thursday, could we not have a discussion of the Prime Minister's statement in answer to the first question in Prime Minister's questions this afternoon when she said that nearly three quarters of youngsters leaving youth training schemes are getting work, since the Department of Employment estimates, on the basis of a survey that covers a few hundred people, that

[Mr. Dubs]

had, without doubt, the best public transport system in the world. People from other countries came to London and said how good, efficient and inexpensive our system was. We have come a long way since then towards having a system that does not match up to the earlier standards. We had a brave effort to improve things in the brief period when the present GLC was in charge of London Transport. Alas, the clock has now been turned back and Londoners will be increasingly sorry and dismayed at what has happened.

I hope that before too long we shall have a different Government in charge of transport arrangement in London and in the country as a whole so that we may have a type of transport in our capital city of which Londoners can again be proud — a modern, fast system, frequent services and low fares.

When we have that, we shall begin to solve the problem of too much traffic on London's roads and problems on London's roads which cannot easily be met because of the number of motor cars. If we have the sort of efficient system we want we shall, as in other cities, particularly Paris, get people back on to public transport in increasing numbers, and that will be a system of which the capital can be proud. I hope that that day soon comes.

9.3 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) talked about the clock being turned back on London transport; but my own postbag, which is a large one, from an articulate area in outer London which includes a very high proportion of retirement pensioners, shows a reduction in the number of complaints about London transport since last summer when it ceased to be run by the GLC. Hitherto, I have had something like 10 or 15 complaints a year about bus services, but in the last six months I can remember only two or three. It seems to me that most people either have not noticed any difference in the running of the services of London transport or have noticed an improvement.

Mr. Moynihan: I, too, have seen a decrease in the number of complaints in my postbag on London Regional Transport. Would my hon. Friend agree also that in the past nine months we have seen an improvement in morale, as I have found in the Catford bus garage, which serves my constituency, as well as increased efficiency, greater sensitivity on routeing and, above all, an improvement in the level of service provided for the local residents?

Mr. Jessel: I believe that that is right. London Regional Transport, in seeking to serve the public in Greater London and to provide a better service, is now less inhibited by the constraints that applied before.

I regret that no hon. Member of either the Social Democratic or Liberal parties has been in the Chamber for several hours. For two parties that claim to care about transport and the environment not to put in a show for several hours — although they have 25 members — is disgraceful. I hope that the House will take note of that.

The Bill provides for £258,179,588 subsidy to LRT. Evidently someone has worked that out with great precision. I understand that that is the amount for the year, and it is a very large sum. With a population of 6·5 million in Greater London, that figure averages some £40 for every man, woman and child, and well over £100 per average household. Yet some hon. Members want that subsidy to be higher still.

We must strike a balance; we must try to be fair. One quarter of all the users of London transport do not live or pay rates within Greater London — either they are commuters coming from outside the boundaries of Greater London and the provinces, or they are foreigners. The greater the subsidy by Greater London ratepayers, the more unfair it is on them — and they include the business ratepayers, whose rates are a tax on jobs. As we all know, too heavy a rate demand upon businesses threatens their survival and threatens jobs.

The House should note another unfairness, which derives from a geographical imbalance. Although half of the subsidy goes to buses, which are evenly distributed geographically, the other half goes to the underground, which is far from evenly distributed. A map of the London underground shows clearly that well over 80 per cent.— perhaps 85 per cent. — of all London underground stations are north of the River Thames, with only a tiny minority to the south. For historic reasons, there is a network of non-underground railways in the south, the south-east and the south-west — mainly the southern region of British Rail. Therefore, far fewer residents from the south, south-east or south-west use the underground. If the burden is evenly distributed through all quarters of both outer and inner London, that means a subsidy from householders south of London for those to the north of London.

There is no underground station in Twickenham, but there are seven British Rail southern region stations. They all go to Waterloo. A minority of my constituents change at Richmond or Wimbledon to the underground service, but the majority who commute to central London — whether to the City or the west end—do not change to the underground until they are in central London, either at Vauxhall, or mainly at Waterloo. Most commuters make the bulk of their journey on southern region trains. The same is true for commuters from the rest of the south, south-east and south-west of London. That is what lay behind Bromley council's case against the GLC. The greater the subsidy to London's transport, the greater the injustice. It is entirely wrong that a subsidy which is drawn evenly from ratepayers on all sides of London should be any larger. The Opposition have not taken sufficient account of that argument, although they have historically sought to be concerned with fairness.

Bus passes for old-age pensioners are quite a different matter, as each borough will impose a rate evenly throughout its area to finance such a pass. I am aware of the argument that old-age pensioners would be treated more fairly if their pensions were higher and if there were not subsidies for certain areas of expenditure, such as transport or heating; or in the old days, for tobacco. I recognise the strength of that argument, but the fact remains that pensioners in London are used to having a free Travelcard and there would be widespread disappointment if it were no longer available. I hope that my right hon. Friend will enable the scheme to continue.

I am glad to support the Bill.

9.12 pm

Mr Roger Stott (Wigan): I have served on the Committee of every major Transport Bill since 1980 and, having listened to the turgid remarks of the few

Conservative Members who have turned up today, I am glad that I was not on this one. For my sins, I have had to read most of the relevant copies of *Hansard* to familiarise myself with the discussions between my right hon. and hon. Friends and the Secretary of State.

We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate. As the Member of Parliament for Wigan, I have found it interesting just to sit and listen. I should like to re-emphasise what many of my hon. Friends have said—that the Secretary of State's actions, judgment and activities in the past few weeks have brought us to this sorry state of affairs. The Secretary of State is in the dock in the high court of Parliament.

My hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) mounted an assault on the London Regional Transport Bill in Committee. They made it clear that we opposed, root and branch, the transfer of powers from the GLC transport committee to some Government-controlled quango, especially as it would be controlled by the Secretary of State, at least temporarily. In Committee, my hon. Friends continually warned the Secretary of State of the folly of pursuing such a course, but the Secretary of State knew best. With characteristic intuitive judgment, he plotted his course and ran straight on to the rocks. He is making a habit of doing that, and has of late made several excursions in that direction. To extricate himself from the product of his own incompetence he has had to resort to the shameful practice of introducing what can only be described as retrospective legislation. My hon. Friends have concentrated their remarks specifically on what is contained in the Bill. I shall reinforce at length what they said because this is our last chance to try and get through to the right hon. Gentleman.

The Bill requires the GLC to pay LRT £258 million in the remaining part of 1984-85—that is the initial year after the transfer of control of LT to the Secretary of State for Transport. Since the GLC has already paid £177 million, the Bill requires it to pay £81·1 million, either in two instalments, if the Bill is passed on or before 25 June, or in a single instalment, if the Bill is passed thereafter. The transfer of control of LT took place during the financial year 1984-85, and after the GLC had approved grants to LT and set its precept in March last year.

Section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 gives the Secretary of State powers to direct the GLC to pay grants to LRT in the remaining part of the year, after transfer of control on the appointed day under the Act has taken place. The Secretary of State rushed the transfer of control to LRT and, therefore ostensibly to himself, on 29 June, which was only three days after Royal Assent was given to the Bill. On the same day he directed the GLC to pay LRT £281·3 million under section 49 of the Act. As my right hon. and hon. Friends have continually said, he did so without consulting the GLC. He also exceeded the maximum sums permissible under the Act by £10·2 million, and I am informed that he has conceded that error.

In July the GLC informed the Secretary of State that it thought the direction was unlawful, but it continued to make payments to LRT without prejudice so that LRT could maintain its operations. However, on 11 January 1985 when the GLC challenged the Secretary of State in the court, Mr. Justice McNeill held that the Secretary of State had acted

"unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly in giving a direction which exceeded his statutory powers."

All hon. Members know that, but it is worth repeating. If that is not a damning indictment of the Secretary of State, I do not know what is. Those are not my words, nor those of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but those of Mr. Justice McNeill.

Initially, on 14 January, the Secretary of State told the House that he intended to appeal, but on 29 January he announced his intention to introduce new legislation, and the Ways and Means resolution that paved the way for this amending Bill was approved by the House on Thursday night. The Bill is undoubtedly unnecessary.

The Secretary of State could quickly and easily have issued a new and, as has been pointed out by my hon. Friends, this time a legal direction under section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 after consultation with the GLC. Had he done so, the judgment and the matters surrounding it would have been fully resolved. The terms of the judgment are clear. They allow the Secretary of State to require the GLC to pay sufficient grant to LRT to meet its operating needs for 1984-85 with the possible exception of the leasing reserve. The Secretary of State told Parliament about section 49. He said:

"It is not my intention to take more through the clause than is strictly necessary for running LRT for the year in question, so that it shall not end up with a surplus."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 15 March 1984; c. 1114.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West gave that quotation.

The Bill will require the GLC to pay LRT some £50 million in grants that are surplus to LRT's operating needs this year and next year. Only about half the sum is required for the following year—1985-86. It will not be fully utilised in the case of the leasing reserve, as I am advised, until 1996. If the £50 million were not paid it would be available to offset the 1985-86 GLC precept. London ratepayers would benefit to the full amount. If the surplus is applied by LRT in 1985-86 and beyond, the maximum ratepayer benefit will be limited to the size of its future contributions—two thirds. The other one third will accrue to the benefit of the taxpayer via the Treasury because the Secretary of State is now in charge of London Regional Transport.

The Bill is, as I and my hon. Friends have said, retrospective in effect. It allows the Secretary of State to escape the consequences of his own unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper actions in administering the law. Contrary to the Secretary of State's assertions in Parliament, Mr. Justice McNeill's judgment was not primarily concerned with the interpretation of section 49, but with the Secretary of State's actions in setting a direction under section 49. What the judge had to say about the right hon. Gentleman's attitude is important. The judge found that the Secretary of State had got his facts wrong. He had not taken into account all the relevant factors, and had

"failed to consult the GLC when a promise to do so had been given."

Those are not my words. They are the judge's words. The Bill is not about correcting bad drafting but about the Secretary of State avoiding the consequences of his action in administering the law.

The traveller need not be affected if the Secretary of State takes the necessary action. Although the surplus has been taken into account in the LRT annual business plan for 1985-86, the Secretary of State could compensate it for the loss of grant which would take place if the Bill were

[Mr Roger Stott]

not passed. Had he acted quickly enough he could have recovered two thirds of that from the ratepayers, but the 1985-86 London Regional Transport Rate Levy Order has now been approved so that method is closed. That is in marked contrast to the position that faced the GLC after the Law Lords' judgment in 1981, when the Government refused to act quickly to clarify the law and a doubling of fares and cuts in services followed.

The original direction specified a sum of £281·3 million. The bill specifies a sum of £258·2 million, the difference of £23·1 million being due to the abatement of the £10·2 million error conceded by the Secretary of State and the £12·9 million surplus capital grants. LRT's actual needs in 1984-85 are some £50 million below this—£208 million.

The Secretary of State outlined four separate sums at issue in the debate on the Ways and Means resolution. I apologise to my hon. Friends, but I believe that these points need to be answered and I shall answer them in some detail. I refer first to the error in respect of payments made by the GLC before the appointed day—£10·2 million. The Secretary of State said:

"This was a trick—a piece of creative accounting—to enable the GLC to avoid paying what it owed LT in 1983-84."

Mr. Ridley: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stott: The right hon. Gentleman agrees. The right hon. Gentleman says that he does not intend to take that sum now. During the debate he said:

"The House should be under no doubt that the GLC has robbed LRT and the ratepayers of this £10·2 million".

In the past, the GLC has paid London Transport on the basis of needs, and it does so now. The sum was not required until 1983-84. The Secretary of State made an error in the amount that he assumed the GLC had paid in 1984-85 before the appointed day. That error could have been avoided if the right hon. Gentleman had consulted the GLC before issuing the directive.

Clearly LRT does not need the £10·2 million, and the Secretary of State does not propose to include it in the sum specified in the Bill. It is nonsense to suggest that the ratepayers are being "robbed". It was clearly in the ratepayers' interests that grants surplus to LRT's needs were not paid over.

I shall deal now with the £12·9 million capital grants surplus to LRT's requirements. An amendment to the GLC's money Bill during its passage through Parliament reduced by £12·9 million the provision for prescribed capital expenditure to be funded by grant from the GLC. That was a Conservative Back-Bench amendment, opposed by the GLC but in line with the Government's policy. By not including the sum in the newly specified figure, the Secretary of State conceded that the GLC should not be required to pay over capital grant that LRT is unable to spend in 1984-85. The sum of £23·1 million is deducted from the originally directed figure of £281·3 million to produce the figure which is now contained in the Bill. I apologise to my hon. Friends for going into this detail, but these are extremely complex matters. I wish that some of the London Conservative Members were here to listen to this explanation, because they would then be able to understand the complexity of the issues and the way in which the Secretary of State is trying to dodge the column by introducing this Bill.

The GLC decided to include £27 million in 1984-85 after the Government had determined the GLC's capital allocation for the year. According to the Secretary of State:

"That was another piece of creative accounting deliberately designed to circumvent the controls of the GLC's capital expenditure . . . the GLC hoped to escape the responsibility for funding more than a tiny fraction of those costs, pushing the rest on to LRT and the hapless ratepayer for future years."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1199-201.]

The GLC decided to use leasing following the impossibly restrictive capital allocations in 1984-85. The GLC submitted its money Bill to Parliament but the Government inisted on a 52 per cent. reduction in capital available for new starts in 1984-85.

Mr. Tony Banks: Absolutely right.

Mr. Stott: The GLC has not budgeted for the sum and has no powers to borrow for it. Leasing is a commonly used practice of other local authorities. The Department of Transport has not denied this. It encouraged the GLC to use leasing in 1984-85. The money will no longer be fully utilised until 1986.

There is one other sum of money involved in this matter to which I should like to draw the attention of the House, and that is the revenue grant that is surplus to LRT's requirements. On this, the Secretary of State said that it would be "intolerable" to abate the payments of grant by the GLC because

"It would mean that additional income, which has resulted from improved productivity, better than expected sales of travel cards and from LRT's decision to raise fares earlier this year, would all be handed over to the GLC."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1200.]

That money, he said, would be needed to fund accrued liabilities incurred in the course of turning the business round.

In Committee on the London Regional Transport Bill, the Secretary of State said that he intended to take only what London Transport intended. In the early stages of the debate, he said:

"There is perhaps a slight piece of compensation for the GLC, in that if the Government succeed in getting London Transport to make some economies during the rest of the financial year, it will be possible to pass those economies back to the GLC by requiring a reduced contribution."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B;* 24 January 1984; c. 94.]

The surplus, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West pointed out, has not come about through the efforts of the Secretary of State or of LRT, but through increasing fares when the budget was set on the basis of a fares freeze, meeting the cost of British Rail and LRT fares integration by higher charges to travellers rather than by the subsidy budgeted for by the GLC and the success of the GLC's Travelcard scheme.

It is absurd to say that LRT needs the money in 1984-85 because of accrued liabilities, which is what the Secretary of State has told us. LRT's annual business plan shows a surplus of £8 million, and there are no real liabilities but for the provision of future redundancy costs. The GLC does not accept this principle and, in 1983, refused to fund LRT's provisions for surplus staff and bus work reconstruction until final decisions had been taken and the money was needed.

I maintain that the Secretary of State for Transport has on at least two occasions misled the House. He has constantly maintained that, in setting the direction, it was not his intention to create a surplus and I shall weary him again by reference to the Standing Committee *Hansard*,

col. 1114. However, confidential minutes of a meeting on 6 June between his Department and LRT officials make it clear that they were planning a surplus in 1984-85 by increasing fares in January by 11 per cent., when the GLC had budgeted for a fares freeze and LRT wanted the fare increase to be 6 per cent. In the end, the fare increase was of 9 per cent.

Mr. Justice McNeill said that the Department's officials seemed

"more concerned with creating a surplus in 1984/5 to be carried forward, to enable much smaller revenue to be required in 1985/6"

than with the careful appraisal of all the relevant facts required when setting the correct figures for the direction. The Secretary of State is on record, on more than one occasion, in Standing Committee and in the House as saying that it was not his intention to create surpluses. Despite that, in this confidential minute, it is clear that his departmental officials and LRT were doing precisely that. That is an absolute disgrace.

Secondly, the Secretary of State made it clear to the House that he intended to appeal, following the judgment. Therefore, he would not respond to questions. The implication was that an appeal had been lodged. In fact, the Secretary of State was at best considering an appeal. In reality, he had probably decided not to appeal. Thus, the Secretary of State avoided answering questions immediately after the judgment by misleading the House about his intentions. He dodged behind the sub judice rule. He was pursued on that point by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East.

The Secretary of State made a number of comments during the Ways and Means debate. These should be refuted. During that debate, the Secretary of State made a wide-ranging attack upon the GLC. The GLC precepted for the sum specifically for LRT in order that it should be paid over to LRT. The payment of precepted grant, regardless of performance and need, is absurd and contrary to all past practice between the GLC and London Transport. The budgeted grants in 1983-84 amounted to £235 million. In the event, the GLC paid only £173 million. The balance went towards offsetting the 1984-85 precept, the ratepayers getting the full benefit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) commented in his very long and interesting speech upon the "Fares Fair" argument. The interpretation of "Fares Fair" by Conservative Members is a complete distortion of the facts. The House of Lords ruled that the "Fares Fair" policy of the GLC was unlawful. As a consequence, doubt was raised about the GLC's powers to pay for concessionary travel. The Government introduced new legislation to provide the necessary statutory powers. The Government did the minimum that was necessary to protect themselves from the embarrassment of the collapse of the concessionary fares scheme and specifically refused to legislate in order to deal with the main issue — the requirement upon London Transport to break even, so far as practicable— and a doubling of fares, together with cuts in services.

The judgment which we have been discussing today did not primarily turn upon an interpretation of the law or upon bad drafting but upon the Secretary of State's exercise of the law. A clear course of action is open to the Secretary of State that would avoid any damaging consequences for the traveller and would be in the positive interests of ratepayers. Those alternatives have been enunciated by the Opposition throughout the afternoon, but the Secretary of State, with his characteristic stoicism, has chosen completely to ignore any advice.

If the Secretary of State is not prepared to accept my advice or to listen to comments made by Members of the Opposition, perhaps at this late stage he will listen to what was said by the leader of the Conservative Opposition on the GLC, Mr. Alan Greengross. At a transport committee meeting held on 6 February, he said:

"The way the Government has handled this matter is very wrong—it has been badly handled. It is very embarrassing for the minority party. There are many Tory MPs in the House of Commons who have reservations about Nicholas Ridley's approach, but the tone of Mr. Judge's remarks (comparing Nicholas Ridley to Hermann Goering), will not assist them to tackle the Government. The Council"—

that is the Greater London Council—

"should stick to the very strong professional reasons set out in the report in conducting its case, because the Government has made a complete"—

I had better stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the rest is what would be described as unparliamentary language.

I return, finally, to what I said at the beginning of my speech: that the Secretary of State was warned during the Standing Committee proceedings that in exercising his powers under section 49 of the Bill we were not in any way reassured by his remarks. We were not reassured by them at all. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said:

"I do not think that Secretary of State's assurance is worth a great deal. If I were a London ratepayer — indeed I am a ratepayer in my constituency and in London—I should not put much store by that promise." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 15 March 1984; c. 1117.]

How right my hon. Friend was! The Secretary of State has been caught with his fingers in the till. Instead of accepting the legal judgment which was successfully brought against him, he has now plummeted to depths by introducing this squalid little Bill, this retrospective piece of legislation, to get his hands on the money which the court of law said he had no right to have.

By his disreputable behaviour tonight, the Secretary of State is merely trying to mask the enormity of his own incompetence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said repeatedly, the central and crucial issue surrounding this whole shabby affair is that the Secretary of State wants to force London's ratepayers into paying London Regional Transport vast sums of money which will only go towards creating a surplus which LRT does not need. That is why I invite my hon. Friends to joint me in the Lobby to prevent the Secretary of State from making a mockery of Parliament.

9.41 pm

Mr. Ridley: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I should like to reply. We have had two debates, a short one of not much steam about the Bill, and a long and interesting one about London Regional Transport, punctuated by the marathon speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I was extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because his speech enabled me to get something to eat—more than one usually gets when one is replying to a debate.

The matters which do not strictly fall within the Bill are none the less extremely important, and I am sure that the House was grateful for the opportunity to debate LRT's past and future.

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

only about 56 per cent. get work? If the youth training scheme is so good, why is the Prime Minister trying to remove from supplementary benefit all 16 and 17-year-olds who refuse to go on training schemes?

Mr. Biffen: I have repeatedly been asked by hon. Members that the debate on the RAF should be held as soon as possible. That is why I am pleased to announce it as Thursday's business.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware that it is uncommonly awkward to take the Committee stage of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill tomorrow? [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Why? Because I do not think that the Secretary of State can take the excitement. What are the precedents for taking the Committee stage so soon after Second Reading?

Mr. Biffen: I am touched by the solicitude shown by the hon. Member for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I assure him that what is proposed is with precedent and has inconvenience.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Why are we not taking the opportunity on Thursday to debate the disgrace to our prosperous country of so many old and poor people suffering from hypothermia? Is it not a damned disgrace that we have not had a full debate in Government time on the danger posed to many people as a result of the dreadful policies of this disgraceful Prime Minister?

Mr. Biffen: We are having the business that is set down for Thursday because there is an obligation to have a debate on the RAF, and I have been requested to arrange for that debate to be as soon as possible.

Mr. Wareing: What about heating for the old?

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): I understand that the order which was to have been debated tomorrow has been delayed because the figures in respect of one of the local authorities involved have been got wrong. It is not unlikely that the figures in respect of several other authorities have also been got wrong. Would it not be more sensible for the House to consider orders concerning each of the authorities which are likely to be affected by rate capping, since in each case there are different circumstances which should be debated separately?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, but it is one for the debate on Monday.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Is the Leader of the House satisfied that on Thursday the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 should again be debated after the main business? Is it not typical of the Government not to want a proper debate and a good attendance for the debate on Thursday night?

Mr. Biffen: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I did not catch what he said. I should be grateful if he would be kind enough to repeat it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member ask his question again briefly?

Mr. Parry: I ask the Leader of the House why he agrees to the Prevention of Terrorism Act being debated on Thursday when he knows that there is a one-line Whip and that many hon. Members will be absent? [*Interruption.*] Will he reconsider the position so that we can have a proper debate about that important Act?

Mr. Biffen: In no sense can I answer for the attendance of the House. However, the hon. Gentleman is right that this is an important order. It is to be debated at the usual time of the night for such business.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many hon. Members will be delighted at his decision to bring forward the debate on the Royal Air Force, which is already overdue, because many important decisions need to be taken?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What opportunities will be made available to the borough councils concerned to examine the figures produced by the Government in advance of the debate, and when will the figures be made available to hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into that point and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Water (Fluoridation) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

'Before any health authority makes an application in accordance with section 1(1) it shall consult the county council, borough or district council, community or parish council and community health council in whose area any part of the area the subject of the proposed application falls.'.—*[Mr. Best.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.21 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take the following:

New Clause 2 — Resolutions of borough or district councils

'If at any stage a resolution is passed in the borough or district council in whose area any part of the area the subject of an application made under section 1(1) falls which requires the cessation of any increase in the fluoride content of the water supplied by the statutory water undertaker then the statutory water undertaker shall cease to increase the fluoride content of the water.'.

Amendment No. 15, in clause 1, page 1, line 5, after 'authority', insert

'after a vote taken at a meeting at which not less than 50 per cent. of the members of the authority entitled to vote are present'.

Amendment No. 13, in page 1, line 8, after 'may', insert

'subject to subsection (2) below.'.

Amendment No. 14, in page 1, line 9, at end insert —

'(2) There shall be no increase in the fluoride content of the water supplied by a water undertaker unless approval is given for such action by the vote of a majority in favour of it in each county council in the area to be affected'.

Amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 13, at end insert—

'(2) There shall be no increase in the fluoride content of the water supplied by a water undertaker in England and Wales unless approval is given for such action by a majority in favour of it in a county council or councils, or in each district council, in the area to be affected.'.

Amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 36, at end insert—

'"consumer" means each legal person, individual or otherwise, to whom a demand for water charges is sent by the statutory water undertaker.'.

Amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 39, at end insert—

'(9) Any statutory water undertaker wishing to increase the fluoride content of water in accordance with subsection (1) above must first obtain the consent of a simple majority of its consumers.

(10) No fluoride increase is permitted unless and until consent is obtained.'.

Mr. Best: I must declare an interest, because I drink water. I suspect that I share this interest with many right hon. and hon. Gentlemen. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to leave the Chamber quietly.

Mr. Best: I may even share that interest with some Opposition Members. The difference between freedom of choice on some issues and the freedom of choice about which we are debating—the amendments talk about a manifestation of popular will—is that I have no choice but to drink water. Water is the one element that is essential to sustain life, and no one has any choice but to drink it. Sometimes a seemingly analogous picture is painted between the choice of drinking water and, for example, the choice of wearing seat belts or crash helmets. That is not an analogy, because ultimately a person can choose not to drive a car, or not to ride a motor cycle, but he cannot choose not to drink water.

Science can make water potable so that it does not harm those who drink it. We welcome that, because it is right that the water supply should not cause active harm to those who drink it. However we can take a more positive role. The amendments deal with whether people should have the right to decide through their democratically elected representatives whether something positive should be done to the water supplies, not to make them potable, but to introduce mass medication. It is mass medication, because it is done to inhibit the onset of dental caries.

I am a Conservative, not least because I believe in individual freedom. I see that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) does not agree with that. That is not surprising. I wish to be charitable. I do not want to make this a party political issue, because I hope that many Opposition Members will support those of us who believe in individual freedom when we go through the Lobby tonight. I hope the hon. Lady agrees that people should have the right to make decisions about their health.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman so soon, but has he ever asked for the natural fluoride present in the water in Wales to be removed?

Mr. Best: I do not wish to digress. That issue has been well debated. It has always struck me as extraordinary that because something which may or may not be harmful is naturally present in water supplies, that is a good reason for saying that we should artificially add it to water supplies.

I have never been persuaded by that proposition, and on closer analysis no one would be. I repeat my rhetorical question: should individual members of our society have the right to make a decision about their health?

The Government have been in the forefront of giving people individual choice on matters of transport and education. I welcome that, and I believe that all Conservative Members welcome those decisions. Why should we not give individual choice to people on health matters? That choice is being denied them because this substance is being added to the water supply and no one has any choice but to drink water.

Society has a duty to safeguard the health of its citizens, but does it have a right to force its citizens to be medicated against their will? Many citizens will want to receive fluoride through the water supplies because they will have been persuaded that it is beneficial to children's teeth. I do not derogate from the broad proposition that in certain circumstances fluoride can inhibit the onset of dental caries, but this matter goes way beyond that.

The gravamen of the issue is whether those who do not wish to be mass medicated through the water supplies should have the right not to be. It is not right for society, through the House, to force on people something relating to their health which they do not want and over which they have no choice.

The amendments try to introduce a measure of democracy into the decision whether health authorities should recommend water authorities to add fluoride to the

[Mr. Best]

water. At present there is no democracy because those decisions are taken by a health authority, which is not directly elected. I acknowledge, of course, that there are persons serving on those health authorities who were orginally directly elected to other bodies, but that does not make a health authority a directly elected body.

I shall give an example from Anglesey, which is part of Gwynedd. It is interesting to note that when the Gwynedd health authority last debated this matter on 26 November last year it voted by eight to six, with one abstension, to continue to support the fluoridation of the water supplies. That is not an especially large majority, even for a non-elected body, but the directly elected bodies representing people in Anglesey and Gwynedd tell us a different story.

On 15 June 1967, after debating this issue, the Anglesey community health council — we should not forget that that body was set up by Parliament to be a watchdog for the Health Service and the people of Anglesey—opposed the artificial addition of fluoride to the water supplies and voted, not by eight to six but by eight to four for that decision. The number who did not want fluoride added to the water supplies was twice the number who did.

10.30 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Has my hon. Friend noted a glaring defect in the Bill? If the health authority changes its mind and votes eight to six in favour of discontinuing adding fluoride to the water supplies, that vote does not instruct the water authority to cease supplying fluoride.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, because another amendment addresses the duration of an application made by a health authority under the Bill's provisions.

The consumer watchdog for Anglesey said that it did not want fluoride added to the water supplies. Anglesey borough council is also opposed to the artificial fluoridation of water supplies. If we delve even further into every survey and opinion poll conducted in my constituency—whether by me or anyone else—we find that the majority of people are against the artificial addition of fluoride to the water supplies. Those of us who believe in democracy and the expression of individual choice, especially on a matter that is as fundamental to the individual as health have a right to ask: what price democracy? Where is democracy in the Bill? It is entirely absent. That is one of the gravest defects of the Bill and the reason why we are debating these amendments.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be prepared to say that these matters should be subject to democratic control. I hope also that he will agree with some of these amendments, which say that an application should not be made by a health authority without prior consultation with those bodies which have been democratically elected in the area which would be affected by the application. That is a modest enough proposal, and that is the affect of new clause 1. The new clause does not even go so far as to require the health authority to abide by the decision of the directly elected body. It merely requires the health authority to "consult" with the directly elected body.

I hope the House will agree that it is not uncharitable of me to say to my hon. Friend that he would be extremely churlish if he did not even pay lip-service to democracy and consultation by at least recommending acceptance of new clause 1. It merely requires consultation. There are those of my hon. Friends — and I would prefer to go along with them — who would require a further manifestation of the democratic will in the Bill than merely a duty to consult. That would be that a health authority should not only consult directly-elected bodies, but that if those directly-elected bodies are against the artificial fluoridation of water supplies, the health authority should abide by that decision.

Even if that is not incuded in the Bill there is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) so helpfully pointed out, a fundamental defect in it. If, at some subsequent stage, the health authority decides against the artificial fluoridation of water supplies in its area, an application having been made, there is no machinery for that change of mind to be put into effect.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): On this rare occasion my hon. Friend has been led into error by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). Clause 1 says that the water authority may put fluoride in the water, when the health authority has applied in writing to it,

"while the application remains in force".

Clause 1(2) says:

"an application shall remain in force until the health authority, after giving reasonable notice to the statutory water undertaker in writing, withdraw it."

If a health authority changes its mind, it has to give notice of this, the application is cancelled, and the fluoride is withdrawn.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for pointing that out. I believe that he is right, and my fears are assuaged on that matter.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Before my hon. Friend's fears are assuaged, can he advise my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister on what happens to the flouride in the water in the meantime?

Mr. Best: My hon. and learned Friend will, I hope, catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will be able to advance that point. I shall not follow that path now, as I do not wish to detain the House for too long.

The problem of the Bill is that there is no vehicle by which popular consent or dissent to artificial flouridation of water supplies can be made manifest. That is a grave defect. There should be a clause or clauses which mean that that manifestation of popular will, however it is done, will be carried into effect, for the reasons that I have advanced. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will say something about wide consultation, not just with local, elected bodies, but with the general public, so that there is an opportunity for members of the public to make their views known fully in advance, before an application is made by a health authority.

I hope that, by nodding his head, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister is not signifying his boredom with my speech so far, but is signifying his assent to that proposition. If that is so, I welcome it, but I ask another question. If he is to make sure that the widest possible consultation can take place and that people can make known their views about whether they wish flouride in the

water, what will he do in the Bill to ensure that if the overwhelming majority view is that people do not want flouride in the water supplies, due regard will be paid to that?

It is one thing to invite the views of the general public —even that does not appear in the Bill, although I hope that in due course it will—but quite another to say that action will be taken as a result of the expression of those views. If something is not done as a result of the expression of those views, it all becomes rather nugatory, because one is then paying merely lip-service to consultation, without carrying it through to its natural conclusion.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Since there was an intervention from my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, may I reiterate to my hon. Friend that the Bill does not say that the water authority may not continue with fluoridation after the application ceases to be in force? As we were told on Second Reading that the Bill merely states what is already the law—that was the contention of my right hon. and learned Friend—and as the law does not say that one may not fluoridate without an application from the health authority, is it not the case that the Bill as drafted does not require the water authority to cease introducing fluoride when the application from the heatlh authority is no longer in force? That is the point that I made in my intervention and, so far as I know, it is correct.

Mr. Best: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not debate this matter with him. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will have heard what he said, and I am sure that he will deal with it when he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Finally, if we believe in individual choice, particularly over health matters, it is incumbent upon the House to ensure that the legislation does not ride roughshod over the expression of individual choice. It is incumbent upon the House not just to pay lip-service to the will of the people about something over which they have no control, because we must drink water, but to go beyond mere consultation and ensure that in legislation we give expression to the result of that consultation. For those reasons, I hope that the House will ensure that the new clauses and amendments become part of the Bill.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am a little surprised that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) asked the Front Bench a question in which he suggested that large numbers of people in a particular area would be against the fluoridation of the water supply. The hon. Member should know that down yonder they have already made up their minds. They are in favour of the fluoridation of the water supply. In Committee one Minister said that he had been against fluoridation but that he had then changed his mind.

Mr. Best: I must defend my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government. The hon. Gentleman ought to know that many of them believe in what we are trying to do my moving these new clauses and amendments. many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have considerable sympathy for what we are trying to do and in their hearts feel that it is right to give expression to local democratic views. It is very unfair of the hon. Gentleman to classify all my right hon. and hon. Friends as not being lovers of democracy and individual freedom.

Mr. Haynes: Once again I am surprised at the remarks of the hon. Gentleman. He cannot get away with it like that. I repeat that the Government have made up their minds and are taking no notice of these amendments, but I am going to have my say.

The hon. Gentleman talked about democracy. That is a bit rich coming from the Government Benches. This Administration is in line with that of Adolf Hitler in 1933. It is a dictatorship. *[Laughter.]* It is all right for hon. Members to laugh. The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) made it clear during the election what would happen. He will be proved right. People will realise what is going on.

10.45 pm

The new clause refers to health authorities. *[Interruption.]* This is a serious debate. Half the Tory Members are never here. They are sailing the high seas. Look at the tans. Yet they come in now to criticise hon. Members who almost live here doing the job that hon. Members should do on behalf of the people they represent. Hon. Members may laugh.

My district health authority is no different from any other. Health authorities are mentioned in the new clause. The hon. Gentleman talked about democracy. I wish he would come and see my district health authority. It is answerable to nobody but the Government Front Bench. It is full of freemasons. One cannot move for them. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis made a point in regard to freemasons. There are plenty of them on the Government Benches. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn may talk about democracy, but the Government have already made their decision without any consultation with outside bodies.

I am pleased to see the Minister listening carefully. What democracy was exercised by not giving the people of London the opportunity to say yes or no to the abolition of the GLC? The hon. Member for Ynys Môn said that the people should decide. There was serious criticism on the Government Benches about the closure of post offices. There was no consultation on that. I am talking about consultation on the part of the Government in relation to this Bill. I am giving one or two examples of how the Government let the people down by not having consultation.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: I am not giving way. The hon. and learned Gentleman had his opportunity. All right, I will give way.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does the hon. Gentleman think that we should put the GLC in the water as well?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) will not be provoked into straying from the new clause.

Mr. Haynes: I never break the rules, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I respect the Chair. What the right hon. and learned Gentleman said is not respecting the Chair. He ought to know that much better than many of us because of the office he has held. I have criticised him for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister is laughing. I will take the smile off his face. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it."] We are in debate on the Bill and I am talking to the amendments. I resent hon. Members telling me to get on with it. We have got all night. We have waited for the opportunity to find out what will happen in regard to prescriptions. We are talking

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. and learned Friend will know the phrase in law vir flocci, which means a man of straw. I am not one. I do not grasp at them. I am not looking for straws; I am looking for principles. It is offensive to me that we should even be considering amendments that say that the majority shall say, either by default or by vote, that the minority should be poisoned by that vote. This is not a matter for voting, either through district or any other councils.

I notice that the amendments are, as ever, significantly inappropriate to Scotland. After all, England and Wales are the only places that matter. It only happens that the legislation that we are unfortunately considering tonight arose out of a case in Scotland. If it were not for Scotland —I wish that we had never done it—the beastly Bill would never have been before us. Alas, it is, and alas, by the judgment of one of the senators of the college of justice.

The principle is one from which the House cannot escape. We cannot say that we should give any council, any authority or any majority, the right to dictate to the minority or to the non-voting minority, or to anybody else on whether the one thing on which life depends—pure water—shall be adulterated, for any reason, whether it is for the health of others or ourselves. It is one thing to say that everybody must be vaccinated—no Government ever did—because that is in everybody's interest but it is a very different thing to say that everybody must be vaccinated because some people might benefit from it, although most people are not under threat.

Mr. Golding: Could the hon. Gentleman say clearly to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) that we do not need to "sell" the principle because there is to be a Third Reading debate when the principle will again be raised? Will he please tell the hon. and learned Member that he is absolutely right to stick to his guns on the grounds of principle and that he should not try to reach shoddy compromises with a Government that are so much out of touch.

Mr. Fairbairn: I could not understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a word that the hon. Gentleman said, but I assume that he intervened in support of my case. If it was not support, I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he should go away and take some fluoride. We are considering the concept that elected or unelected bodies should be able to dictate to every single citizen—not just a majority or minority of citizens—that they are to be subjected to something to which they do not wish to be subjected, which is of no help to them and which may do them harm.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) raised an important matter. Large amounts of water from Wales are sent to England. How can one possibly control the fluoridation of that water?

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Drink Scottish oil.

Mr. Fairbairn: No, we do not have to drink Scottish oil. We can drink whisky instead. But even the right hon. Gentleman has to drink water with his whisky. Will his district council tell the right hon. Gentleman whether the water he drinks with his whisky contains fluoride? If the majority fail to vote, that is what will happen. Some of us may drink whisky and some of us may choose not to do so, but all of us have got to drink water. So it is not a voting matter. While I sympathise with the purpose of the amendments, I regret that, because the principle is so strong, they are not sufficient.

Mr. McGuire: I believe that all hon. Members enjoyed the contribution of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). He speaks with great eloquence, clarity and force. He believes in what he says. We very much missed him on our Committee, even though we had the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). However, the hon. and learned Member did not have sufficient time in which to raise all the points that he wished to raise.

This is a debating Chamber, and it is sometimes forgotten that we are expected to respond to important points that have been made. I could not agree more with the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross about the principle that he enunicated with such force. We must have some democracy. I take the hon. and learned Gentleman's point about water. This is not the appropriate time to rehearse why I am against fluoridation. It is mass medication, and there is no escape from it. If we do not try to get some democracy into it, all those about whom the hon. and learned Gentleman is worried will suffer. Surely it is better that 51 per cent. should vote not to put the fluoride in. I shall support the amendments, and I ask the hon. and learned Gentleman to do so too.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) said that he was willing to take advice from experts; in this case medical experts, because I doubt whether philosophers will support the Bill. What happened in the coal mining industry is relevant. Until nationalisation, it was held by experts of the kind on whom the hon. Gentleman intends to rely for guidance that when a miner worked on a coal face the only disease for which he could be compensated was silicosis—silica being the Latin for stone. A miner who worked on a coal face and breathed in coal dust could not get compensation because it was thought that it did not do him any harm. That was the barmy proposition that was enshrined in law.

Hon. Members can examine the compensation cases. Lawyers have addressed us in this debate. They will know that the old workmen's compensation legislation gave more work to lawyers than any other legislation that has been placed on the statute book. Much of the work arose from the words "arising out of" and "in the course of" one's employment. I used to deal with this in my timid layman's fashion.

Experts similar to those who are guiding us on this Bill said that coal dust did not harm a man. They supported that contention by saying that when people had heartburn they sucked coal. I am talking about people in Lancashire, but no doubt this happened in other coal mining areas. People felt that there was some correlation between sucking coal and disappearance of the heartburn, and therefore the experts said that coal dust would not do a man harm. They said that it was not like silicosis or getting the dust from stone. The legislation laid down that for a man to receive compensation for a dust reticulation disease—that is, silicosis—he had to have worked for a certain number of years in a heading or a place with so much silica content.

If a man had pains in his chest, suffered from breathlessness and had all the symptoms that we now regard as proof positive that a man has pneumoconiosis —the terms that has been used since nationalisation—

and if he had worked in a heading with stone, he could get compensation for silicosis. Another person who had the disease which we now call pneumoconiosis did not get compensation. People with pneumoconiosis died quickly. If it was allied with tuberculosis, it was called galloping consumption. We proved that the ruling in regard to compensation was utter and damaging nonsense for many hard-working men.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure the hon. Gentleman is about to relate his remarks to consultation.

Mr. McGuire: We have been told that experts are guiding us on this matter. I am trying to prove that they have not always been right. There is a long history of their advising people that something was not harmful, and then being proved wrong. I do not believe that adding a poison to water does anybody good.

12 midnight

I am not in favour of referendums to test public opinion. Indeed, I urge the Government not to touch them with a barge pole. I accept that hon. Members are often under pressure from constituents to put matters to the test by that means, but I regard the referendum as a soft option which does not produce the right answer, because it all depends on who frames the question. For example, if those who have spoken on the new clause framed the question, fluoride would not be added to the water.

However, there are occasions when referendums have a use. For example, they are useful to test local opinion on whether an area should be wet or dry. In that type of case there is no difficulty in framing the question. In that context, I am probably addressing Opposition Members of a party other than mine.

The Government are in a difficult position. Following a case in Scotland, they have introduced the Bill to make clear what was previously thought to have been clear but which the Scottish judgment said was rather dicey. The Bill will enable authorities which were adding fluoride to continue doing so, and those which were not doing so to be able to do so.

Let us be clear that the payroll vote won the day on this issue. One needs only to check through the way in which hon. Members voted to see that, and I have no doubt that those hon. Members will file in to vote later. I am appealing, therefore, to the infantry on the Back Benches; those who occasionally must march and go over the top.

I say that because the Government do not have the courage of their convictions. They are saying, "If you want to add fluoride, continue doing so." Presumably those authorities which have already added it by underhanded means, so to speak, will be able to remove it, if they wish, on a democratic basis. It seems strange that the Government should be prepared to leave to unelected, undemocratic bodies a decision which they will not take themselves. The reason for that is simple—not even the payroll vote would support them on any other basis. In other words, although the Government have an overall majority of 143 in the House they will not force their view on any body.

That is a sound principle if the Government are saying, "We are leaving the decision to the democratic view of the people." Unfortunately, the people who will make the decision will not be subject to public accountability. They will be appointed and, presumably, will do what the Minister tells them. That is why I urge hon. Members to think deeply about this issue, for we may be taking a step which goes against everything in which this democratically elected Chamber believes.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend was urging the use of the referendum to decide whether fluoride should be added to water.

Mr. McGuire: No, I was not.

Dr. Marek: In that case, my hon. Friend was speaking of the use of the referendum—he probably had in mind certain areas of Wales — in deciding whether areas should be wet or dry. That would result in those areas which wished to be wet on Sundays to be wet, and those which wished to remain dry to remain dry. If one decides to add fluoride to water in an area, the people there have no choice; they all have fluoride. I am not sure that I followed my hon. Friend's argument completely, and perhaps he would develop his case.

Mr. McGuire: I regret that my hon. Friend misunderstood me. I have been gently rebuked this evening by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but what I must aspire to in the few years remaining to me in the House, subject to the will of other hon. Members, is to be as succinct as my hon. Friend.

I did not say that a referendum should be used. I said that we should not touch a referendum with a barge pole. I said that, if we entertained the idea, we then had to consider who frames the question. I referred to an example of west and dry in a local area of the country where a referendum may be the best way to test public opinion. However, I am bound to tell my hon. Friend that, if as imperfect an instrument as a referendum is used to test the public wish, those who do not want to be wet and those who do not want to be dry can maintain their opposing positions without infringing anybody's liberty.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The hon. Gentleman seems to agree that it is simple enough to draft a question for a referendum on whether a particular area wishes to be wet or dry on a Sunday. Will he explain why he thinks that it is more difficult to draft a simple question on whether in a particular area people wish to have fluoride in their water, because I would have thought that the two issues were similarly capable of simple questions?

Mr. McGuire: I do not. First, I want to emphasise that a referendum to judge the will of a nation is a bad instrument. If the Liberal party now says that it believes in the principle of referendum to test the will of a nation, not only in regard to fluoridation but in all matters, it can so decide.

On the matter of framing the question, I believe that if I were allowed to frame the question, assuming that a referendum had been decided upon as the instrument to test the public will, the vote would probably be 93 per cent. against. However, if my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) framed the question, while he may not hope for 99 per cent. in favour, he would be able to frame it in such a way that the public would fall for it, and the vote would be 93 per cent. in favour.

Mr. Golding: Would not the best advice to my hon. Friend be to stick to Lancashire and to stay out of Wales? Would my hon. Friend agree that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has illustrated the dilemma? Is it not different to ask, "Do you want fluoride

[Mr. Golding]

in the water?" from, "Do you want extra fluoride in the water?" There are at least two questions that can be put. The result depends on which question is asked.

Mr. McGuire: The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) suggested that the two issues were similar, and asked why in my view a referendum in north Wales would be appropriate but a referendum on the issue of fluoride would not be appropriate. Has the hon. and learned Member considered that, if a referendum were held in north Wales in a local area on whether people wished to have drink freely available on the one day that hitherto had been designated as dry, namely, Sunday, and subsequently people desired to change their minds, at the end of the day nobody's liberty would be infringed as, indeed, would be the case if one decided by referendum to have fluoride in the water because people would have to have it whether they liked it or not? The man who votes to remain dry, even if the rest go wet, will remain dry. There is, therefore, a fundamental difference.

The Government are convinced that it is a good thing to allow authorities to put fluoride into water. They will not take the decision themselves. I have illustrated why. Not even the payroll vote would be able to vote that way and sustain the argument.

Therefore, it follows that if this is to be done democratically, it must be done through precisely this new clause in its limited and imperfect way. We are saying, "Let democratically elected bodies test the temperature." People will have been appointed—some of the so-called experts. I have said that we should take some of their expertness with a pinch of salt. They will be able to override the democratic wishes of the elected people representing constituencies. I ask all Back Benchers, democratically elected, to give the measure the boot in the Lobby.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is indeed great danger in allowing appointed members to decide this vital question? It is possible that those appointed members will be connected with industries from which fluoride is generated as an industrial waste as well as an industrial poison. Does not the hon. Gentleman therefore feel that there could be much vested interest in the decisions taken by appointed people? Whether there are flaws in some of the amendments that have been proposed, they give the people a say as to whether they are to be compulsorily medicated through the water supply.

Mr. McGuire: I am trying to learn how to be succinct, so I shall just say yes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Truly this one, as the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, is making strange bedfellows of us all. In this important area of freedom of choice, I should like to refer in particular to amendment No. 2, in the name of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). I feel that I like his amendment and want to support it, but I am worried about a certain wooliness to which my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) referred.

The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) gave us the stricture that this is not the time or the occasion to rehearse the arguments that we went through on Second Reading, but I feel that we must not lose sight of the important fundamenal principles that are involved and that we must continue to bear in mind as we consider——

Mr. Golding: I must have been as incomprehensible to the hon. Gentleman as to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). I said that we must stick to the principle. We must remember the principle. On Third Reading we can vote against it. I was rebuking the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) who will accept fluoride in beer because of the vote on Second Reading. I agree with the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones).

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he is always as comprehensible in all his contributions.

I feel that the great principles involved are, first, that the measure represents a dubious health addition. For all the evidence from experts that I have found, one can find an equal expert with an opposite view. Clearly, the subject is not proven. The best evidence that I have ever seen suggests that the only proven medical advantage from fluoride is for unborn children and children below the age of six months. However, beyond the age of six months, the evidence suggests that the addition of fluoride moves to being a disadvantage. In turn, this is the grossest interference with the liberties of the individual, a complete removal of freedom of choice.

Who then decides on whether fluoride should be added to our water supply? In the Bill before us it is to be the health authorities.

12.15 am

As many of my hon. Friends and hon. Gentlemen have already said this evening, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to suggest that there is a form of local responsibility emanating from the concept that a health authority should decide this supremely important question. Who is it accountable to? There is a plethora of bodies coming under or believed to be the health authorities, but not actually the health authorities. There are community health councils, family practitioner committees, joint consultative committees—the list is almost endless. I trust that all the worthy and well-intentioned people who are involved in those committees fully understand the responsibilities they already have before this addition. But I am fully convinced that the public do not, and certainly do not feel that they are in any way the accountable or responsible bodies that should take these decisions. There must be some form of veto that elected authorities can exercise in this area as the representatives of the local population.

Amendment No. 2, put forward in the name of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) confuses me when it talks about the "county council or councils" or the "district council" for the areas involved. There does not seem to be any clarity as to which authority is pre-eminent. Rather, it seems to be an invitation to conflict between the two levels of local government.

To clarify the matter, I would suggest—and it would certainly be my own preference — that the decision ought to be at district council level. A local decision such as this ought to be at a really local level.

I cannot help being aware of my own situation in Cardiff. Cardiff city council is the district council and one

of two district authorities in south Glamorgan. South Glamorgan has a population of 400,000. The city council, as one component, has a population of 300,000. I know full well that the Cardiff city council, which has on many occasions indicated its opinion that there is widespread opposition to the addition of fluoride, would find it intolerable, as the council of the capital city of Wales—with no disrespect to the neighbouring Vale of Glamorgan district authority—if in any way the Vale were able to impose fluoridation on the people of Cardiff regardless of the decision of the city council.

I fully subscribe to the point that has already been made. I do not like this Bill. I do not want to see it go through. But if we have to have it we must have the very best form of local control that can be devised.

Mr. Fairbairn: Is it not rather absurd that the House of Commons should be debating local control on a free vote when the pay roll people are waiting to vote us down?

Mr. Jones: The hon. and learned Gentleman has made that point, leaving me with no necessity to go any further down that road. I hope that this Bill will not yet find its way on to the statute book but that, if it does, we must bring in proper local control.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), in moving the first amendment before the House this evening, touched briefly and quite properly on the underlying concerns which most hon. Members who have spoken so far have about the purpose of the Bill. It would be quite wrong, with the Second Reading debate behind us, for me to set out the public health and other arguments in favour of fluoridation which many people in the medical and dental profession share. What we are talking about this evening is the worries of many of my hon. Friends and many hon. Gentleman about the threat that a Bill giving these powers to local authorities, water authorities and health authorities poses to the freedom of choice of individuals. We have heard the expression "mass medication" used more than once in the course of the debate.

Most of these amendments seek to give the general public and the individuals who might be affected by the exercise of these powers a greater influence, if not a decisive voice, in the eventual decision.

I wish to be helpful, so I shall not devote a great deal of time to a direct challenge to the main underlying argument, although I fail to see that this great issue of freedom of choice is posed in quite the way that it has been presented so far by the exercise of proposed powers by health and water authorities.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: If my hon. and learned Friend will allow me to explain why I do not share his view, he might then rise to challenge it.

We are talking about the public water supply. It is an inescapable practical fact that we all have to have, in any given location, the same public water supply with the same additives or lack of additives in the water coming out of the tap. It is not yet possible to distribute water so that neighbouring houses can have water coming out of the taps to the particular mix chosen by the owner of the household. From time immemorial, for one health reason or another—my hon. friend may think that some are stronger reasons than others—there have been additions to what otherwise would have been natural water for the benefit of the mass of the nation.

I know that I tried and did not succeed in Committee to persuade my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) to put forward the man who might take the ultimate view on individual choice and say that he has heard all the arguments about chlorine and listened to all the clever scientific people — who have been heavily derided throughout the debate—saying that it is essential to put it in water to cure typhoid, but that he does not agree with that. He does no want doctors putting in mass medication when he is not sure that they might not ultimately be proved to be wrong—as the doctors have been proved to be wrong in the past. He might wish to assert his individual freedom to have no chlorine in the water coming out of his taps, and would prefer to have pure water.

I know that that is an extreme example, but we all know that the answer to that man would be that while we respect the courage of the man's convictions, common sense and practice are against him and he cannot have water without chlorine without putting at risk the health of everyone else.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I give way to my hon. and learned Friend, whose interest in water I find especially moving, as I had not previously appreciated that pure water ever passed his lips.

Mr. Fairbairn: What my right hon. and learned Friend does not understand is that, whatever does pass my lips, it must have whatever water this beastly Government will put in it. Whether I drink it in the form of whisky, gin or anything else, if they add fluoride I have to drink it. Let us get away from that argument.

My right hon. and learned Friend should understand —and this is an argument of the greatest importance— that if we add chlorine to the water it is to ensure that everybody has potable water. If we add fluoride to the water, it is in the hope that some people—not all people —may be protected from a disease that nobody else has. That is a wholly different principle.

Mr. Clarke: As I come from south of the border, I am a beer drinker. I might introduce my hon. and learned Friend to the prospect that some beer at least is brewed by breweries that take their water from springs, not from the public water supply. If every health and water authority in the country was seized with the idea of putting fluoride in the public water supply, my hon. and learned Friend might still find some fluoride-free liquid.

On my hon. and learned Friend's serious point, of course he is saying that in one case the argument for overriding individual choice is more compelling than in the second case. I am pointing out that if he is saying that the absolute nature of individual choice is what matters, there are undoubtedly some health grounds upon which long ago that principle has been completely overridden with the public water supply.

My point is that, although we are all sensitive about individual choice, we are talking about the public water supply which every members of the public must have. There will be differing opinions. A number of doctors and dentists receiving the public water supply want fluoride in the water. The public will have different opinions, and

[Mr. Lawrence]

Staffordshire, east Staffordshire, Lichfield, Cannock Chase, Tamworth and Stoke-on-Trent have all said no to fluoridation, yet the water authority is about to fluoridate if it has not already started. Oswestry, north Shropshire, south Shropshire, Shrewsbury and Atchan, the Wrekin and Bridgnorth in Shropshire have all said no to fluoridation, and, with contempt for their views, the water authority is fluoridating. Malvern Hills, Wychaven, Worcester in Hereford and Worcester have all said no. The district councils of Cheltentham, Gloucester, Tewkesbury——

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to be reading the *Financial Times*?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If that is happening, unless it is in preparation for the debate it is out of order.

Mr. Lawrence: I was making a very good point. If my hon. Friends can control themselves until I have finished the good points, and interrupt only during the bad points, I should be grateful. The district councils of Cheltenham, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Stroud and the Forest of Dean have all said no. The Wolverhampton, Stratford-on-Avon, south Derbyshire, Broxbourne and Nottingham councils have all said no. They are the local democratically-elected representatives of the people saying, "We do not want that medication forced down our throats." Yet the water authority and the health authority contemptuously say, "You will have it."

Mr. Golding: The hon. and learned Gentleman has done his homework. Can he tell us all the parishes in Staffordshire, Gloucestershire, and Cheshire that have said no?

Mr. Lawrence: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has asked me that question. Of a total of 148 parish councils—[HON. MEMBERS: "Read them out."] I have two lists, but out of concern for hon. Members I shall not read them out. I shall simply state the general conclusion. Of 148 parish councils that were circularised by the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association, of the 72 replies 12 said that they were in favour of fluoridation —none of those had conducted a local survey—of the 58 that said they were against fluoridation, 22 had conducted a local survey. Two said that they did not know. Of those responding, 86 per cent. of the parish councils in Staffordshire are against fluoridation of the water supply, 14 per cent. are in favour, and 40 per cent. of those against fluoridation bothered to conduct surveys.

It is plain that this measure takes away the freedom of the individual to choose whether he will have poison put into his water, whether it affects him or not, whether it benefits him or not—and there are at least 17 million people who have no teeth and therefore cannot benefit by fluoride in the water; they can only be harmed by the continuous ingestion of a poison that is accumulative in the system and which, by old age, can develop harmful effects. There have been many surveys on that point, but this is not the time to detail them. It is absolutely clear that those people should be given some opportunity of having their views on the matter properly reflected in the only way we know how.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend if he will take seriously the wishes of the people. They want to have a local decision; they mean a local democratic decision. I always thought that my party would never introduce compulsory mass medication. It is compulsory because any health authority that so desires will inevitably get a water authority fluoridating the water and so the people will be compulsorily medicated.

For the moment I shall control my anger at my party for selling me the pass on freedom if it does not follow it by selling me the pass on democracy. I believe that my party is a democratic party and that it believes in the freedom of the individual to make his choices if not individually, then through his democratically-elected representative. I therefore support the amendment.

11.15 pm

Mr. Meadowcroft: The Second Reading debate has already taken place and it is a shame that we must rehearse the principles again. I support the principle, but it is interesting that some of these amendments unite Liberal Members, even though some might oppose the principle. It is important to consider locally and democratically elected authorities as a means of providing local opinion on whether water should be fluoridated. It would be dangerous if local councils were unable to have a voice in and to influence the decision whether to fluoridate water.

The Minister for Health is able to appoint members of health authorities and the Secretary of State for the Environment can appoint members of water authorities. Through those appointed members, the Government are able to ensure that water is fluoridated throughout the country. It is wrong that all the power should rest with the Government. Since the Government came to office, members of health authorities who have disagreed with the Government have, on occasion, not been reappointed and others have been appointed because they have political affiliations with the Government. Whatever one's view about that, I am anxious that members of authorities should not be removed simply because they disagree with the Government. To be consistent, I should add that some Left-wing local authorities have also endeavoured to take people off health authorities because of disagreement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the Government might remove members from health authorities because they vote against fluoride and that they now need the backing of local authorities in the interests of their own protection?

Mr. Meadowcroft: There is a suspicion that those who are appointed to water or health authorities might be removed if they do not carry out the wishes of the Government who appointed them. The danger is that the bodies that carry out Government policy appear to be local and democratic but are far from it.

The processes of politics and of decision making are as important as the decisions themselves. It would be wrong if the Government could tell the public, "We do not want to argue our case with you locally. We do not want to try to convince you of the rightness of our arguments. We do not want to persuade you that a given course of action, which we believe to be important, must be passed through your local authority. You must just accept it." Our democratic processes are not best served by opting out of that decision-making process.

Powers have been removed from local authorities for decades. I was a member of Leeds city council for six

years before the present appointed water authorities came into being. For six years the water supply in Leeds was the responsibility of the waterworks committee of Leeds city council, and a member of the council had to answer for that service in the city council chamber. One could get a response to questions from officials, and a debate on the efficacy of the water supply. The day that the water authorities became appointed bodies, the style of administration changed. The openess no longer existed, it was more difficult to get inside the decision-making processes of the water authorities, and the way in which we could influence the financing and efficiency of the authorities disappeared overnight.

Mr. Lawrence: Are not even the public allowed in?

Mr. Meadowcroft: That is a further point. One of the Welsh water authorities, to its credit, allows people in, but that is its decision, as it does not have to do so.

If we are to make this change in our water supply, it is important that each hon. Member and our local authority colleagues can persuade people that it is right and proper. If we do not make the decision through those elected authorities and are prepared to say that the Chamber and Government offices are right to force the decision on the public, public cynicism will accumulate. Just as it has been said that fluorine is a cumulative addition to the water supply, so the erosion of the democratic process is also cumulative.

If one cannot persuade people in a local authority area to support this principle, national Government should not force it on them. As we have regional water suppliers, fluorine can be added regionally, and the matter does not have to be decided nationally.

New clause 1, which provides for the right of consultation in local authority areas, is unobjectionable. It is a start. New clause 2 is too strong. It states that one local authority has the right to opt out and therefore to ensure that every other authority in the water authority's area is also opted out. That seems wrong.

Amendment No. 15 seeks to provide that 50 per cent. of the membership of the authority should be present and vote. If we had to enforce the same principle in the House, a great deal of legislation would not pass through the Chamber. It is a strange principle that in one chamber 50 per cent. of the membership should be present and vote, but not in others. That is a flippant amendment because it is not feasible in a democratic set-up.

Amendment No. 14 makes it necessary for county councils to give their support. I support that. However, as the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, amendment No. 2 gives the choice either to the county council or to the district authority. There may be more or fewer enlightened people in county or district authorities; I do not know. But at least it gives those who have a public representational role to play at either level the chance to argue the case, help local people to understand it and make the decision.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): I do not understand the following wording and would be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would explain it. The amendment states that there must be a majority in favour of it

"in a county council or councils, or in each district council."

What will happen if the district councils vote in favour and the county councils against fluoridation? How does he reconcile that?

Mr. Meadowcroft: In some water authority areas and regional health authority areas there is more than one county council, so both must be involved. If either set of authorities can persuade its membership that it is in favour of fluoridating water supplies, it should fluoridate the supplies, rather than have the action vetoed by the other. It is an affirmative vote by counties or districts.

The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said that the position in Scotland is far better than that in England or Wales. He said that we were in favour of devolution, indeed, with devolution England and Wales may also have benefits. One might be that in a constitutional settlement we would regain the democratic control of our health and water authorities. The regional authorities in Scotland are the water authorities. When I first drafted the amendment — in ignorance of the position in Scotland — I wrote in that the regional, county or district councils should decide the matter. I was then informed that the regional councils were the water authorities. The hon. and learned Member's intervention was unnecessary because the amendment was correctly drafted.

On amendments Nos. 3 and 5, I do not favour the principle of a referendum. Strangely enough, it detracts from the democratic process that I am trying to forward because people who are charged with the elected responsibility of a district or a county council can have that responsibility set aside by a referendum. If in any decision-making process we introduce the right of decision by referendum on any issue that we oppose, what else will be taken away from that local authority? What other decisions will we say must be made by referendum rather than by the democratically elected authority?

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The hon. Gentleman said that county and district councils are charged with the responsibility to decide. They may be charged with some responsibilities, but they have no responsibility for water. That responsibility is the water authority's. I do not see the difference between individuals or an elected council, which does not have responsibility for water deciding. How does he explain that?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to explain the point again. Amendment No. 2 gives the principal local authorities the right to say affirmatively that they wish to have their water fluoridated. I wish to enhance the local government process and the role of district or county councillors. I am therefore opposed to amendments Nos. 3 and 5 because they do not seek to enhance the role of the local authorities. They seek to take the decision away from elected councils and give it to a referendum. I am fearful that that will open the door to take away other powers from local authorities. The hon. Gentleman's point would be right if we did not pass amendment No. 2, because the position would then be different. I am arguing for the adoption of amendment No. 2 and for support for new clause 1.

Several Hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, the House will wish to know that Mr. Speaker has considered the representations made by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) about new clause 13, and he has selected it for debate.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): Like the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), I am persuaded that the addition of fluoride to the water supplies is beneficial. I would vote for it in any referendum or test of opinion. I am prepared to defer to expert medical opinion and to the advice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health. I hold, in an increasingly despairing way, to the quaint belief that because something is wise it is not necessarily right to impose it upon people without asking them, and that because something is unwise it is not necessarily right to prohibit it without asking them.

My amendments, which are related, seek to introduce a way of asking those who take water from a water authority whether they wish that water to be fluoridated.

Sir Raymond Gower: My hon. Friend will recall that many years ago, when there was a smallpox epidemic, the Government deemed it right and proper to introduce compulsory vaccination.

Mr. Fairbairn: Nonsense.

Sir Raymond Gower: My hon. and learned Friend says "Nonsense." I am not discussing the merits of the matter. I am merely stating a fact.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have an intervention within an intervention.

11.30 pm

Sir Raymond Gower: The Government of the day deemed that the danger of the disease was so great that in the circumstances it was right and proper to introduce compulsory vaccination. There was no choice for the people. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) talks about mass medication. Surely that vaccination was a form of mass medication.

Mr. Parris: Let us assume for the purpose of argument —this may or may not be so—that what my hon. Friend has claimed took place did take place. That would have happened because there was an emergency. The Government are entitled in an emergency to take action which they are sure will have the overwhelming support of the people. In those circumstances the Government of the day will act before asking the people for their approval. They will take the action in the confident belief that restrospectively it will receive the endorsement of the people. There is no emergency about the——

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Parris: I shall not give way on this issue because it does not matter for the purposes of my argument——

Mr. Fairbairn: It does for mine.

Mr. Parris: —whether there was compulsory medication for smallpox or there was not. If that action was taken, it was because there was an emergency. There is no emergency behind the fluoridation of water, and that being so I do not see why we should not ask the public before we fluoridate, rather than afterwards.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Parris: Very well, I shall give way.

Mr. Fairbairn: The proposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) is wrong. No Government have ever ordered vaccination or made it compulsory. If a Government had done so, and none has, it would have been in the interests of those who were vaccinated, and not in the interests of those who were not likely to suffer from anything.

Mr. Parris *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) will resist the temptation to go down that road, which is far from the new clause.

Mr. Parris: I shall resist it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the fluoridation of water is beneficial, but we should, if possible, find a way of asking the public for their opinion on whether that is what they would like to be done to their water.

Various options are rehearsed in the new clauses and amendments. I am sure that my amendment is technically defective, so we shall not have to argue about the merits of the wording. The water authority is the undertaking which sells water to the consumer and it regularly bills consumers for the water which it supplies to them. It might take the opportunity of sending along with its bills a simple question to consumers: do you or do you not wish your water to be fluoridated?

We place a tick in a box in the account to tell the gas or electricity boards whether we would like a receipt when we pay our bills. When paying our water bills we could add our views about fluoridation. If the water authority wanted to advise consumers on what it wanted to do, and wanted to enclose with the bill the advice of the health authority, the district council, the county council or that of the Government, it could so. It would then be left to the consumer, on paying his bill, to tick a box, for example. I suggest that if a simple majority of customers of the authority placed a tick in a box to say that they would like their water to be fluoridated, we should give the water authority the authority to fluoridate its water supplies.

Perhaps the network of one water authority is not the right block, as it were, in which to fluoridate. Perhaps we should consider smaller blocks, such as district councils, local authorities or parliamentary constituencies. That does not matter, because I imagine that a water authority would have sufficiently detailed information about where its customers reside to enable it to conduct referendums in smaller areas than the extent of its supply area.

Dr. Marek: Perhaps there is a flaw in the hon. Gentleman's argument. He is talking about consumers only in the sense of those who pay water bills. There are many others in an area than those who pay water bills. Is he disregarding those who do not pay for a water supply?

Mr. Parris: Yes. That is a problem. It is a defect which detracts from the completely democratic nature of what I am proposing, but it might be said that the theory of local government representation is somewhat flawed because those who pay for local government are a minority of those who vote for it. These defects are inherent in any system in which we ask people what they want when they are not necessarily those who are paying for the service.

I would not go to the last ditch in proposing my own way of consulting. I agree with many hon. Members from both sides that, given the will, there is a practical way of consulting people about whether they want their water to be fluoridated.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): This debate is producing some unholy alliances, one of which is that between myself and the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). On this matter we are at one.

Having followed the argument, I tend to support the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris), who wants an opinion expressed by the maximum number of people possible. I have already expressed my preference for a local referendum. That is feasible within the 1972 legislation which allows community or parish councils to conduct such referenda.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn was right to say that people have misgivings about fluoride—30 years after it was added to their water. It is an unkown quantity and yet one in two people in his area are against fluoridation. That reflects the right of people to take decisions themselves instead of accepting a process which is imposed upon them.

Agreement amongst those who are subject to this medication, or process, unites parties and those who are for or against fluoride. The Government should note that in all parties there is some sympathy and support for those who are subject to this legislation having some say.

The situation is worse than it might have been 10 or 12 years ago because the Conservative Government set up a non-elected, nominated, water authority and a non-elected and nominated health authority. Two non-elected bodies are charged with dealing with this matter. That is in contrast with the Government claims that they want local decisions. Members of those two authorities cannot be said to represent local people.

In my county, many people believe that the local authority and water authority do not reflect the wishes of local people. Recently the local authority has been at loggerheads with local opinion on a series of matters. Local authority members are appointed by the Government and therefore beholden to them. The Government's policy is to encourage fluoridation, so it is little surprise that they have a majority on those bodies.

Mr. Fairbairn: There is a longstanding resentment in Wales about the fact that a large part of its water supply comes from England. Even if the amendments were accepted, how would the local authorities be able to prevent the fluoridation of water from a source over which it has no control?

Mr. Wigley: I can imagine circumstances in which the hon. and learned Member's point would be absolutely right. There may be boundaries between the natural flows of water so that fluoride would have to added at every interface. Complications would arise. Presumably the fluoride would not be in the rivers. If so, the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) would have something to say about the effect on fish in the rivers.

My main concern is about the rights of people who sincerely and strongly oppose the imposition of fluoride. None of the amendments is a perfect means of solving the problem. Do we say that if 51 per cent. of the population favours and 49 per cent. of the population opposes fluoridation, it is right for the 51 per cent. to impose their solution on the 49 per cent? I have reservations on that point. I believe that the community should take positive action when taking important decisions, such as whether to add fluoride to their water.

I hesitate about leaving the matter to local authorities. So far, local authorities have not been charged with powers with respect to health or water. If there was legislation to make health and water authorities answerable to locally elected authorities or regionally elected authorities, those local bodies might be the appropriate bodies to handle this matter. I believe that there is a strong case for holding a referendum, as proposed in amendment No. 5. That amendment may not be technically correct as the hon. Member for Ynys Môn acknowledged. I hope that the Minister is willing to examine this approach and that, the Government will concede possibly in another place that an amendment along those lines should be accepted. An opportunity would thereby be provided for all the local community to take part in a referendum to decide whether fluoride will be added to the water supplies.

Whatever our feelings about fluoride—I have grave reservations, although I acknowledge the medical arguments in favour of its addition — we must acknowledge that many thousands of people feel strongly about this matter. They will pass sleepless nights if fluoridation takes place. The very least that we can give those people is the right to express their opposition. I hope that the Government will recognise the strength of feeling about this matter.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have the greatest sympathy for the amendments' intentions, but I do not believe that those who support the amendments comprehend the principle behind them. We all have to pay rates. Every service for which we pay is comprehended in one tax — except water. Education, sewerage or health—all the services provided by local authorities—can be taken or excepted, but water alone is accepted for a separate charge. Water is excepted, not because water authorities in England differ from those in Scotland but because water is the fundament of life. Water is necessary to everything. It is essential. Its purity and guarantee are enshrined by its separate treatment in the services provided.

11.45 pm

Therefore, I do not accept what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said about mass medication. I do not accept the amendments, which suggest that there should be a democracy about water. Fifty-one people, by failing to vote, should not be able to submit 49 others to the compulsion of swallowing something that may and, I believe is, harmful to them, and which is certainly of no good to them. That is not a matter for democracy. If 99 people said to me that they wished to swallow fluoride, I would not believe that to be a good reason to force it down the throat of the 100th. It is wrong that the one substance that each one of us requires, without which nothing can exist, should be contaminated for the spurious, however vindicated, reason that it may do some good to somebody who swallows it.

Mr. Lawrence: Before my hon. and learned Friend gets carried away, against his predisposition, into voting against the amendments, I point out that, while everybody who is opposed to fluoridation agrees with every word that he has said, we are faced with the fact that a Second Reading was given to the Bill, at which the individual liberty aspect was taken away. We are left, therefore, grasping at the straw of a democratic reflection of people's wishes. Therefore, I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will come down at the end, even against his logical disposition, in favour of one or other of these amendments so that he can join us in the Lobby.

[Mr. Clarke]

somebody must come to a collective decision because a block of the country has to have the same water coming out of the taps.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the collective decision that we all want, and which the majority of the people in the country want, is that no decision should be taken to fluoridate the water? Is he further aware that when he keeps interchanging chlorine and fluoride, he is missing the essential point in regard to democracy? If people were asked whether they wanted water that carried typhoid and malaria or preferred to have water that was chlorinated and might save their lives, it is a reasonable assumption that nearly every sane person in the country would rather have chlorinated water. If people are asked whether they want fluoride, which will not save their lives but delay the onset of dental caries in children's teeth for a limited period of their life, the overwhelming majority will say that they do not want it. That is the important difference.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for explaining what he believes to be the important difference. He has confirmed the point that was made first by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). We are not discussing individual choice. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton did not refer to individual choice in his intervention, but based his argument on his belief that the majority of people do not want fluoride. He believes that that should over-ride the individual choice of the minority of people who he believes want fluoride in water. He is being led off into his opinions about the virtues of fluoride and its impact on public health as compared with other additives to water. I am merely saying, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn, who said that somehow there is some great principle of individual choice here, that I still fail to see how that stalwart body of people who wish to have a substance that exists naturally in water in some parts of the country not to be in their water can assume that their individual liberty can be taken so far that everybody's water must be changed to accommodate them.

We do not intend to sweep away the right of the individual to have a chance to influence decisions on these matters. Although, by giving the Bill a Second Reading, the House has not accepted that the absolute individual choice should be installed in the law, nobody is saying that there should be no decision making process or, least of all, as the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) argued, that the Government, by some edict, will now make all decisions. I remind the House that the whole purpose of the Bill was to restore the law to that which had been followed in practice by water and health authorities and successive Governments. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said, that is local decision making. We are proposing that decisions should be taken by the correct and responsible local authority. The Government have no wish to impose choices on those authorities.

People have campaigned for and against fluoride for many years. Different parts of the country have come to different conclusions. If it was not for a Scottish case, we should not be here debating the issue in the middle of the night. The Government are merely putting back in the hands of the correct local authorities discretion to make a decision about whether fluoride should be added to local water.

Mr. Best: Does my right hon. and learned Friend trust health authorities never to make mistakes?

Mr. Clarke: No, and for a number of their mistakes they are held accountable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We know that if we do not hold them to account, we shall have to account to the House for their mistakes. We have made it clear that we are leaving it to health authorities to reach a judgment whether to apply for fluoride to be added. The Bill is not intended to pave the way for a great new national campaign, such as we certainly have not conducted during our first five years in office.

12.30 am

Mr. Lawrence: Is not my right hon. and learned Friend being unusually disingenuous and naive? Is not the position that because of uncertainty about the law, few water authorities were fluoridating water supplies? Now that he has removed that state of uncertainty which may have put them at financial risk, they will almost inevitably, double, treble or quadruple the volume of water that is being fluoridated. At present 10 per cent. is fluoridated. In a year or two between 30 per cent. and 50 per cent. may be fluoridated. Does my right hon. and learned Friend not appreciate that reality?

Mr. Clarke: It is my unworldly nature which keeps me in this post, so I do not entirely appreciate my hon. and learned Friend's point. There has been doubt about the law, which is why the Government offered an indemnity to authorities against the threat of legal proceedings if they decided to go ahead with fluoridation. They have not faced the financial penalties that my hon. and learned Friend described.

We are talking about local decision making, and I agreed with some of my hon. and learned Friend's speech. All the amendments and the debate are addressed to the question of which local authorities should take the decision, and how they should conduct themselves when they do so, so that they do not ride roughshod over individual opinion.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Why does the Minister regard it as preferable to leave the decision making to a nominated body when there are ample elected local bodies available to take the decision on a democratic basis?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman, because he leads me precisely to my point. The question at issue relates to the choice of authorities. Why does the Bill, as drafted by the Government, give the decision to the authorities which have been taking that decision for the past 20 years? There are two good reasons.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: That is rubbish.

Mr. Clarke: That is a statement of historical fact.

Mr. Winterton: That is rubbish. As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, until local government reorganisation, water authorities were under the control of local authorities, which were democratically elected.

Mr. Clarke: I am not sure that all the private water companies which were succeeded by the present water authorities, were. The two authorities to which we have

chosen to give the decision-making power, are those which the House has made responsible first for the public water supply and, secondly for public health. It is only on that, which I would have thought was a fairly rational basis, that the choice of those two bodies was made.

The water authorities are obviously charged with all the practical, technical and other problems that arise from the distribution of water. The district health authorities are charged with all responsibilities for public health, especially preventative medicine, health education and so on, which is an important part of their task. That is not the conclusive part of my argument, but at least in deciding which local bodies should be responsible for local decision-making, its beginning has the rationality of choosing the only bodies which have any direct responsibility for either the water supply or public health.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister accept that one of the problems for hon. Members who have tabled amendments is that we recall vividly that he instructed health authorities on, for example, privatisation, that they must carry out his instructions? He did not do that only through a circular, but he wrote to the chairmen of the regional health authorities—I admit that they are not the tiers about which we are debating—saying that they must carry out his instructions sent by circular and also what he said, even if it was not sent by circular. The worry is that if there is only one chain of command and no local democratic element, the Minister may well do the same again. Although I am in favour of what the Minister wants to do, I want the decision to be taken locally.

Mr. Clarke: As other hon. Members have been drawing distinctions between different arguments, I draw a distinction between the activities of health authorities when it comes to making the best use of public money —we have taken action to ensure that health authorities do not of their own volition forgo savings that they could make, by testing the cost of their support services by going to tender—and a decision on fluoride.

I can repeat the undertaking that I have given—the Government will not give any directions to those local bodies about whether they should add fluoride. I shall leave this to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), but I suspect that the Opposition will not commit themselves to some great national campaign to add fluoride to the water by putting pressure on those local bodies, and if ever the great coalition arises it is clear that the alliance will not chip in directions to them so we have a timeless prospect before us whereby the matter will be left to local discretion. We then move to how best that local discretion can be exercised.

All the amendments try to introduce into the decision making of health and water authorities an element which will reassure us all that they are more responsible to the public by bringing in elected local government on the argument that that means that an element of democracy is injected into the process.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister and his colleagues have appointed the health authority and the water authority members in south Yorkshire. Let us suppose that the south Yorkshire county council, all the metropolitan district councils and all the parish councils in south Yorkshire which are largely dominated by my party, decided that they were flatly opposed to the fluoridation of water, and that a health authority and water authority, appointed by a Conservative Government, were to ignore the views of the elected local authorities. Does he deny that he would sustain the water and health authorities in their complete disregard of local, democratic views?

Mr. Clarke: It is clear from all the debates that we have had on fluoride that the idea that local democracy will be ridden roughshod over on any party political basis is mistaken. We are on yet another of those subjects, which I seem to be hitting with unerring regularity week by week, where the party divisions are being shattered as we go along.

The Government are reserving to those authorities which are responsible for decision making, the decision-making power in their own sphere. At the moment, if any metropolitan county or any district within a metropolitan county passed any resolution about the contents of the public water supply, it would have no practical effect because the house, in its wisdom, has not yet given local authorities responsibility for public water. Similarly, if all the district councils——

Mr. Meadowcroft: It has taken it away.

Mr. Clarke: Exactly. The House, in its wisdom, has taken it away. If every local authority in south Yorkshire were to pass a resolution about the hospital service that would be an expression of opinion, but it would not be decisive, because the House has not given local authorities any responsibility for that kind of public health.

For that reason, ther is, to say the least, a distinct illogicality in saying—at this hour of the morning it would appear that the most vital part of the Health Service is the public water system — as various of these amendments suggest, that the decision-making power should be transferred to bodies which have no direct responsibility for any other aspect of the subject.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: It is more than that. I am not just standing on what seems to me to be the basic constitutional principle that we cannot give one public body decision-making powers for a matter for which it has no other responsibility.

I suggest also that we must have a decision-making process that makes some sense, whether for or against fluoride. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton will forgive me for saying that in Committee I expressed the view that one or two of his amendments were plainly of a wrecking nature. The aim was to cloud the issue by saying that a number of bodies' opinions should coincide before fluoride could be added to the water supply, thereby making it impossible ever to arrive at a positive conclusion.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way again, but I wish to make this argument plain so that I do not have to keep chopping into it. I remind the House that the boundaries of the various bodies do not coincide. Water authorities cover a large area and the pattern of distribution of water means that they can alter the water supply in ways determined by purely practical considerations. The areas of water authorities do not match those of health authorities; in their turn, the health authorities' areas do not match boundaries of the district councils or the county councils. If we give all these bodies decision-making power — I am

[Mr. Clarke]

conceding to the skill of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton as on of the authors of the proposition that is before us—it would be necessary to achieve a consensus within a jigsaw of water authorities, health authorities and local authorities of different tiers before fluoride could be added to the water supply. I hope that it is an unworthy suspicion on my part that one of the reasons for the new clauses is an attempt to ensure that fluoride is not added to the water suuply anywhere. I accept also that it is part of local democracy and a concern for the individual.

Mr. Golding: Is the Minister worried that he is dependent upon an unholy alliance between do-gooders on the one hand and the payroll vote on the other? Is he not worried also that apparently he cannot persuade the House, or those hon. Members who are present, to take an interest in his arguments? When he talks about the will of the House he is really talking about members of the Government who have been dragooned to stay up tonight to vote with him in what is supposed to be a free vote.

Mr. Clarke: It is not an unholy alliance. The payroll vote is always doing good in the House and I have no doubt that it will do so on many future occasions. Yet again, I find myself involved in a passionate debate. I have been involved in others fairly recently in which I have felt fairly strongly. I am interested in the number of hon. Members who are in their places at 12.42 am to express a view about fluoride but I am not sure that the general public share their great concern. I said in Committee that I had not received a letter from one of my constituents on the issue but I have now received about six.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister's last argument is an illustration of how ludicrous it is to debate such an important issue at this time of the morning. Does he accept that there is no problem in getting authorities in a conterminous as the parish councils in England and the community councils in Wales are conterminous with the water authorities or health authorities? Even more important, if a volume of opinion is expressed through democratically elected bodies within an area that is represented by a health authority that opposes the introduction of fluoride, does he accept that the health authority should give due weight to that opinion although it is not a sanction on it?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's conclusion, but everything depends on what we mean by "due weight". I am saying that the decision-making process cannot be divided among a myriad of authorities. That is impossible. For all the reasons that I have given, that would lead to confusion and foolish decision making. If we are to preserve the present position and say that health authorities and water authorities are logically the right choice as decision makers, we cannot bring elected local authorities into the decision-making processes. The question arises, and starkly in new clause 1, which has been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn, how can we pay due regard to the expressions of opinion that come from local authorities? Due regard should be given to the opinions of the general public as well as those of local authorities and community health councils.

The House should resist all those amendments which appear to give a decision-making power to authorities which are not charged with any responsibility. After all, this House has no day-to-day decision-making responsibilities for local government and local government has no decision-making power over central Government. We should consider how best to consult the public, including elected bodies.

12.45 am

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: It is difficult to accept my right hon. and learned Friend's assurances about the influence of guidelines, letters and pressure when his Department is financing the Fluoridation Society — which promotes fluoridation—to the tune of £14,000. How can my right hon. and learned Friend say that he and his Department are unbiased in this matter?

Mr. Clarke: I did not know that we financed the Fluoridation Society. The idea that the £14,000 involved guides our decision is misguided.

The Government introduced the Bill for one reason only. In law there was some doubt and that doubt was turned into confusion when a lady, in Glasgow, with no teeth brought a case to the Scottish court. A Scottish lawyer heard all the evidence for and against fluoride, and decided that fluoride was beneficial and posed no danger to the public but that the health authority had no grounds upon which to put it in the water. This is a serious and non-biased attempt to restore to the law the commonsense position which we had always believed to exist.

Mr. Fairbairn: My right hon. and learned Friend should not mock so important a principle so stupidly, so late at night, when many people regard the fundamental of life—water—as important. His right hon. and hon. Friends might be waiting to vote for him, but he will not impress the people of the country if he makes a mockery of an important principle.

The case to which he referred was brought on principle —whether the woman had teeth or not. If my right hon. and learned Friend does not deal with it on principle he will insult the House, the people of the country and the Government of which he is a member.

Will the Minister understand? Water is the only substance that all of us have to drink. It is not a matter of democracy, of pay-roll votes or majorities. It is a matter of purity for all of us.

Mr. Clarke: We do not wish to lower the tone of debate late at night. I do not deride my hon. and learned Friend's principles. I tried to explain that I do not agree that the great cause of individual liberty is raised by fluoride. My hon. and learned Friend says that we are talking about the quality of water. Because of the constituents of our diet we need all sorts of nourishments and individual liberty might be involved in all sorts of respects. I was deliberately not trying to become involved in that when we are talking about consultations.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The hon. Gentleman has not been here very long.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for giving way, especially because the hon. Gentleman said that I have not been here very long. That is true, and I apologise. I have been

attending a Committee. How precisely will this consultation go ahead? Obviously, before we vote on this issue, we want to know precisely what the Government have in mind.

Mr. Clarke: The opportunity for me to say so is getting nearer. I have reached the stage in my argument where I can say no more about why we should not share the decision-making process throughout the various tiers of local government together with the health and water authorities. We are talking about how to pay proper regard to individual opinions and how to consult.

At an earlier stage, the Government reiterated their determination to ensure that health authorities should consult before taking this decision. We could ensure by administrative guidance that that is done, but it is plain from the mood of the House that hon. Members—I trust that they accept my assurances on the Government's behalf—are not sure that the Government's successors will adhere to our assurances. They need something more positive than just an undertaking that we would require health authorities to consult administratively in the usual way.

I am prepared to say that we accept that the Bill should be amended so as to place a statutory duty on the health authorities to undertake proper public consultation before deciding whether to apply to the water authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn may justifiably say that new clause 1 lays such a statutory duty on the health authority. I believe that that new clause is too narrow. I suggest that my hon. Friend should stipulate only the local authorities—my hon. Friend takes every tier

"county council, borough or district council, community or parish council"—

and then take in one consumer organisation, which is the community health council. We would certainly expect the health authority to consult that council all the time on this or any other important local matter.

I am most sympathetic to my hon. Friend's new clause, but I would prefer the Bill not to include it. I would prefer to be allowed to give an undertaking that in another place the Government will move an amendment laying upon the health authorities a statutory duty to undertake more general public consultation, with the obvious implication—as with matters of this kind—that public consultation would begin by taking in elected local authorities which are accustomed to participating in this process. That process would, therefore, be able to take in a wider range of bodies and opinions in the way in which most public bodies are accustomed to doing when they consult.

Mr. Lawrence: What reassurance is that really? I have already given the example of how, in a sense, the Severn-Trent water authority was able to take the pulse of popular opinion in the area it covered when every single county council, practically every district council and an overwhelming majority of parish councils said no. Nevertheless the Severn-Trent water authority, seized of that knowledge, decided to fluoridate. What reassurance is there in the amendment suggested by my right hon. and learned Friend?

Mr. Clarke: I am not altogether sure whether consultation was lacking in that case. The Severn Trent water authority does not fluoridate the water in a large part of its area. It successfully and popularly fluoridates the water in Birmingham in particular. That fluoridation has been occurring for years.

If my hon. and learned Friend is saying that by consultation he means that the authorities should be bound by the reactions of particular people to the consultation process—he lays heavy emphasis on the local authority—I have to say that that is not consultation. It is an argument that always creeps into every consultation process in Government. I believe that, when agreeing that one is going through a process of consultation, one does not say that one is binding oneself to accept the majority reaction to that consultation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] The amazement is only at the ordinary meaning of the word in the English language. Consultation that is binding in its results is not consultation, but is handing over the decision-making power to those whom one consults.

I cannot be accused of shrinking from making clear what I have described. I shall not rehearse all the arguments about not dividing the decision making among countless different bodies. We must stick to the logical decision-making authorities. They should consult and hold their meetings in public, and should be accountable to the public in that way. The best way to achieve this without attempting some radical rewriting of the statutory powers and responsibilities of the various local authorities charged with these duties is to lay a statutory duty to consult on the health authority, and that is what I shall propose. As that cannot be dealt with by any of the amendments or new clauses, I undertake that the Government will do that in another place.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): Is my right hon. and learned Friend not saying, when he talks about the free will of the House choosing to flouridate the water and local people deciding to put flouride in their water locally, that here, the payroll vote, told by him, will decide to put flouride in the water, and that locally, the health authority, appointed by him, will tell us to put flouride in the water?

Mr. Clarke: I have made jokes about this before, but as a member of the payroll vote, I like to remind hon. Members occasionally that I am here as a Member of Parliament, accountable to my constituents, just like any other hon. Member. If it turns out that more of the payroll vote is here tonight than any other group of hon. Members, the House should abide by the consequences.

I have already made it clear that we are leaving this choice to the discretion of local authorities. The history of the last decade has made it clear that they will not rush into these decisons, as my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) suggests. The idea that we shall remove from the health authorities those who do not vote for flouride, as the hon. Member for Ashfield suggested, is another matter far from our minds. We have a number of other considerations to take into account when appointing those members than their view on flouride, which has never entered into our considerations.

I am not dealing with this matter frivolously. On Second Reading, hon. Members were concerned about individual liberties, choice and all the rest of it. I ask those hon. Members who have spoken in the debate to address themselves to the need for legislation in a sensible form to give two bodies only responsibility for deciding those matters where they have the total responsibility in every

[Mr. Haynes]

about consultation and democracy under the Government. What right have the Government to do what they propose without consulting the people who will be affected?

Consultation is the point at issue. By consultation, the people will say whether fluoride, if it is in the water naturally, should be removed. If they say that it should, they will have my support because I am anti-fluoride, and in taking that view I am with some Conservative Members. If we agree that water should be natural, without containing fluoride, we should find a means of removing what flouride it contains.

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): We must nail firmly the accusation that, because fluoride occurs naturally in water, we should add it to water where it is not present naturally. We argued in Committee—our argument has not been rebutted so far—that in addition to fluoride, other constituent parts make up the water content, and many of those parts, including calcium, are beneficial. It is probably not necessary to remove such constituent parts because the water has qualities which aid natural consumption. It is not——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is making a long intervention. I remind him that we are dealing with consultation with local authorities. The general principles cannot be argued in discussing the new Clause.

Mr. McGuire: I apologise for the length of my intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I wish that I had the ability to speak more succinctly. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is wondering whether fluoride, where it occurs naturally in water, should be taken out. He should accept that the water contains other qualities which we would not want to take out. Those qualities do not do any damage, I urge him to concentrate on adding fluoride artificially, rather than taking it out. He will then be on a good wicket.

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-unde-Lyme): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) wants lessons in being succinct, I will take him out afterwards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is time to return to the subject of the new clause.

Mr. Haynes: We are talking about the need for consultation about the fluoridation of water. Unfortunately, the Government have established a sort of secret society in that one cannot learn what water authorities are saying when they discuss these issues. The press are not allowed into their meetings, so the general public cannot be told the facts. How can the Government talk about consultation and democracy when what is happening is a denial of democracy? That is why I support the new clause. This is all about democracy and consultation, in both of which I sincerely believe, but it seems that a number of hon. Gentlemen believe in neither.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I wish to speak to the amendments in the hope that hon. Gentlemen who are my friends on both sides of the House will stick around long enough to be able to vote.

May I at once address my mind to the amendments under consideration. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) will not mind my saying that new clause 1 does not meet with my approval, since it is far too wet and feeble. New clause 2, which calls for the ability to cease fluoridation after it has begun, seems to me too much like shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. Amendment No. 15, which I tabled, is meant to be a fallback position if all else fails. In my view, it would then be reasonable to expect the health authority to make the decision to fluoridate with at least half the people on the health authority present. Amendment No. 13 is purely procedural.

That brings me to the much stronger amendment No. 14, which I tabled. I limited this to getting a majority in favour in each County Council because in Committee I had argued the case for getting a majority in favour in district councils, and I thought that Mr. Speaker would find it easier to select the amendment for discussion if I changed it slightly.

To my great pleasure, I note that the perfect amendment in this respect has been tabled by the Liberals, that is, amendment No. 2. That does what I attempted to do in Committee and what I am trying to do now on Report. It says:

"... approval is given for such action by a majority in favour of it in a county council or councils, or in each district council, in the area to be affected."

I think that that is the right and sensible approach, and the strong approach, and I hope that it will meet with support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I am pleased on this occasion—and I hope that it will not happen too often—to accept and support something advanced by members of the Liberal party.

Mr. Fairbairn: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will appreciate that, while he may be foolish enough to accept something which is given in the Trojan horse with Liberal colours this could not of course apply to Scotland because we do not have such authorities. The Liberal Members allegedly are in favour of a separate Scottish government.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that most helpful intervention.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Is the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) aware that the water authorities in Scotland are themselves elected authorities? This is a function of the regional councils. The amendment, therefore, is perfectly correctly worded; it need not apply to Scotland because the Scottish authorities are already elected. It is only in England and Wales that the water authorities are not elected bodies.

Mr. Lawrence: If I may join in the discussion between my hon. and learned Friend and the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), I want merely to make the point that we now have an opportunity to do something which it is important for the House to do.

11 pm

We have already sold the pass on the freedom of choice. We have sold the pass in allowing for the first time in the history of this country mass medication of the public water supply, which is an infringement of the fundamental liberty of the individual so grave that whenever it has been introduced in any country, it is not very long before advantage is taken of the precedent therein. I am very worried that at some stage there might be in this country a Government who would build upon the precedent of

adding fluoride to the water, which at its best, if the claims for it have anything like approaching any value, would only delay the onset of caries in children's teeth for several years——

Mr. Fairbairn: What about AIDS?

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. and learned Friend puts his finger on it—*[Interruption.]* I do not think that that is the first time that he has put his finger on a matter of importance. Although AIDS is a serious matter, several other illnesses can also be rife in society, such as AIDS, for which cures are not necessarily known, and where concerns run very deep. There might be a tendency in a future Government to take the advice of doctors, dentists and scientists, and treat the water so that that illness may be cured.

One can conceive situations in which, for example, if any country became overpopulated, the temptation to put into the water something that might have a contraceptive capacity would be very great——

Mr. Fairbairn: Bromide.

Mr. Lawrence: The expert on bromide and other forms of treatment of water and mere water sits behind me, and I do not think that I need go down that avenue very far tonight.

It is a monstrous infringement of the liberty of the individual. The amendment is hauling back some measure of control over it.

I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, who resisted an amendment in Committee to make it compulsory for a water authority to fluoridate in any situation where the health authority required it to do so. We all know that health authorities will require water authorities to do so because health authorities are full of those great public-spirited gentlemen, the doctors, scientists and dentists of this world who, while they are public-spirited, do not seem to care a damn for the liberty of the individual.

I think that I have already told the story of the dentist who came into my surgery and asked whether I would fight for his freedom to choose which school he should send his child to. I said I would do so if he would fight for my freedom to choose whether fluoride goes into my water. I asked how he would equate the two. He said that he would have to think about that. The sad thing was that he had not thought about it until I raised it. Freedom is not a matter that centres in the thoughts of doctors, dentists and scientists in our society. It should centre in the thoughts of we who represent the people who want to be free in this country.

The only way in which we can control health authorities and water authorities — but mostly it is the health authorities—is if we introduce an element of democratic choice to the process of fluoridating water. If one was to say my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, "Do you believe in fluoridation?" she would say, "Yes, provided that there is local choice." If one were to say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, "Do you think that we should have fluoride in the water?" he would say, "Yes," as he has done, "provided that we have local choice." The people who have written to the Department of Health and Social Security and said that they oppose fluoridation are always told that if it is introduced as a discretionary matter, there will be local choice.

However, we have been misled because ordinary people believe local choice to be what the local authority —the locally elected authority, the representative of the people—decides. But we find in the Bill that it is only the local health authority or the local water authority.

That would not satisfy anybody in the area in which I live who was looking for local democracy because the Severn Trent water authority does not represent the wishes of the people of Burton upon Trent, Uttoxeter, Tutbury or Tocester; it represents an enormous area, a region of the United Kingdom and simply has no interest in finding out what the wishes of the people are.

It is not that we simply want to be able to express through our democratically elected representatives their wishes in the matter; it is that we have before us examples of exactly how dismissive of democratically-held views on the subject the water authorities can be. In this matter we see no party boundaries, therefore I hope I shall be forgiven for addressing all hon. Members as hon. Friends when I say that the health authorities in the West Midlands and the water authorities decided that they wanted to fluoridate the water. They did not decide just cool, without having any idea of the wishes of the people, therefore they cannot be excused for saying that they really believed the people are in favour and that was why they did it. Thay had many expressions of view on fluoridation. Their view was directly contrary to the view which had already been expressed by Staffordshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Hereford and Worcestershire county councils. So here we have a water authority that in complete disregard of and contempt for the democratically expressed view of county councils in its area has decided to go ahead and mass-medicate the water supply.

Mr. Golding: The hon. Gentleman is talking about the regional health authority but I see that according to the definition "health authority" means, in relation to England and Wales, any district health authority. Would the hon. Gentleman advise me whether he is referring to regions or districts?

Mr. Lawrence: The present situation is that the area health authority makes its representations, the regional health authority advises the water authority and the water authority fluoridates the water. It is on the request of the regional health authority, with the advice and support of the area health authority—*[Interruption.]* I am so sorry, I mean district health authority. We have abolished the area health authority. That was one of the achievements of the Conservative Government in the days when it was trying to liberate people and also to save money—both factors which arise in this matter. The hon. Gentleman will have to ask the Minister what his intentions are. The fact of the matter is that there is no intention in this Bill democratically to give right to anybody to have his views expressed or understood.

Whenever in the West Midlands region, in the Severn-Trent water authority area, there has been an opportunity to test the will of the people in the only way which is really effective—that is the way of the democratically elected councils—they have acted in the face of the results of those elections.

I have spoken about county councils, but it is far worse than that. As far as the district councils are concerned, Newcastle-under-Lyme — the hon. Gentleman's own district council — Stafford district council, south

[Mr. Golding]

I do not wish to be led astray. But I wish to discuss amendment No. 15, which I reject. The amendment is naive, and I do not know why the hon. and learned Member for Burton tabled it. I should have thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) was too experienced to put his name to that amendment. This measure makes respectable a vote on the issue of fluoridation. It is as though someone had said that if Crippen had been democratically elected and had convened a meeting of himself and his mistress at which one person voted for poisoning, he could not be taken to court. That is the principle *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members laugh, but this matter is laughable.

2 am

I appeal to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover because he understands the way of the world. Conservative Members do not. I do not know whether life in the courts is rough or sheltered, but fancy saying to an authority, "You shall have the authority to poison so long as buses are sent around the towns and villages to bundle 50 per cent of authority members on them."

Mr. Beith: Chauffeur-driven cars.

Mr. Golding: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover and I would go by bus.

The meeting is held and a vote is taken. The authority would say, "We have had the 50 per cent. attendance as required by Parliament. We have satisfied the condition. We have satisfied the opposition to the Bill." How daft.

Mr. Lawrence: All right. I shall withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Golding: I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman does so. The meeting's chairman would only have to send out two notices, one saying, "Meeting at two o'clock on fluoridation," and the other, a nice white card with gold edging, saying, "Sherry party at 2.30 pm." The chairman would ring around saying, "We have a notable personality and sherry and beer will be available."

Mr. Skinner: If there was claret, the SDP would turn up.

Mr. Golding: There would be claret for the SDP and a notable personality, resulting in 50 per cent. attendance at the meeting.

I hope that the innocent, gullible and unworldly hon. and learned Member for Burton will withdraw the amendment. I once appeared in the stocks with the hon. and learned Gentleman, but I would have refused if I had known that I would be appearing with such an innocent. The hon. and learned Gentleman must withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Skinner: There is another aspect to this 50 per cent. I agree with my hon. Friend about the way in which one could arrange to get that 50 per cent. attendance. It is clear that the Government have not been using that invitation card system tonight to get 50 per cent. of their Back Benchers here to vote for the measure. Will my hon. Friend consider whether it is more democratic to get 50 per cent. of authority members to the meeting as opposed to getting fewer than 50 per cent. of Conservative Members here to pass the measure?

Mr. Golding: That is not the point. The point is that the Minister and the chairman of the authority would use the same sort of language. Tonight, the payroll vote will be whipped in and out. I think of the scene in the courtyard, with all those Rovers bumping into each other, five minutes after the Vote. Five minutes later, the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box and say that this is the will of Parliament. That will be after a whipped payroll vote, with nobody wanting to vote and everybody hating it, but voting because a Department has decided to go one way, and the Whips are supporting it, and the directive has gone out. That is what the Minister will describe as the will of Parliament, as will the water boards and the health authorities. They will get 51 per cent. of members—26 per cent. will vote yes, 24 per cent. will vote no, and they will say that it was the will of Parliament.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is right because the Minister used that argument when he talked about the democratic powers of water authorities. He said that Parliament in its wisdom had taken those powers away. It is clear that Ministers would do this again, given the chance, as my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Golding: I agree with my hon. Friend. In the interests of time, however, I shall not develop his point unduly.

Amendment No. 14 has been tabled by the same hon. Members who tabled amendment No. 13. It says:

'There shall be no increase in the fluoride content of the water supplied by a water undertaker unless approval is given for such action by the vote of a majority in favour of it in each county council in the area to be affected'.

There is a problem here. The hon. and learned Member for Burton should listen at this point. He was kind enough to give me a list of all the different——

Mr. John Cope (Treasurer to Her Majesty's Household) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 105, Noes 43.

Division No. 114] **[2.09 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Ancram, Michael	Eggar, Tim
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Farr, Sir John
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Batiste, Spencer	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Gow, Ian
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Gregory, Conal
Bottomley, Peter	Gummer, John Selwyn
Bright, Graham	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Brooke, Hon Peter	Hayhoe, Barney
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Henderson, Barry
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Burt, Alistair	Howard, Michael
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Howells, Geraint
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Colvin, Michael	Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Coombs, Simon	Jessel, Toby
Cope, John	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy	Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Couchman, James	Lamont, Norman
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Lang, Ian
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Dobson, Frank	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Dorrell, Stephen	Lilley, Peter
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Dunn, Robert	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Durant, Tony	Lord, Michael

Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Beith, A. J.
Best, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cash, William
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Flannery, Martin
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Galley, Roy
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Maynard, Miss Joan
Monro, Sir Hector
Norris, Steven
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Golding and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 53, Noes 95.

Division No. 115] **[2.20 am**

AYES

Best, Keith
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Conway, Derek
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dobson, Frank
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Flannery, Martin
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Galley, Roy
Golding, John
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Monro, Sir Hector
Pike, Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Batiste, Spencer
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hayhoe, Barney
Henderson, Barry
Howard, Michael
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Lamont, Norman
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned. — *[Mr. Cope.]*

2.30 am

Dr. Marek: I am somewhat surprised that at this stage the Government should propose the adjournment of further consideration of the Bill. I was waiting patiently in the long line of speakers on the previous new clause, and I

[Dr. Marek]

expected that I would be able to have my say, for what it is worth, and impart my opinion to the House. However, that was not to be because, by the smallest of majorities, the Government managed to carry the Closure. However, we have now disposed of new clause 1, and it would be out of order to refer to it.

Important new clauses are now before us. There are new clauses 6 and 11. New clause 6 refers to

"monitoring of the levels of fluoride within all parts of the United Kingdom."

I am worried about whether that monitoring is goind on now. If it is not, how can we be sure that an adequate and accurate record of the effects of fluoridation will be kept? Only if we have such a record can we be absolutely sure in 10, 20, 30 or 50 years that we are doing the right thing by placing fluoride in our water supply. That is a very important clause. I should like to oppose the motion that further consideration be adjourned. I hope that we shall continue with our debate.

It was wrong of the Government to seek to put the debate on after 10 o'clock. It is a debate of crucial importance. I am in basic sympathy with the Bill. I was not allowed to speak, because of the Government. I have one or two caveats about the Bill, but I am in basic sympathy with it. New clause 6, tabled by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), is very important. We should get on to it as quickly as possible.

That is not the only matter that we should consider. For example, there is new clause 11, which states:

"The Secretary of State shall establish machinery for monitoring the effects of the operation of this Act with particular reference to—

(a) benefit for teeth;

(b) harm to health;

(c) harm to plant and acquatic life".

It is the same with new clause 6. New clause 11 is about obtaining information. Is that information being obtained now? If it is not, we should obtain it as quickly as possible. For that reason, it is important that we debate new clause 11 as soon as possible.

There are also amendments Nos. 6 and 17, which have been selected, as well as amendment No. 4, which I am not too worried about. However, it needs to be debated fairly because it is crucial to the Bill. I would support the principle of it. It is that fluoridation should go ahead only if the fluoridating authority can guarantee that the quantities that will be put into the water will be one part per million or close to that.

Finally, we have amendments Nos. 11 and 10, which are very important to the Bill. We have to know exactly what compounds can be put into the list and what compounds cannot be put in. It is not altogether clear to me, and I should certainly like to know precisely what the Government think about this. We have two compounds here — hexafluorosilicic acid and disodium hexafluorosilicate. I should like to know whether the Government would be able to put any other compounds into this list and whether any others are suitable.

I know that water is fluoridated in certain areas of the United Kingdom now and it would certainly be my intention to question the Government fairly closely on exactly what compounds are put into the water. For that reason, I hope that the motion will be defeated and that we shall be able to continue the debate on this very important matter, if only because we have half the Cabinet, almost all the payroll vote and all the talent, such as it is, present on the Government Benches. We do not have that very often. Those Benches are usually empty, except for one or two people on the Treasury Bench and a Whip at the far end. We do not usually have the benefit of the Government's concentration and obvious expertise, but we have it tonight, and I suggest that we try to use it. I should certainly be very interested to hear what some of the Government Members have to say.

2.37 am

Mr. Marlow: As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and as the whole House knows, the Treasury Bench has many qualities. One of its supreme qualities is that of listening very carefully to the debate. The Government put measures together and put proposals before the House, then there is a debate and the Government—particularly this Government—listen very carefully to what is said.

This evening we have heard a series of brilliant speeches. The last, which was interrupted by the closure — was a brilliant speech by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). It was persuasive, cogent and well argued.

The motion before the House is that further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned. Perhaps the Minister will open his heart to us and tell us what his intentions are. It may well be that it is his intention to withdraw the Bill altogether, and it would help the House if he were to tell us that before we consider the motion.

2.38 am

Mr. Hardy: I rise to oppose the motion. Hon. Members who were in the Chamber when I took part in the debate on new clause 1 will remember that I had the misfortune to speak after the Minister. The Minister, perhaps understandably in view of the late hour, was very impatient. He rose when quite a few hon. Members were still hoping to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As the Minister will recall, I put a number of questions to him, and I was hoping that during the course of the debate—and it will be very relevant during the debate on new clause 6—I could remind the Minister of the matters which I had raised I asked him, for example, about the implications of the experience in my constituency when a herd of Shorthorn cattle died of fluorosis as a result of the ground being contaminated by fluoride salts. He had talked about medical advice but had not mentioned veterinary advice. I was hoping that in the meantime he would have secured the veterinary advice which would be necessary in order to respond to the points that I had put to him. The Minister might wish to assure me that he will provide me with the relevant information. Unfortunately, he was so impatient to speak in the debate that he could not wait for some of us who had quite serious observations to make.

The second point that I made, to which I was also hoping to be favoured with a reply from the Minister, concerned those of my constituents—and the Secretary of State for the Environment should definitely listen to this —who, like quite a number of constituents in the areas represented by hon. Gentlemen opposite, do not at present enjoy an adequate domestic water supply.

I have real reservations about whether we should be spending money on or giving priority to adding things to water when some of our constituents do not have an adequate flow of water from their domestic taps—and,

in many cases, perhaps because of the cuts in the Government's housing investment, do not have an adequate water supply in their homes at all. It is absurd that we are talking about adding chemicals to water when some people in our country do not have an adequate----

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not go into the merits and demerits of the Bill but should confine himself to the question whether further consideration of the Bill should be adjourned.

Mr. Hardy: I am suggesting that we should not adjourn when I have constituents who do not have an adequate water supply. However, I shall not trespass on that point further.

I would have liked the Minister to have replied to another point. It could have been covered in the debate on new clause 6. While we are concerned about the monitoring of fluoride, if the Government accepted that new clause we should be monitoring the progress that should be made in Britain to promote decent, clean and healthy streams and rivers.

I marvel that the Government are prepared to devote resources to adding chemicals to our water supply when half the water courses in the industrial areas of England are nothing but open sores. It is right that the Government's priorities should be challenged. It is sad that the Minister has not responded to the very serious points made in the debate following his speech. The result is that we shall reach a temporary stop in the progress of the Bill without having had adequate replies to some of the points raised.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the tactics that the Government have needed to use to get through the Bill on a supposedly free vote are quite shabby? Will he address himself to the thought that the payroll vote happens to be here, not having heard the debate. Not one Conservative Member has spoken for the Bill, other than the Minister. I suggest that the pay roll voters ponder on that and ask themselves whether it would not be a favour to the British people if they went home and left this matter to a true free vote. Alternatively——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is supposed to be making an intervention. He must not make a long speech.

Mr. Hawkins: If the payroll voters do not want a free vote, perhaps just one of them will speak for the Bill.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you ask hon. Members to be brief in their contributions?

Mr. Hardy: It behoves all of us, on both sides of the House, to follow my hon. Friend's advice on every possible occasion, which is why I shall not continue for much longer.

I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins). I hope that I shall always have the courtesy to do so, especially when he makes such valid and pertinent observations. It is sad that what is supposed to be a free vote clearly is not one. I am glad that Conservative Members point to the sheer mockery of the House pretending that it is having a free vote when a substantial proportion of hon. Members would not dream of being here in any circumstances unless there was a very real element of compulsion.

Dr. Marek: Whether we should adjourn is an important point. We should not be here at this time of the morning. The Government should put on this business immediately after Question Time as it is an important matter that deserves the attention of hon. Members. It is wrong that we should be here at quarter to three in the morning.

Mr. Hardy: I could not agree more. We all have constituents who are seriously interested in this matter. The newspapers will not be reporting our debate at 2.45 am. As they have more sense than to do that, and as our constituents believe that the matter is important, it is reasonable for us to suggest that we continue the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) should not resist temptation, but hold forth at great length until the journalists have got out of their beds and can report the debate to our constituents.

Mr. McGuire: My hon. Friend is right that this debate should be broadcast to the nation through the newspapers. Although Monday's debate, which was broadcast on "Radio 4", was important, does my hon. Friend agree that, in terms of personal freedom, this debate is of far greater importance?

Mr. Hardy: We should debate this matter long enough to examine the payroll vote so that, when the Prime Minister returns from Washington, she can discover which members of the Government are loyal, devoted and here and which have taken the opportunity of her absence to depart at a reasonable hour.

Dr. Marek: Would my hon. Friend address himself to whether the right hon. Lady has been telephoned and whether the Government have therefore received instructions?

Mr. Hardy: I am not sure whether the Prime Minister is on holiday or a state visit. If she is on a state visit, I assume that she will have been telephoned by now but that, if she is on holiday, she might not find out until she returns. I hope that, when she returns, the right hon. Lady will not be as cross as legend sometimes suggests she is. If the Prime Minister were here, she would want Ministers to reply to the serious issues that have been raised. The frivolous attitude that has developed on the Treasury Bench suggests that the House should take this matter rather more seriously than to allow Ministers to escape far too early.

If we have a Division, the Government are bound to win, but I trust that, when we next consider the Bill, the Government will enable us to do so at a reasonable hour. If the Government Whips assure us that the Bill will be discussed after Question Time, we should discuss it no more, let the Government have their way and, perhaps, go home rejoicing. Unless we are assured that we will not discuss the Bill at 3 am another morning, the Government must accept that we will be compelled to press this matter for rather a long time.

2.48 am

Mr. Fairbairn: It is important that, when we are discussing a Bill of such major principle, no concept of flippancy, filibustering, twisting the rules of the House or the arms of Ministers should interfere with the seriousness of the principle that we are discussing.

Mr. Beith: The Minister anticipates all the points that I am going to make. I shall come to the relationship between England and Scotland, of which I am peculiarly aware, representing the constituency that I do.

My hon. Friend and I meet on common ground from different points. My hon. Friend comes from the point of believing that fluoride should be put in the water to believing that it should be put in, if it is to be put in, by a body which is democratically accountable. I move from the position of thinking that it were best if it were not done at all to one of thinking that, if it is going to be done, at least let us have it done by some body which is accountable to the public.

I remind the Minister that it is not my name that heads the amendment; the name that heads the amendment is that of my hon. Friend, who is verbally committed to the policy that he is advocating. In no sense is it a wrecking amendment. If the Minister believes that the amendment would be wrecking in effect, he has no confidence in his often repeated claim that the public is behind his proposal, and that it is something which consultation would demonstrate was widely supported. If consultation would demonstrate that, let the ballot demonstrate precisely that.

The Minister dwelt at some length on the differences and the mismatch of areas and the problem that, if local authorities were given the opportunity to make this decision, they are not identical in area to the water authorities, but that is precisely the situation now. The water and health authority areas are themselves not identical, for precisely the reasons that he advanced. They are configured for different reasons. The water authority areas were designed to fit river flows and so on. The two areas are not now the same.

Indeed, in my constituency there is one health authority but three water suppliers — the Northumbrian water authority, the Newcastle and Gateshead water company and the Coquet water board. Two out of those three authorities have fluoridated and unfluoridated areas, and only the Coquet water board is in a wholly unfluoridated area. There are three different authorities and different practices prevailing within the areas of two out of those three authorities. The mismatch therefore exists now. The supposedly overwhelming technical objection that the Minister produces is no less an objection to the situation that he is defending than to the situation that he is attacking, so he cannot rest his case on that argument.

When the Minister says that the arrangement that he is proposing must be some logically defensible one, how can he defend this situation to my constituent? Were he to go to the the village of Cornhill on Tweed in Northumberland, there he would find one or two doughty opponents of fluoridation. How can he explain to my constituents there the situation that, if flouride is put in their water supply, there is nobody whom they can call to account who is dependent upon their vote for his subsequent election? There is nobody to whom they can go and say, "I will not vote for you if you continue to support the policy of putting fluoride in the public water supply". This is the essential democratic test.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): In the context of the Northumbria water authority, would the hon. Gentleman care to reflect on whether the Gibraltarians, who are receiving their water from that authority at present, will have a vote on the matter?

Mr. Beith: The Northumbrian water authority is so keen on its contract with Gibraltar that, if the Gibraltarians say that they do not want any fluoride in the water, there will not be any fluoride in it. The hon. Gentleman points to the wide issue of the vast supplies of water and the huge capital debt in the water authority area we share, thanks to the profligacy of the water authority and its predecessor river authority in building the Kielder reservoir, but that is another story. We carry a heavy capital burden for that.

The case that I was arguing was that a man in my constituency in Cornwall on Tweed can merely look down the road to a point two miles away, to the village of Coldstream, the inhabitants of which can go to someone whom they have elected and say, "I shall not vote for you if you put fluoride in the public water supply." There is a difference of only two miles. On one side of the border people have the right to go to an elected body and demand the redress of grievances and on the other side there is no such right. The Minister drew attention to the existence of that right when he quoted the origins of the Strathclyde case. I take the view that I have always taken about that case, that I do not want fluoride in the water supply at all. However, the fact remains that the inhabitants of Scotland, under the proposals, are in a better position from a democratic point of view than those of England.

Therefore, the Minister, in his incredible determination to resist at all costs having any elected body involved in that process, is demonstrating a fundamental weakness in his position. It is Scargillism from the Conservative Front Bench. The Minister is saying, "No ballot at any price; for heaven's sake, don't let's have a vote on it." That is the fundamental weakness of the Bill, and the Minister should get off that position at the same time as he is telling the National Union of Mineworkers to get off.

Mr. Golding: I do not know whether you saw the Minister at the Dispatch Box, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it was a third, a third and a third performance. A third of the time he was speaking very loudly trying to sell himself the brief. A third of the time he spent giving way to his hon. Friends who do not want the Bill at any price. A third of the time we observed him struggling manfully to keep his trousers up. There were moments when I wished that the Parliamentary Private Secretary had accepted responsibility and gone and got for the Minister both belt and braces, because he needs them tonight.

The debate has been marked by one characteristic. From the Chair you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, see hon. Members weary, tired, fed up, and with their pay packets hanging out of their top pockets. That has been the background of the debate — the payroll vote. The Minister says, "I am also here as a Member of Parliament." On how many nights at 1.22 am in debates of this character—I appeal to an authority, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—as an ordinary Member of Parliament, has the Minister been seen expressing the point of view of his constituents?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I was here last week.

Mr. Golding: It is not when the right hon. and learned Gentleman is here being paid that I am asking about; it is not in his capacity as a Minister that I am talking about —I ask him on how many occasions over the past few years as a constituency Member of Parliament has he

abandoned his bed to put, on a matter of principle, the point of view of his constituents? It will not take him long to add it up.

The debate has been marked by the presence of the payroll vote. I have been part of the payroll vote, as you have, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend says that the debate has been marked by the attendance of the payroll vote. I have got news for him. The payroll vote is not all that anxious. Some members of the payroll vote are trying to wrestle with what is freedom of choice on fluoride, especially now that the lady has gone to Washington. The Whip in charge of this Bill is more than a little anxious. He came rushing up the corridor to me and said, "Are you with us?" I said, "When that happens we can all fold up. You can't get 100 to close the debate, can you?" So I do not know what my hon. Friend is going to do, whether he is going to speak for a long time. It may be necessary.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I have listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman, and indeed to the intervention, but we ought to get back to the new clause.

Mr. Golding: It is my misfortune, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just as I am approaching the point, I am led away by interventions. That could be prevented if the Government Whip, with whom I have had experience in the past—he is what is called in the business accident prone — were to stop roaming the corridors, kerb crawling, molesting, soliciting. If the Government Whip were to take his position on the Treasury Bench, interventions could be avoided.

I was saying that we have had experience of the payroll vote. Tonight has been a case of the dog that did not bark in the night. I have had experience as a Whip. A Whip does two things: he keeps on ringing Ministers, keeping them from their beds, and he goes round finding people to speak for the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that I can see no reference to Whips or, indeed, to the payroll vote in the clauses and amendments we are discussing.

Mr. Golding: I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that——

Mr. Lawrence: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that nobody has spoken for the Government so far except the Minister?

Mr. Golding: That is precisely the point that I was going to make. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) is unusual in his profession: he forgets that he gets paid by the day. He hurries to the point too quickly. The point I am replying to in the debate—you are at a disadvantage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that you have not heard all the contributions tonight—is this. The case of the Minister was that the House supports this measure. Is it not permissible for me to say that the Government Whips have not been able to buy one Member hoping to get on to the payroll vote, which is the fodder of all Whips on such occasions? They have not been able to find one to get up and say, "I am a creep, I am a crawler, but I support the Government."

Mr. Beith: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that the difficulty of the Government is compounded by the fact that, whereas on the principle of the Bill they commanded somewhat wider support then they now enjoy, when it came to this new clause and the related amandments, they found that the people who had hitherto supported them abandoned them and they had no friends at all, because they would not agree to any democratic element?

Mr. Golding: We cannot expect a democratic element from the Minister, with his payroll vote behind him. I am just hoping that the name of Golding having gone up on the screen has further discomfited the payroll vote.

Mr. Marlow: I have to admit that I have just been for an orange squash or something in the Smoking Room. I saw the hon. Gentleman's name come on the screen and that was the reason I came in here. There was a great groan from the payroll vote that was seated in the Smoking Room at the time.

Mr. Golding: I am sorry that that intervention was made, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Tonight I wish I could speak in such a way that my words were not recorded.

I know how important it is to get to the democratic principle. As I said earlier, the danger is that we are facing an alliance of the do-gooders and the payroll vote. The do-gooders are trying to put pressure on us. I very much regret that, having voted against the Bill on Second Reading, I received a letter from a Socialist health authority that rebuked me for having voted against party policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover knows that I could not decide whether that was an argument for or against the way in which I voted. My only defence is that I followed my hon. Friend into the Lobby, so I knew that I was on the side of purity.

1.30 am

Mr. Skinner: At last Thursday's Parliamentary Labour party meeting, I raised the question of a free vote on party policy. Having received a similar letter, I was astute enough to do some checking. In 1978 there was an omnibus resolution on the Pavitt report, which was contrary to the advice that we had received. In 1982, when the Labour party drew up its programme, there was such a great deal of controversy about mass fluoridation that it decided not to include it in the programme. That was passed by conference, which means that party policy is that every Labour party member can choose for himself. That is why the Shadow Cabinet decided on a free vote. Therefore, my hon. Friend is free to carry on, at length.

Mr. Golding: My hon. Friend says that we are in the clear. The letter from the Socialist health authority was as nothing compared with the grilling from my wife who is a member of one of the health authorities. I hope that my speech tonight will not be recorded, because everybody who is associated with a health authority appears to be biased and prejudiced in favour of the Bill.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The conference motion that was passed in 1978 was moved by myself. It contained the recommendation that the Pavitt committee's proposals be carried out by a future Labour Government. Those recommendations included the fluoridation of water. That item, therefore, became party policy within a larger resolution, which included an omnibus matter on dental care as a whole.

Mr. Golding: In this dispute, the person for whom I feel sorry is my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock

[Mr. Golding]

and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). He would have joined in this debate on party policy if it were not for the fact that he put on his electric blanket at 9 o'clock this morning and was desperate to get home to bed. The difficulty for those who argue for democratic decisions is that it is the Government who are imposing this on us. If some of the amendments were accepted, we should not have Ministers sending us substantial packets of paper which say at the top, "Implementation of the Control of Pollution Act" setting out stringent regulations to control water authorities.

I declare an interest as a member the Anglers Co-operative Association, which is concerned with the fight against pollution. I listen to its meetings and to its reports on who is responsible for pollution. When I first joined its committee, I was surprised by the number of times that the water authority was the polluter. It has constantly been argued that it is wrong for a polluter to have responsibility for avoiding pollution. The new regulations apply equally to water authorities which, as they are constituted, should not be given such responsibilities. They have no expertise in health matters.

Some members of water authorities are appointed because of their expertise in fishing, and excellent people they are. Knowledge of the roach, the dace or the bream is no qualification to judge whether people should be given fluoride — or is it? Others are appointed to water authorities because they have an industrial interest in the use of water. One would expect brewers from Burton to be on the Severn-Trent water authority and I would hope that they would not want fluoride to be added to their beer. Water authority members are not appointed to consider health matters.

"The Municipal Year Book 1985" makes the point very well. Under the heading, "A survey of the year 1983-84 by the Water Authorities Association", it says:

"With the boards appointed direct by Ministers, local authority representation reduced and on a new basis and board meetings no longer held in public, a new system of representing consumer interests was thought to be necessary."

Local control has been taken from the boards. They have become the supreme quangos. They are statutory bodies over which the Government have decided that they will have full control. In many cases, local authority representatives have been kicked off the boards.

Mr. Fairbairn: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the question of local brewers, he will have heard the Minister say that beer is made from fluoride-free springs; will he contradict that asinine assumption?

Mr. Golding: The hon. and learned Gentleman has already attacked the Government for being beastly and now he attacks them for being asinine. I am more courteous, and will merely say that they are out of touch.

It is not clear in the Bill to which water it applies. It does not refer only to water in reservoirs, water taken from rivers and rainwater treated in reservoirs, but talks of "water supplies." If a water authority has control over spring water, that is spring water. Ministers never seem to know what their Bills mean or contain. I came across that during the passage of the British Telecommunications Act, 1981. In his answer, the Minister seemed to think that the Bill covered only water dropped from heaven into a reservoir and piped through a domestic tap. Does the Bill state that? Of course it does not. I am sure that the Minister has not a clue. Any minute now—he did it then—the Under-Secretary will look anxiously to the Dispatch Box. They do not know what the Bill contains.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are discussing not the Bill in general, but amendments. I am listening carefully to his speech. Will he tell me to which amendment he is referring?

Mr. Golding: I refer to new clause 1.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have been listening extremely carefully but have not been able during the past 10 minutes to discover whether the hon. Gentleman was talking about new clause 1.

Mr. Hardy: I think that my hon. Friend was referring to amendment No. 15, which is being taken with new clause 1. The words of the amendment are relevant to his point about the Minister controlling the authority. The Minister controls health authorities, as my hon. Friend knows. Amendment No. 15 inserts the words

"after a vote taken at a meeting at which not less than 50 per cent. of the members of the authority entitled to vote are present."

As the Minister controls the membership of the authority, surely he can ensure a better attendance at its meetings than there is on the Government Benches this evening?

Mr. Golding: That has led me astray because I have not yet reached amendment No. 15. I am talking to new clause 1.

From time to time I should perhaps spell out my argument at greater length so that its logic can be followed. I am saying that we cannot trust the water authority to take these decisions. We must look at the Bill to see the logic of the argument. Section 1(1) gives the health authority the right to apply in writing to the statutory water authority for the water supplied within an area. The amendment says, "Hold on. The health authority and the water undertaker cannot do that on their own." Those who tabled the amendment are correct to restrict the power of the water and health authorities, because—here my hon. Friends are right—they are controlled by the Government.

1.45 am

As I was trying to show a moment ago, those authorities would then be subject to a Minister who does not know the Bill. How can we allow that? If the water and health authorities had to consult the county, borough or district councils, the Minister, the water and the health authorities would have to know what they were doing. They do not.

It is clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have been speaking about new clause 1. There are substantial arguments in support of the new clause and substantial objections to it. Have you examined the new clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see the inconsistencies in it? The democratic principle was not the Minister's most powerful argument against the clause. His most powerful argument was his own cynicism—the cynicism of a Minister who says, "All consultation means is that you do not have to take any notice at the end." That is what he said. That destroys the assurance that he has given the House that he will introduce a measure to allow full public participation. That will be brought in on the same cynical basis.

Two letters will be delivered to the health authority. One will say, "You must go for public participation." That is the one that it will open at 9 o'clock. At 10 o'clock a separate letter will be delivered by hand to the chairman's

office. That letter will say, "Oh, PS, when you go for public participation, do not take any notice of it." That is how the Government operate.

The second letter will be reinforced by another payroll vote principle. If the chairmen take notice, they will be reappointed; if they take no notice they will not be reappointed. It is the nod and the wink, the stick and the carrot, with more stick than carrot. That is the principle that the Government operate.

Mr. Beith: The carrot is pretty big as well.

Mr. Golding: The hon. Gentleman says that the carrot is pretty big as well. I still think that the stick is bigger than the carrot. By his cynicism the Minister helps to destroy new clause 1. I do not know why the Government have not said to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), "Look, we will take advantage of your inexperience. We shall accept your new clause." In another place the Government will suddenly find that it is defective. The Minister's cynicism almost reached the Mace but he decided to leave the new clause on one side, as it were.

Of course, the new clause is nonsense. If my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover and I were on the Treasury Bench, we could be more brutal than the Minister. I am sure that we would have treated the new clause with greater brutality. It provides that

"the county council, borough or district council"

shall be consulted by the health authority.

Fancy providing a choice in that way! What will happen? Telephone calls will be made—for example, "Chairman, what is the vote on your council?"; "Chairman, do you think that you can do any better than this?"; "Chairman, if you get a majority, and the other two councils have let me down, we shall put you in the honours list." I can imagine it happening. Yet the hon. Member for Ynys Môn submits the new clause for our consideration. Perhaps he wants the chairman of his district council to get in the houours list. Fancy providing such a choice; it does not make sense. It is necessary to choose one council or the other. The new clause refers to district councils, community or parish councils and to community health councils.

Mr. Best: I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to abuse me any more. If he takes care to read the new clause he will find that the requirement is consultation with the county council and then either the borough or district council. The last two are alternatives. The new clause goes on to specify the community or parish council, as those are alternatives as well, there being community councils in Wales and parish councils in England. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not abuse me any further. The new clause was carefully drawn and it could easily be accepted by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health. It would make a perfectly good addition to the statute book.

Mr. Golding: I have never been a parliamentary draftsman, but I have been a victim of the draftsmen, as has the hon. Gentleman. However, I must tell him that a comma should not be placed after "county council". The new clause should spell out its intention in the way in which the hon. Gentleman has done. If he thinks that his intervention will stop me abusing him, he must be appealing for my sympathy. The new clause is nonsense because of defective drafting. If it is not defective drafting, we are faced with blind stupidity. The new clause cannot be read in the way that the hon. Gentleman would have us read it.

Mr. Skinner: Is the hon. Gentleman a lawyer?

Mr. Golding: My hon. Friend wishes to know whether the hon. Member for Ynys Môn is a lawyer.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is a lawyer.

Mr. Golding: I am advised by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who sits on the non-Treasury Front Bench below the Gangway, that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn is a lawyer. That proves my point. I once wrote to the Library asking for a brief on the defects of lawyers and the Library replied by parcel post. I am amazed by the new clause. I thought that things were going wrong in the Conservative party, but not this wrong.

The new clause is defective on two counts. First, the clause would be destroyed by the cynicism of the Minister. Secondly, it is unworkable.

Mr. Marlow: Before the hon. Gentleman moves on to the next new clause, he might well find that new clause 1 is defective but that there is a principle behind it. If the House voted in favour of new clause 1, does the hon. Gentleman think that it would be possible for the Government in another place so to amend it that it would satisfy his requirements?

Mr. Skinner: That is debatable.

Mr. Golding: I do not like the principle. It is the soft option, or the cop-out.

We are talking about the soft option—the cop-out for the Government. Anyone can beat the Government uphill and down dale and show that they are wrong, but they say, "We've thought about that. We'll consult." We have heard tonight what the Minister means by consultation. He says, "Wheel them in, give them a cup of coffee, listen to them, say nice words, then wheel them out." He then tells the civil servants, "Don't write to them for a fortnight. Let them think we're making up our minds."

The Minister says, "We can't have this because it is defective." We are talking about a statutory right of consultation. I thought that Government Members were gullible, but surely they are not as gullible as that. The Government are offering something more perfect than that which is proposed. The Minister has already conceded the principle. He has offered something better than that which is in the new clause.

Dr. Marek: For four hours, no members of the SDP have been in the Chamber. Perhaps the Government are even now ringing them, asking them for their support. If that is so, what would they think about new clause 1?

Mr. Golding: I regard with respect those who avoid my speeches. I cannot, in all honesty, say that it is a criticism of SDP members that they are not here at this time of night. None of us should be here at this time of night.

On this issue the Government could not be defeated, except at this time of night. It is a strategem. You, Mr. Speaker, would tell me off if I described the tactics that you would have used as a Whip, seeking to get Government business through. None of us should be here at this time of night. We are here only because the Government are determined to bulldoze the business through with the payroll vote.

[Mr. Fairbairn]

I hope that the Government, who are here as a press gang, roped one to another—such as are here, 105 of them; well, perhaps not 105 of them: there are a few renegade cannibals in the rope——

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to describe other hon. Members as cannibals?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was not aware that the hon. and learned Gentleman was referring to particular hon. Members. It was a general observation.

Mr. Jessel: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It must follow logically that my hon. and learned Friend was referring to particular hon. Members, since otherwise no meaning could be attached to what he said.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can my hon. and learned Friend tell us from which country the cannibals come?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is an extremely important matter and we should get on with the debate about whether further consideration of the Bill should be adjourned.

Mr. Fairbairn: I happily reject the morsels offered.

This is a debate about the most serious principle, that is, whether aqua vitae, whisky, the water of life——

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that we are debating whether to adjourn, not the principle. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will not stray from that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am listening carefully. We are debating not the principle of the Bill, but whether further consideration should be adjourned.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that you are more entitled to hold the Chair than my hon. Friend.

When we debate a matter of considerable principle, in which hon. Members on all sides of the House have expressed their views on what is called a free vote, it is disturbing that the free vote is not a free vote, that the free minds of the free hon. Members of this free House are not allowed to be exercised according to their consciences, and that those of us with a free conscience are bludgeoned by those who are not allowed to have one. Perhaps we should not continue this important debate tonight. I trust that it is not lost on a Government, who were happily elected on the concept of freedom, that where freedom of conscience on such an important matter is so conscientiously challenged by Back-Bench Members of all parties, that that freedom in a democratic House of Commons should be steamrollered and made to look absurd. I trust, therefore, that the Government will announce that the issue will continue to be debated and voted on freely by free people in a free Government.

2.53 am

Mr. McGuire: I wish to speak briefly about why we should not adjourn, as I do not intend to abuse the House. I hope that I can persuade the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) that we should not adjourn. The Government chose the day and time because they thought that they could pass the measure comfortably. They did not think that a sufficient number of free men and women would stay behind. Tonight it has become clear that the payroll vote are trying to get into the Whips' good books, as are Parliamentary Private Secretaries who hope to become Ministers.

The business will not be carried tonight. The two votes of 105 and 95 in favour show that some of the payroll vote are heading for the hills. The deputy Chief Whip could not rise with certainty to move the next clause because it would be defeated. I say to those free men who have stayed behind, "Keep here." I hope that enough of them get up——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. McGuire: I want to finish the sentence. When the hon. Member intervened earlier, he was told that he had taken too long. I hope that he speaks and inspires all his comrades to say why we should not go home and give the Government a convenient victory. They cannot carry this measure tonight. They will probably make an anodyne announcement at a later stage about the vote being free. The vote has never been free. It has always been carried by the payroll vote, even on Second Reading.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. McGuire: I shall give way in a moment.

If we examine the vote we will find that it has always been carried by the payroll vote. It is an abuse to call the vote free. I had better give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he has been bobbing up and down.

Mr. Marlow: I do not want to keep the hon. Gentleman going; I want to put the record straight. The Government did not have sufficient Members, even with the payroll vote, to get the closure. Opposition Members voted with the Government. Let us get the record straight.

Mr. McGuire: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated me. He is slightly awry with his figures. The Opposition have chastised—those who were within hearing will agree with the technical meaning of the word, and I was part of it—those of my hon. Friends who agreed in principle to make an artificially fluoridated water supply available to more than the 5 million people who have it. I said, "I disagree with you, but you are not asked to vote on that when you vote for the closure. You can reserve that for when we debate the amendments." I told them that they should not have gone into the Lobby and made the Government's vote 105. The Government would have carried it with a bare majority, because I believe that only five of my right hon. and hon. Friends were so wooden-headed as to go into the Lobby to help the Government get their business when their own Members could not get it.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *rose*——

Mr. McGuire: I shall give way in a moment. My hon. Friend must just bide his time. There were 100 votes, including the payroll—the odds and sods, the PPSs and so on.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it permissible to describe PPSs as "odds"?

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it permissible for the hon. Gentleman to refer to his Front Bench as odds and sods?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It would help the House if we returned to the real debate.

Mr. McGuire: I am addressing myself——

Mr. Fairbairn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A PPS is not a sod but an aid.

Mr. McGuire: I am talking about why we should not give the Government an easy ride tonight. I chastised my hon. Friends and told them that they should not have thought of helping the Government, because if the vote had gone to 101 or 102 they would have been in trouble. The Government can only get their measure if we allow them to adjourn. I ask Conservative Members—some have spoken and some have intervened—to follow me and say why we should not adjourn. It is an abuse to call the vote free. It manifestly is not.

Mr. Snape: I am not sure whether I am an odd, a sod, or a woodentop, having heard what my hon. Friend has said. Will he give some evidence to show that I should not have voted for fluoride, because I believe that he thinks that there is something inherently dangerous about the substance? I should be grateful if he could prove that.

Mr. McGuire: I should be out of order if I did that. If my hon. Friend had listened, and if he reads the debates, why I disagree would be apparent. My hon. Friend need not have forgone his principle of being in favour of fluoride. The reason for my chastisement of him and my other hon. Friends who went through the Lobby is that it is not the function of Labour Members of Parliament to assist Tory Governments to get their business on the closure vote. That is what I said. That is the answer to one of my hon. Friend's questions. The answer to his second question is that if we reach Third Reading we shall discuss the contents of the Bill, amended as it is. I hope then to illuminate for my hon. Friend why I am opposed to fluoridation.

Mr. Snape: I thought that my hon. Friend might be opposed to it.

Mr. McGuire: My hon. Friend is trying to be too clever by half. He should attend our debates for longer periods and inform his mind. If he did so, he would be able more properly to make his cracks.

3 am

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I can think of a much better place to be at this hour of the night than in this place, and my wife can similarly think the same. I believe that it is wholly inappropriate for Ministers, who have to run great Departments of State, to be kept up at this hour of the night on a measure such as the Bill. However, the Bill was not mentioned in the Conservative party's manifesto and nor was it mentioned in the Queen's Speech. I have never been a member of the Conservative party compulsorily to medicate the water supply——

Mr. Wiggin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to draw your attention to the way in which the debate is going. It would seem that we are not debating the motion to report progress.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth).

Mr. Howarth: I am addressing myself to the motion that further consideration of the Bill be adjourned and explaining why I believe that we should not adjourn the debate for the moment. I believe that I have advanced good reasons so far. The Bill was not mentioned in the Conservative party's manifesto and we should not be party to such a measure. However, if those on the Government Front Bench can assure us that we shall debate the Bill at a civilised hour and not in the hole-in-the-corner way in which it has been brought before us tonight, I shall be happy to support the motion that the debate should be adjourned.

3.3 am

Mr. Golding: I must confess that I entered the Chamber at 20 past ten o'clock looking for a lift home. I think that my last bus has run by now.

I do not criticise my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) for voting to curtail one of my speeches. He will have the support of many hon. Members who have more sense than us and who are now in their beds. I was a party on the Opposition Front Bench who made certain that the Conservative Government of the day secured the Tote Bill. It is valid on a free vote for Front Bench Opposition Members to vote with the Government to secure legislation. That is acceptable when it is a free vote, at least for the Opposition. I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire) should attack this poor, miserable sinner, my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East, for voting as he did.

Mr. McGuire: As my hon. Friend has missed his last bus, is he in favour of the debate being curtailed on an issue which, as he said earlier, is of prime importance? I want him to reconcile his support for my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and his wish that the debate shall not be curtailed.

Mr. Golding: There are reasons for the curtailment of the debate. I think that I am the only Member to have spoken for the Government so far. Indeed, that has been a feature of the debate. No one, except me, has spoken for the Government. I suppose that that is one of the advantages of having a substantial voting majority. However, the Government do not need the payroll vote on the motion to adjourn the debate because many of their supporters will vote with them, and for very good reasons.

After I wandered into the Chamber and discovered the subject for debate tonight I decided to brief myself with the 1985 "Municipal Year Book". I have read the book, but I have yet to read the preface by the Secretary of State for the Environment. Our debates will be better reported when I have done so.

I put a point to the hon. Member who has spoken for whisky so often tonight—I say "for" whisky, not "with" whisky." He said that many amendments are not efficient. That might be so, but if we adjourn now we shall be able to table more amendments. Of course we can speak until Christmas and until the buses run again, but we should do a service to all if we had a wider range of amendments which appealed to different sections of the community.

The Minister has had a bad night. There has been bear-baiting. My hon. Friends have said that they do not want to go home, for various reasons. The bear has been savaged and the crowd has not wanted the dogs to be pulled back. The Minister is at bay. When the Minister says "Enough, enough, take the dogs away, shoot the fox", hon. Members say, "Let us continue to enjoy the blood."

[Mr. Golding]

My hon. Friends should allow the Minister to go away, because he has given them an assurance tonight. He has said that he will introduce a statutory right.

The Minister thought that after One o'clock we should be long gone. If we draw stumps we can ask the Minister to go back to his Department, draft his amendment, put it on the Order Paper and bring it back for us to look at.

That should satisfy the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) who takes this business more seriously than some. He wants the Minister's promised amendment. So do I.

I say to my hon. Friends "Enough is enough." Government Members will be in enough trouble when the Prime Minister comes back. This is no laughing matter. I shall be in trouble with my wife after tonight. Government Members are in trouble. We must not kick them when they are down, particularly since we shall have another chance of kicking them down when they are up.

The Government are in ribbons—in chaos. They are being battered from all sides. Why do we want to get this debate over and done with quickly? Let us draw it out. I have been charitable to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East but I think that he would do best to slump in his seat because some of my hon. Friends are very upset with him. If he and the Labour Front Bench had not voted with the Government, I would still be speaking. I would not be speaking in support of the Government, as I am doing now. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is grimacing and glowering at me.

Mr. Skinner: It is not that at all. My hon. Friend is making a fairly good point. I would not try to save the Government after their spectacular defeat tonight. I am concerned not just because I have a cold which might have disappeard by the time this legislation is brought back. We might be able to do a bit more propping and cropping in the debate. I am concerned because my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) wishes to raise in the Adjournment debate the important subject of the need for battery-powered wheelchairs for the disabled. Now that we have got the Government on the run, and not because we want to be merciful, I want to give my hon. Friend the opportunity as soon as possible to get stuck into the Government to provide battery-powered wheelchairs. That is why I have been inclined to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding), not, as he said, to grimace.

Mr. Golding: It just shows that I cannot tell when my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is agreeing or grimacing. My hon. Friend has persuaded me that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has such an important subject to raise that there can be no excuse for delaying the proceedings any longer. I say to the Government: "We have made a real bash of it tonight. Go away. Try to do better. There is no chance that you will be able to do so, because you are in a hopeless position. We shall let you off the hook because our mate has the Adjournment and wishes to raise a most important subject."

3.12 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I do not wish to delay the Adjournment debate; I wish only to make a brief point, because I am worried about the reasons why the Government have moved this motion. I appreciate that there is a free vote on this matter, and I am sure that the few observers present find that puzzling. On this rare occasion, there are conflicts on the Labour and Conservative Benches, alliances across the Floor and hon. Members using their minds and addressing themselves to the argument. This is a stimulating experience, and I wish that it would happen more often.

Dr. Marek: The hon. Gentleman referred to conflict on the Labour and Conservative Benches. It is clear that there is no conflict on the SDP Bench, because there has not been an SDP Member here during the past five hours. I wonder whether SDP Members are drafting amendments for when the debate, resumes.

Mr. Bruce: That could well be. They might be well occupied in doing that at this late hour.

A lady in my constituency frequently telephones me. That could be a nice experience, except that the lady is the secretary of the local Conservative association. She telephones me saying, "I know that I do not vote for you and do not campaign for you. But I hope that you will do everything you can to oppose the fluoridation of water." I have to represent that good lady tonight because the Government say that they want to adjourn this debate rather than accept that there is a need to discuss the matter further.

People feel strongly about this issue. It is perhaps unfortunate that many other issues are regarded as political when they should be free, so that people can freely campaign, as no doubt they will at the next general election, for the election of a Government that are going to force through fluoridation and yet can say that they are opposed to this move.

The Government should recognise that feelings are very strong on this issue. We should not force the issue through. People should take fluoride of their own free will, and not because the Government say so. That is my point, and the reason why I believe that the debate should be brought back to the House at a time when all hon. Members can participate at a civilised hour, and sensible amendments can be tabled.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill, as amended in the Standing Committee, to be further considered this day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Question proposed,

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House relating to the interval between the various stages of a Bill brought in on a Ways and Means Resolution, more than one stage of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with at any sitting of the House.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Objection taken.

Wheelchairs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

3.16 am

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): That such a titanic debate should have ended so that I could have my Adjournment debate gratifies me immensely.

The plight of many disabled people, whether they be in Sheffield, south Yorkshire or any other part of the country, is literally heart-breaking. The struggle to live with dignity is hard enough for ordinary working people but if one is crippled and handicapped, life can be a living hell, and there are many such. Those who are confined to wheelchairs are disadvantaged and dispossessed in a way that would horrify us if ever we had to face such a misfortune, and there are many thousands of such people, many more than most people are aware.

We are a little inclined to take such people for granted, although I think that we do not know that we are taking them for granted when we do so. We look on sympathetically, we are glad that we are not like that, and we pass on. Generally, most of us do very little about it, but there is much that we can do, and we have a National Health Service that can and must be put to great use in the service of such people.

Like everyone else, I have watched good people pushing other folk around in wheelchairs, and I have watched people struggling who, through age or ill health, should never have to perform that task for their loved ones. How many times have we all felt a pang of compassion at the sight of an elderly man or woman trying to push another elderly person in a wheelchair when they are obviously unfit to be doing that? We have the sick pushing the crippled, and often the elderly sick pushing the elderly crippled.

Surely, it is obvious, in this day and age, when technology can put men on the moon, and plan weapons of unimaginable horror, that we should use the money and the technical skill to ensure dignity and mobility to disabled people. Many of the people who are confined to a wheelchair are virtually prisoners in their homes. I can give an example of this.

In Sheffield, there is a woman called Ivy Peters, who is 82 and is crippled. She spends all her days sitting in a high chair, making soft toys and other handicrafts to help patients in the city hospital, despite her own ailments. She has been completely crippled since 1979, and since her husband died four years ago, there has been no one to push her manually-operated wheelchair. The only respite to her daily routine is a daily visit from a district nurse, and a weekly trip to a nearby day centre for the elderly. She says:

> "I can't stand up because of the pain. I can't get my manual wheelchair out of the hall because I can't manoeuvre it through the door, so all I do is just sit in this chair. To me, it is living hell."

If it were only Ivy it would, in all conscience, be bad enough, but she is only one among many thousands. Surely our priorities are wrong. By rearranging our priorities it is possible to provide, under National Health Service prescription, a battery powered wheelchair to all those who need them, provided that we use money for that purpose. These poor people, already deprived and disadvantaged by being crippled, are a thousand times more deprived by the national restriction upon powered wheelchairs which in many cases compels them to spend their lives imprisoned in their own homes. As Mrs. Kath Savage in my Sheffield constituency, who is leading the campaign, says:

> "I don't think the people who make the rules appreciate how degrading, frustrating and depressing it is to have to rely on someone else to take them everywhere."

This lady, Kath Savage, ought to know, for she is both disabled and determined: disabled, at 48 years old, for some years by rheumatoid arthritis and determined to end this misery for all similarly disabled people as well as for herself. Recently she came down to London in her wheelchair, which is not battery powered, with another lady who is similarly disadvantaged, Colleen Ford, pushed by Kath's husband and the co-ordinator of the Sheffield branch of the Spastics Society, a lady called Marlene Seedhouse.

It was reading and hearing about their efforts which brought me into this struggle and almost shamed me into doing what I could to try to help. There are many people trying to help. As a result of the campaign, large numbers of people are helping these poor folk. For example, the *Sheffield Star* began a campaign to help them under the general title "Power to the People". It highlighted their plight, and letters came flooding in from all over the country.

Local Members of Parliament began to ask questions and I put down an early day motion asking for battery powered wheelchairs to be provided for all those who need them. It soon attracted 108 signatures and I hope that we shall obtain more signatures. Sadly, those signatures are largely confined to members of my own party, except for one or two Ulster Unionists who added their signatures because so many people in Northern Ireland are losing limbs. Therefore, Kath Savage and Colleen Ford were pushed in their wheelchairs through the corridors of power and met the all-party parliamentary committee for the disabled which promised to help them.

In my opinion, everybody who enters the fray learns how improved the quality of life can be for the disabled once they receive battery powered wheelchairs. This has stirred the conscience of many people. I wrote to the Minister for Health, who in his reply said:

> "We have however recognised for a long time that, while it is necessary to bear the financial constraints in mind, the range of wheelchairs supplied by the Department requires to be reviewed. We are keenly aware of the strength of feeling among some wheelchair users that it does not provide them with the kinds of wheelchair they would like to have. For this reason, we have asked Professor Ian McColl, who is chairing an inquiry into the services of artificial limb and appliance centres, to give particular attention to this matter. I know he will be interested to see the leaflet and I will draw it to his attention."

We are very grateful that people who are dedicated to helping these folk have moved more deeply than hitherto into the fray. However, it is not enough. I was told in a recent letter from Mrs. Savage that many disabled people and associations are writing to Professor McColl who chairs the working party review of wheelchairs. Support from all corners of the country has become tremendous and is heartening a wide group of these people, many of whom are sending us letters. One or two who have got the chairs tell us how the whole quality of their life has been changed. Of course, these chairs are for internal use and the ones they use outside still have to be pushed.

I understand that the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is supporting our campaign. A network of disabled people are interested in this small debate which

[Mr. Clarke]

other way. They should acknowledge our desire to take account of public feelings and opinion by putting in the statutory duty to consult at a later stage. I hope that I have made it clear why I think that that is the right way to proceed, and why it is sensitive and responsive to the minority of people who feel strongly on this subject. There is a better way to go about it than putting into the Bill an unworkable proposition.

Mr. Hardy: I shall try to be brief. I am not terribly excited either way about fluoridation, but the Minister for Health has made me more determined to stay a little later because I do not like his definition of the word "accountable". The two authorities to whom he will give power are accountable to the Government and not to those whom they may serve with dedication. I am anxious about the matter from a different point of view, and one that has not been mentioned so far.

If the country has any resources available and wishes to do something about water, it would be healthier to devote those resources to improving the cleanliness of Britain's rivers and streams than to adding chemicals to drinking water when a large proportion of the population does not want them added. Quite a large proportion of the population want to see the rivers and streams brought to a healthy standard.

In south Yorkshire, there is a foully polluted river, with a road by it named Salmon Pastures. I would prefer that money to be spent upon making sure that Salmon Pastures ran by the side of a river that is wholesome rather than that the people who live in that road should have water which the Minister believes to be healthy but which does not please them.

I am

Another important aspect is that many people do not yet have a decent water supply in their homes. Only this weekend I encountered a constituent who lives in Hellaby in the parish of Bramley who cannot have a decent supply of water in his home because he does not have the money to pay for it. The water authority will not give him a grant to improve his water supply, but it can afford to put this stuff into people's water, whether they like it or not.

Dr. Marek: As 60 per cent. of the river water in London is treated effluent, surely it would be far better if my hon. Friend turned his attention to cleaning up the river rather than worrying about what the level of residual fluoride in the river water might be.

Mr. Hardy: I think my hon. Friend is right. We could be establishing the potability of the water in the rivers and streams of Britain, but this Government are holding back progress. When I first became a Member of this House in 1970 I was advised that by the early 1980s the rivers in Yorkshire would reach at least class 2. I did not expect that by the 1980s the rivers and streams of Yorkshire would reach potability standard, or class 1, but I did expect the rivers in south Yorkshire—the Rother, the Dearne and the Don—to be at least two grades higher and capable of sustaining fish for the recreation of my constituents. However, this Government do not allow the water authority to spend the amount of money that it would like to spend in order to create a decent environment.

If local people were allowed to determine their priorities, I am sure that their first priority would be the enhancement of the environment, not the addition of a chemical to the water. But what about the poor souls who do not have an adequate water supply? This constituent of mine in Hellaby is a war pensioner, a poor man. He does not have sufficient money with which to improve the water supply to his home. What is the use of adding fluoride to his water supply if all that he gets out of his tap is an attentuated trickle? The Government's priorities are all wrong.

The Minister referred to the medical advice that he sought. May I ask him what vetinary advice he has sought? Many of the people of Rawmarsh, which is in my constituency, know that six years ago one of my dairy farmers had a very good herd of shorthorn cows, 40 of which died. We established after a great deal of work that they died because this farmer had put on to his land sewage sludge that had been provided by the water authority. As the Minister stated, the water authority is not accountable to anybody. That sewage sludge contained fluoride salts. The beasts died of fluorosis.

If the Brampton Bierlow parish council or those who represent the district of Rawmarsh on the metropolitan borough council were to express the concern felt by the people who live in those areas, their views would not even be considered. They would not even be consulted. If they decided to inform the health authority of their view, the health authority's view would be sustained by the Minister, even if it flew in the face of the views of every local authority in my area. This Government are not particularly worried about the Labour-controlled authorities in south Yorkshire.

I am not suggesting that the addition of fluoride to the water would cause fluorosis in human beings or in a large number of cows, but the fact is that people in that area know that those cows and a very expensive pedigree bull suffered the skeletal destruction that is the consequence of this disease. I am advised by people who are more skilled in cattle farming than I am that cows are highly susceptible to fluorine salts. They can develop fluorosis easily. After a considerable battle and an Adjournment debate in the House, we forced the water authority to pay compensation for those 40 animals.

The Minister may think that the fluoride that will be added to the water will do our teeth good, but cattle at many farms drink from the public water supply. If there is within the natural vegetation of the farms a high level of indigenous fluoride we must ask the Minister whether adding fluoride to the drinking water which the cows will consume will increase the risk of fluorosis in those herds.

Mr. Golding: The case of the Government will surely be that although the cows died, they died with healthy teeth.

Mr. Hardy: I hope that when my hon. Friend next fishes in south Yorkshire he will catch fish. His ability to catch fish there would be improved if the Government withdrew this proposal and devoted the same resources to improving the water supply.

The Government are apparently not interested in whether we have cows, judging by their policy on dairy farming. The Minister should ensure that the veterinary point is considered properly. The remaining dairy farmers in many parts of England will want an assurance that they can continue to provide drinking water from the public reservoir for their cattle without increasing the risk of

fluorosis, which quite a few farmers have experienced. If a dairy farm is to windward of a brick works, or if it is in the vicinity of an aluminium smelter or an open hearth steel furnace, there is an additional risk of fluorosis. If the cattle in such areas drink from the public water supply, the risk may be greater.

The Minister may feel that the payment of compensation would be sufficient to allow fluoridation to take place. I am not sure that that is the case. If a man has spent 40 or 50 years building up a good herd of pedigree cows, he needs to know that if he can survive the Community's dairy policy, he will also be able to survive the fluoridation of the water supply. That point has not yet been answered to the satisfaction of dairy farmers.

Nor has the point been answered to the satisfaction of the elected local authorities. The Minister used the words "local authorities" in a sense which is not generally accepted in the House. We believe that local authorities mean those elected by the people and not appointed by a Government who are not supported in many parts of the north of England. They are not supported in my area. There will be even less support for them if they use the payroll vote high-handedly to compel us to accept medication which we view with reservation and suspicion.

Several questions remain to be answered. First, why is it that we can afford to add a chemical to the water while rivers are foul and open sewers? Secondly, why is it that we can afford to add a chemical to the water when a disabled war pensioner has not got the money to provide an adequate water supply in his own home and the water authority refuses to make any payment towards it? Thirdly, why is it that we can afford to act with contumely and contempt and give further cause for anxiety to dairy farmers who are suffering greatly already? Those points must be answered in another place if not here.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The Minister made a serious mistake in the way that he approached the debate on this issue and did a disservice to hon. Members who have stayed in the Chamber until this hour to discuss a matter about which they feel strongly.

In the right hon. and learned Gentleman's intellectual convolutions to try to justify an indefensible case, he finally argued the sanctity of the quango. He thought that his local committees would be superior to any elected institution and superior to the choice of the individual. It was not for the Government to make the decision, he said —although the payroll vote in the House will indirectly impose it—and it was not for local government or for the individual to make the decision. The specially created quangos, established by the Government, would make the decisions. He is either calculatedly confusing the issue, or he is himself confused about it.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman tried to draw a parallel between chlorine and fluoride. He seems not to understand that there is all the difference in the world between adding a substance to water to remove potential illness that is carried in and spread by that water, and fluoride, which is added to deal with ailments which are not related to the water supply. He deliberately refused to face that point.

It is no good the right hon. and learned Gentleman trying to buy off hon. Members with statutory consultation. We know what that can mean in organisations and groups of people who, for the best motives, are convinced that they know what is best for their fellow citizens. Despite any requirement for statutory consultation, there is no protection against the arbitrariness of the bigoted, of those who are driven by prejudices and preferences. In no way is consultation to be accepted as a diversion from the basic issue of the choice and freedom of the individual.

The merits of the fluoride case are not the central point. We are dealing essentially with freedom of choice. We are dealing not with a relative but with an absolute monopoly. With energy supplies, people have a choice—they can use electricity, gas or coal. With water, there is no choice. With fluoride, people have a choice. They can take it other than through the water supply, if they wish or need to take it. But those who do not want fluoride will have no choice if the Government achieve their objective.

We have got ourselves into a series of unnecessary arguments over the need to find conterminous boundaries for the appropriate local authorities because we will not trust the individual to make up his own mind. That is the essence of the case. The Government have not dealt with it, and that is why they should be defeated on this issue.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am impelled to intervene by some of the Minister's remarks. He has the capacity to enrage hon. Members who have assembled to hear his case. For example, he described all the amendments in this group as wrecking amendments. That was an extraordinary charge for him to level at my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), who is in favour of adding fluoride to the public water supply.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has tabled what are deliberately wrecking amendments. I fear that with typical Liberal finesse, the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) has tabled what are accidentally wrecking amendments.

Mr. Beith: If the Minister thinks that it would wreck his campaign to get fluoride into the public water supply were people given the opportunity to vote on it, then he has exposed how threadbare his case is. If he really believes that it would wreck his case to allow people the opportunity through their elected representatives on local authorities to take a democratic decision on the matter rather than have the decision taken for them by nominated bodies who are not answerable to them, he has shown how threadbare his argument is.

I stand by my defence of my hon. Friend. He and I from different sides of the argument agree on the principle that, if fluoride is to be put in the water supply, the decision to do this cannot be taken by nominated bodies. It must be taken by elected bodies.

1.15 am

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that the decision in Scotland which gave rise to all this was taken by an elected body? Strathclyde agreed, in a vote with a democratic majority to put fluoride in the water. Unlike his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed is an opponent of fluoride. The idea that his sole concern is that a democratic body should take the decision is somewhat belied by the fact that the whole campaign and the attempt to change the previous practice began with an attempt to set aside a decision of an elected body in Scotland that took a democratic decision to put in fluoride.

declare an amnesty for all Soviet war veterans, such as Colonel Lev Ousischer, who have been detained for many years against their will, and to allow them to visit their families and friends abroad? It is because they have expressed a desire to do that that they are locked away.

Mr. Rifkind: The problem of human rights was raised during the visit of Mr. Gorbachev to the United Kingdom in December. I note the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, and the celebrations of the 40th anniversary, which are intended to be an occasion of reconciliation, would provide an adequate and desirable opportunity for acts of the kind recommended by him.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Since a right to believe in God and to practise one's religion is a right which we take for granted in this country but which, in practice, is still considered to be an offence against the state in the Soviet Union, should we not put that country in the dock for its utter failure to live up to the aspirations of the Helsinki and Madrid agreements?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that. The ironic fact is that the Soviet constitution purports to grant freedom of religious observance to Soviet citizens. We are unfortunately aware that that does not happen in practice. It is important to remind the Soviet Union of that. For that reason we included cases of religious persecution in the representations made to Mr. Gorbachev and on other occasions.

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the Minister acknowledge the visit that was led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) to the Soviet Union recently to study the plight of Soviet Jewry? There are a number of people in prison whose only sin is to want to go to Israel. Will the Minister take those matters into consideration and increase the pressure on the Soviet authorities to reverse the trend which is increasing the number of those in prison, increasing the harassment, and deterring many people from making representations to them?

Mr. Rifkind: We are delighted when parliamentarians make representations similar to those made by Her Majesty's Government. The hon. Gentleman correctly draws attention to the dramatic fall in the number of Soviet Jews permitted to leave the Soviet Union. Last year the figure was some 900, compared to 51,000 several years earlier. There is no doubt that that is because of the refusal of the Soviet authorities to process applications from those who would like to leave.

Sir Peter Blaker: Would it not be a cause for great rejoicing if the Soviet Union were to make half as much progress in the field of human and democratic rights as Turkey has in the past few years?

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend is justified in making that comment. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State emphasised, human rights in Turkey have improved progressively over the past few years. It is unfortunate that we cannot say the same about the Soviet Union.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister realise that when there was a question about Guatemala not one of his Back Benchers stood up to speak, despite the terror in that country? Is the Minister also aware that the Soviet Union would receive a more sympathetic hearing in this country if it pursued different policies towards people who want to practise their religion or leave the Soviet Union? The sooner the Soviet Union modifies its policy the better.

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, if he wishes to be consistent, I should expect him to be advocating the same sort of policy of dialogue and contact with Turkey or Guatemala as he seems keen to have with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend aware that at the visit referred to by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) five Members of the House were allowed to visit 37 refuseniks? They told us in Moscow that they were grateful to the Government for continuing to make the point with the Soviet authorities that if the Soviets want us to trust their undertakings on peace they must first honour their international undertakings to respect fundamental human rights.

Mr. Rifkind: We have noted that whenever representations are made to the Soviet authorities they take careful note of the points that are made and of the individuals who are mentioned. We can only hope that they are the basis for the action that is taken by the Soviet authorities. There has been some modest progress with regard to certain personal cases which my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary has raised. We hope that that will be the beginning of more substantial improvements. There is as yet no hard evidence to support any degree of optimism.

Mr. George Robertson: May I emphasise to the Minister that Opposition Members who campaign for human rights do it even-handedly in East and West. Discussions on the middle east are taking place in Stockholm and between the Soviet Union and the United States in Vienna this week. Is this not an opportunity whereby the British Government might pursue the idea of greater flexibility on the Soviet Union's part in allowing some of its Jewish citizens to go to Israel, in contrast to the record of that country over the last few years?

Mr. Rifkind: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman that no country should feel obliged to forbid its citizens to leave its territory. If it does so forbid its citizens, that is a mark of a substantial lack of self-confidence in the merits of the country concerned.

Middle East (Arms Supplies)

9. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to hold discussions with European Economic Community partners on arms supplies to the middle east.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so. It is for each member Government of the Community to decide on their own policy on arms supplies to other countries.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister accept that there are double standards on the part of certain European countries, as well as on the part of the United States, which are self-defeating? Does not the arms race in respect of the middle east worry him, and is not the imbalance, which has been deliberately created by the United States, causing difficulties for moderate Arab countries, which have been driven into the hands of the Soviet Union despite the fact that the United States says that that is not its intention?

Mr. Luce: I agree with the hon. Gentleman in the sense that everything must be done to strengthen the prospects of peace and stability in the middle east, and particularly at this time in respect of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Lebanon. All efforts must be seen in that light and the sale of arms—the subject that the hon. Gentleman has raised—must be judged against the background of whether it is likely to exacerbate the possibility of conflict. We have criteria in that connection.

Mr. Latham: If the Government agreed with the EEC arms embargo against Israel as a result of the Lebanon war will my hon. Friend confirm that when the Israelis withdraw finally from Lebanon there will be no possible basis for continuing such an arms embargo?

Mr. Luce: I should tell my hon. Friend that it was, of course, a British Government decision in the summer of 1982 to impose an arms embargo on Israel arising from its invasion of the Lebanon. Following a European Council meeting at the end of June that year the Belgian Prime Minister, who was President, stated that no member of the Community was supplying arms to Israel. We are watching with great interest—indeed, we welcome—the withdrawal of Israel from the Lebanon. The question of arms sales can be reviewed as withdrawal is completed.

Mr. Cartwright: Is not the Minister concerned about the continued supply of sophisticated arms to Israel by the United States, particularly when those weapons have so often been used not for self-defence but for offensive strikes against neighbouring states?

Mr. Luce: As I said earlier, our criterion is to judge each case on its merits and on whether the sale of arms is likely to exacerbate the possibility of conflict in that part of the world. However, each country obviously has a right to self-defence.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Is it not high time that the European Community had a co-ordinated policy towards selling arms to the middle east? If the United States is unable to meet the shopping list recently supplied by Saudi Arabia, is that not a jolly good opening for the British arms industry and the prospects for employment in this country?

Mr. Luce: It is certainly the case that we have good relations with many Arab countries as well as with Israel. We hope that it will be possible to sell certain equipment to them. As to the European Community, there is no provision under the treaty for common policies on arms sales. Nevertheless, we exchange views with it on arms sales policy from time to time.

Mr. Mikardo: Is it not a fact that the arms with which Christians and Muslims in Lebanon are killing each other on a large scale all come from Europe, including the Soviet Union and Great Britain?

Mr. Luce: I cannot put my finger on the source of every firearm that is being used in the Lebanon. All I can say is that it is very much in the British Government's interest to see the sovereignty of the Lebanese Government displayed throughout the Lebanon. That means that we want to see all foreign troops withdraw from the Lebanon to give that country a chance to survive on its own.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend examine the possibility of concerting European policy in this matter within the Council of the Western European Union? Will he further, as a priority, make sure that the needs of Kuwait and Jordan, which are in a particularly vulnerable position, are met from European sources?

Mr. Luce: I shall give thought to my hon Friend's suggestion about the WEU. As I said, within the European Community we exchange views from time to time on the question of arms sales.

Mr. Healey: Does the Minister agree that nothing would do more to improve the prospects for peace and prosperity throughout the middle east than a sharp reduction in the expenditure of all those countries on foreign arms? This matter concerns not only the European Community but countries in the Communist bloc and, above all, the United States. What representations has the Minister made to the American Government to ensure that this matter is discussed in the current talks on the middle east between the United States and the Soviet Union?

Mr. Luce: During the course of today and tomorrow my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be having discussions with the American President and Mr. Shultz, and the middle east will be a major topic of conversation. In the view of the British Government—and, I believe, of the United States—the highest prioirty must be given to working for an end to the Arab-Israeli dispute and the Iran-Iraq war, on both of which we follow policies which give priority to achieving an end to the conflicts rather than to exacerbating them.

Human Rights

11. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning torture and other abuses of human rights in Iran.

Mr. Luce: We continue to be concerned at the large number of reports of violations of human rights in Iran. We take every suitable opportunity to urge the Iranian authorities to meet their obligations under the United Nations convention on human rights. Our continuing concern was expressed by the European Community Presidency at the United Nations in November 1984 and I set out our position very clearly in an Adjournment debate on this subject on 21 December 1984.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that a list has recently been announced by Mr. Rajavi, the chairman of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which documents over 10,000 executions in that country, including 18 women who were pregnant at the time of execution and 430 children under 18? Is he aware that there are, in addition, allegations of torture on a wide scale and imprisonment without charge and trial? Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied, in the light of this unprecedented wave of barbarism, that the British Government are doing all that they can, in conjunction with other countries, to mobilise international opinion against what is happening in that country?

Mr. Luce: Yes, Sir. The British Government are deeply concerned by reports of the abuse of human rights in Iran which have been drawn to our attention, not just in respect of the Baha'i community but in respect of other parts of the Iranian community. With that in mind, we co-sponsored last year a resolution of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights about the abuse of human

rights in Iran. We propose to do precisely the same now, with the resumption of the United Nations commission's work in Geneva. We use whatever means we can—through the European Community, the United Nations and in other ways—to draw the attention of the Iranian authorities to the grave concern that is felt about the abuse of human rights.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my hon. Friend agree that the allegations of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) about torture and misery in Iran are remarkably similar to the complaints that were made against the Shah's regime, when the revolution was heralded as the answer to all the troubles? Is this not another example in the course of history of the fact that revolutions nearly always seem to bring greater misery to the people whom they are meant to save?

Mr. Winnick: Bring back Louis XVI.

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend, and that is why we are focusing as much attention as we possibly can, within the United Nations and the Community, on drawing the attention of the Iranian authorities to our anxieties about the abuse of human rights.

Mr. Johnston: The Minister sounds very reasonable, but why do the Government continue not only to approve of, but to encourage, the vast increase in trade between Britain and Iran that has taken place since Khomeini took over power? There is no doubt that that trade has helped him to maintain his barbaric and cruel regime so that, in the end, we have some responsibility for what happens to the Baha'i.

Mr. Luce: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. If he makes the assumption that if we impose trade sanctions on countries which abuse human rights that will improve the situation in those countries, he should think again. It is in our interest to have a good trading relationship with Iran to maintain contact between our country and the Iranians, but at the same time to draw to their attention our grave anxieties about the abuse of human rights.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

European Council (Voting)

79. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the use of majority voting in the European Council.

Mr. Rifkind: The European Council's task is to provide strategic direction and general political impetus to the Community. Majority voting would not be appropriate for this purpose. The European Council therefore proceeds by consensus.

Mr. Park: Does not the system of qualified voting on the budgetary provision end any effective United Kingdom say in the amount of money spent on agriculture, and will this not be even more so when Spain and Portugal join the Community?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's supplementary question refers not to the European Community but to the Council of Ministers, where different procedures apply. It has been the case for some time that a qualified majority applies in budgetary matters, but the hon. Gentleman should also bear in mind that new arrangements have been reached on agricultural guidelines that will control agriculture expenditure.

Sir Anthony Meyer: In view of the persistent frustration of an emerging consensus on policies of direct advantage to the United Kingdom through the abuse of the veto by countries such as Greece, is not the balance of the argument now shifting in favour of going back to the original concept of the treaty and accepting majority voting in those cases where it is specifically provided for?

Mr. Rifkind: There are many circumstances in which the Presidency can request a vote, and it would then be up to the country concerned to decide whether it wished to apply the veto. Recently it has been the practice for voting to take place rarely, but there is nothing either in the treaty or in what is called the Luxembourg compromise that prevents further voting if the Presidency of the day so chooses.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister recognise that at many of the previous European Council meetings matters of detail and not of broad strategy have been discussed by the Heads of Government? When that is so, would it not be appropriate to move towards a majority voting system?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct in that it has been one of the causes of concern that European Councils have often had to deal with matters of detail. When the European Council is dealing not with matters of strategy but with points of detail, it takes on the form of a Council of Ministers and can take decisions in the normal way.

Spain and Portugal

80. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he now expects the accession of Spain and Portugal to take place.

Mr. Rifkind: As I said in reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 23 January, we are working for completion of the negotiations as soon as possible so that Spain and Portugal may accede on 1 January 1986.

Miss Boothroyd: If the accession of Spain and Portugal is one of the exceptional events that allow a change in the terms of budgetary discipline, will the Minister give an undertaking that the accession of these two countries will not mean increasing the 75 per cent. of the budget that is already spent on agricultural affairs?

Mr. Rifkind: The need for budgetary discipline is separate from the question of enlargement, although I freely concede that if there were no budgetary discipline, enlargement would create additional problems. It is the common desire of the House and of the member states that the proportion of total expenditure should be reduced and should continue to decrease, and the formula agreed so far on agricultural exenditure means that agriculture will progressively represent a lower and lower share of total Community expenditure.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: What account has my hon. Friend taken of the employment implications for the United Kingdom of the accession of Portugal and Spain to the Common Market? Is he aware that, in particular, the textile, clothing, paper and board industries will suffer enormously? What account has he taken of this factor,

bearing in mind that, for the United Kingdom, there is no economic benefit from the accession, and that the European Economic Community is now a political community and nothing to do with economics?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly the case that there is concern in various quarters about the implications of enlargement. It is for this reason that tough and lengthy transitional arrangements are being insisted upon. I cannot agree with my hon. Friend that there are no economic advantages to the United Kingdom. For example, the arrangement that has been reached on industrial tariffs and controls on imports of motor vehicles to Spain means that the present duty will be reduced by over half in the first three years after Spain's accession. That should give opportunities to the United Kingdom in that important area.

Mr. Leighton: As a tax increase to 1·4 per cent. was envisaged to cope with the Iberia enlargement, if that enlargement is delayed will the Minister guarantee that no such increase will be made? After all the talk of financial discipline, as agricultural spending is already punching big holes in the EC budget, will he assure the House that he will not be coming back for even more money for EC agriculture?

Mr. Rifkind: The proposed increase in own resources is caused by several factors, of which enlargement is only one. The Federal German Government have indicated that they could not support the introduction of any increase in own resources until after the ratification of the accession treaty has been completed. In regard to the hon. Gentleman's second point, we have already said that it may indeed be necessary in the current year to provide for further supplementary finance if the own resources provision is not brought forward.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend not regret that it has been left to the Greek Government to take a robust and sensible attitude to the accession negotiations? Does he agree that it is always more important to get the right answer, however long it takes, than to attempt to rush Spain and Portugal into the Community on the wrong terms?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. He will reflect that Spain's application for membership of the Community was made seven years ago, so I do not think anyone can be accused of rushing the negotiations. In regard to his comment on Greece, Greece is simply concerned about integrated Mediterranean programmes. It is openly and blatantly using its objectives in that respect as a bargaining point to try to achieve what it believes to be appropriate.

Mr. George Robertson: Is the Minister aware that the Labour party supports the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EC? Given the shambles at the Foreign Affairs Council yesterday, where does this leave the practicalities of accession on 1 January next year and the consequent EC funding crisis? Is there not genuinely a monumental crisis that cannot be shoved under the carpet any longer? West Germany will exercise a veto on any increase in own resources unless accession takes place before an impossible date; the British rebate is almost certainly doomed and the Community is running out of cash. How precisely will the Council of Ministers resolve the EC financial nightmare?

Mr. Rifkind: I am pleased to hear that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are in favour of Spain joining the community. I would be pleased to hear an equally unequivocal statement that they are in favour of Britain not leaving the Community. That itself would represent considerable progress. The hon. Gentleman correctly referred to the difficulties and problems that the Community faces. There is no belief within the Community that these problems cannot be resolved. Various proposals are on the table and it is reasonable to assume that over the next few weeks major progress will be made.

External Identity

81. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made at the ad hoc Committee on Institutional Affairs concerning an external identity for the European Economic Community.

Mr. Rifkind: In its interim report, which is available in the Library of the House, the committee has identified a number of useful ideas to enable the Ten to strengthen their foreign policy co-operation and make it more effective, complementing the Community's existing trade and development policies.

Mr. Haynes: Can the Minister inform the House whether, when the Prime Minister has discussions with the President of the United States, she will urge him to abandon his policy of destruction and destabilisation in Central America? *[Interruption.]* Will she bear in mind the Dublin declaration, which clearly said that the only solution to the Central American problem——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not sure that that question has much to do with the EC.

Mr. Haynes: It has.

Mr. Speaker: Has it? All right.

Mr. Haynes: It is the bully boys over yonder who are causing the trouble. Will the Prime Minister bear in mind the Dublin declaration, which was associated with the EC, and which stated that the solution to the Central American problem lay not in the use of armed force but in political efforts?

Mr. Rifkind: As I am the British member of the ad hoc Committee on Institutional Affairs, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that this is not a subject that we have discussed so far. It may be appropriate for our next meeting, and I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's interests in mind. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will bear in mind any statement made by the Heads of Government at meetings that she attends.

Mr. Yeo: Is my hon. Friend aware that most people are far less concerned with the development of an external identity with the Community than with the removal of the many obstacles to the free movement of trade and services within the Community and with the ending of such absurdities as the directive that requires businesses with a turnover of only £18,000 to register for VAT?

Mr. Rifkind: One of the unanimous recommendations of the interim report of the committee to which the question refers is a strong desire for early and maximum

[Mr. Tony Newton]

towards identifying numbers and kinds of potential wheelchair users, because that would help us in the planning that we would wish to consider.

More immediately relevant to the subject raised by the hon. Gentleman is the attention that the Department is giving to the possibility of commissioning an evaluation study of the powered outdoor wheelchairs that are on the market. The questions that need to be addressed in such a study are being considered at the moment, and it is proposed to seek outside expert advice in drawing up possible terms of reference for such a study.

Whether the Department's range of wheelchairs may be extended to include occupant-controlled powered wheelchairs for outdoor use is something about which I cannot, as I hope the hon. Gentleman will understand, give a firm undertaking here and now. Indeed, it would be quite wrong for me to attempt to anticipate the report of the McColl working party, in view of the work on which I commented a moment ago.

I should like to repeat to the House, and particularly to the hon. Gentleman, who has taken a close and valuable interest in those matters, my assurance that we very much understand the pressure that the hon. Gentleman has reflected and very much sympathise with the problems for people with severely restricted mobility — problems which underly the debate. When we study the working party's findings, we shall bear carefully in mind everything that the hon. Gentleman has said today and the other efforts that he has made to advance that important cause.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Four o'clock am.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

1. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has made any representations to the Government of Guatemala over violations of human rights.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Renton): In the absence of official relations with Guatemala we have no means of expressing our concern directly to the Guatemalan Government. But we have repeatedly expressed disquiet during United Nations debates at reports on human rights abuses in Guatemala, and we continue to support efforts by the United Nations to bring about an improvement in the situation. On 14 December 1984 the United Kingdom voted in favour of a United Nations resolution which reiterated great concern about human rights in Guatemala.

Mr. Smith: Has the hon. Gentleman seen and considered the findings of the British parliamentary human rights group report on its visit to Guatemala, which was published in October 1984? In particular, has he seen the distressing finding in that report that

"the killings and disappearances have continued, and there has been no significant improvement in the human rights situation —if anything, it has worsened since 1983"?

In the light of that, has the hon. Gentleman made any representations to the Government of the United States to urge them to abandon their current proposals to re-establish military links with and military aid to Guatemala.

Mr. Renton: Yes, I have seen the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred—"Bitter and cruel". We share the concern expressed in that report about the continuing human rights violations in Guatemala. It is worth pointing out that Lord Colville, the rapporteur, on whose views the United Nations recommendations and resolution were based, does, on the contrary, see some improvement in the situation in Guatemala. But we have continued regularly to express our concern to the United States, particularly about the possible consequences of any military aid to Guatemala and the effect that that would have on our garrison in Belize.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Have the Government sought to prevent arms sales to Guatemala by British companies, and, if so, with what success?

Mr. Renton: As I said in my first answer, as we have no diplomatic relations with Guatemala we cannot make any representations directly to Guatemala, but one of the things that the United Nations resolution called for, which we firmly supported, was that there should be no military aid to Guatemala.

Cyprus

2. **Mr. Wilkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent diplomatic attempts to solve the Cyprus problem.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Richard Luce): We are disappointed that the outcome of the high level meeting between the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus was not more positive. We have consistently supported the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to seek a settlement of the Cyprus problem and will continue to do so. We share his view that at that time the gap between the two sides had narrowed significantly and welcome his intention to pursue his initiative. We have stressed the need to seize the opportunity he has created.

Mr. Wilkinson: During his recent visit to Ankara, did my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs make representations to General Evren and the Turkish Government that they use such good offices as they may have with Mr. Denktash to be as accommodating as possible and to try to seek a negotiated settlement in line with the United Nations' proposals?

Mr. Luce: Yes, my hon. Friend will be glad to know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary had a full discussion about Cyprus with the Turkish Government and both Governments agreed jointly that the dialogue between the parties concerned should continue and that every support should be given to the Secretary-General in his efforts.

Mr. James Lamond: Do the Government still hold firm to their decision not to recognise the so-called Turkish state in northern Cyprus?

Mr. Luce: Our position remains precisely the same.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: I share my hon. Friend's great disappointment about the collapse of the talks in New York. Is it not unhelpful for the Turkish authorities to be calling for elections on 23 June and to be saying that concessions so far offered are to be withdrawn? Is it not important that Britain should keep in touch with the other guarantor powers to support the Secretary-General's important initiative?

Mr. Luce: We believe that nothing should be done to undermine the efforts of the Secretary-General to get a reconciliation between the parties. In January the gap had narrowed considerably and we believe that the alleged proposals by Mr. Denktash to hold elections in June will not be helpful to that process.

We have kept in close touch with the other parties. The Foreign Secretary has been to Turkey to talk to the Government there and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has had three meetings with President Kyprianou in the past five months.

Mr. Healey: Is not the position of the Turkish Government central in this matter, because a programme for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus is the main issue for the Greek community? What representations did the Foreign Secretary make on that subject? It is entirely within the scope of Turkey, an ally of Britain and one of the guarantor powers, to secure a programme for the withdrawal of Turkish troops as part of an ultimate settlement.

Mr. Luce: It is the British Government's clear view that the withdrawal of foreign troops, principally the 22,000 Turkish troops, should be part of a comprehensive package. That was discussed by the Foreign Secretary when he was in Turkey.

Turkey

3. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Turkey in the light of his recent visit to that country.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Turkey from 11 to 13 February. He met the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and other leading Turks, including representatives of the Opposition parties. These talks covered a wide range of issues and we are confident that the visit will have helped to develop our relations with Turkey. These relations are based on firm foundations, including our shared membership of NATO, the Council of Europe and OECD.

Mr. Brown: When my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary visited Turkey, did he have an opportunity to raise with the Government recent reports that the Greek Government are to ask the United States to remove its bases from the Mediterranean? Did my right hon. and learned Friend also discuss the possibility that Turkey might be able to fill the vacuum that could occur in those circumstances?

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend's principal aim in his discussions with the Turkish Government was to express the hope that, in the greater interest of the strength of NATO, Greece and Turkey would reconcile their differences and have bilateral discussions to overcome their problems.

Mr. Boyes: The Minister mentioned the interests of NATO, but did the Foreign Secretary have an opportunity to raise the interests of members of the executive of the Turkish Peace Association, who are languishing in a lousy, stinking jail, so described in a pamphlet that is in my possession? Did the Foreign Secretary make strong representations to the Turkish Government to the effect that our relations with them will not improve until human rights in Turkey are improved and the peace prisoners are set free?

Mr. Luce: Turkish leaders have been made aware on a number of occasions of the anxieties and views of hon. Members, the British public and the Government on human rights. However, the hon. Gentleman ought to acknowledge the progress that Turkey has been making in recent months towards the restoration of democracy and the strengthening of human rights. There is no shadow of doubt about the fact that considerable progress has been made. The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that before 1980 there were an average of 20 political murders a day in Turkey. There has been a considerable improvement and we ought to encourage that process.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my hon. Friend agree that Britain's relations with Turkey are at a post-war high, and should we not capitalise on that fact by increasing ECGD cover and aid to Turkey, thereby helping to restore its economy? Would that not do more than any other single measure to secure a lasting return to democracy in Turkey, which is a member of NATO?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is in all our interests to encourage trade between Britain and Turkey. The ECGD restored cover for Turkey in 1983 and agreed, for example, to provide cover for the important Bosphorus bridge project. We are doing everything that we can to encourage trade.

Mr. George Robertson: Is it not true that only last week Amnesty International published reports showing that there is still widespread official torture in Turkey and that thousands of Turks are facing the death penalty in Turkish gaols? In that light, what conceivable justification can there be for the Foreign Secretary to offer his help in unblocking the EEC aid which is the one effective means by which Turkey has been brought closer towards democracy? How does the Foreign Secretary think that that sort of support given in Ankara to the Turkish Government will help the prisoners who are languishing in the gaols of our NATO partner?

Mr. Luce: As I have said, we are well aware of the allegations that have been made over many months about the abuse of human rights. We should acknowledge the facts in Turkey today. Martial law has been lifted in 33 of the 67 provinces and the military prison population was reduced from 43,000 in 1981 to 16,000 in 1984. If the hon. Gentleman is referring to allegations of brutality, I point out that more than 100 police officers have been convicted of ill-treatment of prisoners. It is absolutely wrong to turn our back on a country which is responding to representations from the Western world that it should improve its human rights treatment. On the contrary, we should give encouragement, and that is why we support the releasing of European Community aid to Turkey.

UN Decade for Women

4. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the reports prepared by the United Kingdom working groups on the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Renton: We have made funds available for copies of the reports to be distributed to group members, relevant Government Departments, copyright libraries and the Library of the House. The groups themselves will be free to make further copies available as they see fit.

Ms. Richardson: When will the Government ratify the United Nations convention on the Decade for Women? Why have the Government not done so?—[AN HON. MEMBER: "Rubbish."] Someone says, "Rubbish". I hope that that is understood by the public as a comment from the Tory party on the rights of women.

When will the Government realise that Britain is almost the last major state to ratify the convention? I know that 67 other states have done so. If and when the Government

ratify the convention, what advice will the Under-Secretary of State give to other Ministers about carrying out the convention?

Mr. Renton: We hope to be in a position to announce our decision soon. We are still considering the convention in the light of our existing legislation. We are consulting other Departments. I do not think that the delay in ratifying is surprising in the light of the convention's wide scope.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend enlighten everyone in the United Nations and elsewhere that in this country at least we have no time whatever for this modish rubbish? In this country women are equal, and, thank heavens, most of them are different.

Mr. Renton: We have not yet taken a decision to ratify. We signed the convention in July 1981 because we share, as I am sure does my hon. Friend, its central objective of eliminating discrimination against women. We have a long tradition of concern about human rights and discrimination, wherever it occurs. We live in a world where discrimination against women is still commonplace. It is against that background that we originally signed the convention.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity of condemning as disgraceful and offensive to women in this country and throughout the world the remarks of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)? The hon. Gentleman refuses to recognise that a strong body of opinion finds discrimination against women anywhere offensive, and believes that the British Government should reflect the views of the large majority of people and should, therefore, play an active part in United Nations efforts to outlaw discrimination against women throughout the world.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is capable of conducting his own condemnation and does not need any assistance from me. I share his view that there is still far too much discrimination against women in the world. We have a long history of concern about the abuse of human rights, which was the reason for our original decision to sign the convention.

Spain

7. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Spanish relations following the opening of the border between Gibraltar and Spain.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement my right hon. and learned Friend made in the House on 6 February. We, and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, are fully satisfied that the results of the opening of the border and the meeting in Geneva with the Spanish Foreign Minister are good for Gibraltar. They open the way to even closer relations between the United Kingdom and Spain.

Mr. Bruinvels: Does my hon. Friend agree that the arrangements made between my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and Senor Moran have greatly improved the prospects for the future of Gibraltarians? Does he agree that they encourage and maintain the base, preserve the heritage and, more important, bring about a tremendous increase in the tourist boom?

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. I support what my hon. Friend said. I understand that there is to be a conference next week entitled "Save Gibraltar's Heritage", which will be opened by an address from the Duke of Gloucester. The tourist industry in Gibraltar is doing extremely well. There have been 108 coaches there since the frontier was opened, and all the 210 pubs on the rock are said to be doing a thriving business.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: In view of the increase in the number of tourists to Gibraltar and Spain, will the Minister have a word with the Spanish authorities about improving safety at Spanish airports? There is worry about some airports, especially about landing arrangements. It is about time that special steps were taken and representations made, because large numbers of British people go there.

Mr. Renton: I take the right hon. Gentleman's point. I was in Spain 10 days ago discussing with, the Interior Minister the safety arrangements in the tourist resorts and so on for the 6 million British tourists who go to Spain on holiday. I shall certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's point about the safety of landing arrangements at Spanish airports.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: May we now give up discussion of sovereignty in any future talks, and get on with practical co-operation, on which an excellent start has been made?

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary made it clear in his statement to the House what was said about sovereignty, namely, that Senor Moran outlined the Spanish position, and informally suggested some proposals about possible ways in which Spain would wish to try to recover the sovereignty of Gibraltar, and that those proposals are now likely to be presented through diplomatic channels. My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that he would not comment on any ideas until they were formally put forward, and also underlined our commitment to respect the wishes of the people of Gibraltar as set out in the preamble to the 1969 constitution.

Human Rights

8. **Mr. Woodall** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the implementation by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki final act during the past six months.

10. **Mr. Brando-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there has been any change in the degree of Soviet compliance with the provisions of the Helsinki agreement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): During the past six months, in spite of welcome progress on a small number of bilateral personal cases, Soviet compliance with the majority of its Helsinki commitments has remained completely unsatisfactory.

Mr. Woodall: I thank the Minister for that reply, but it is disappointing. In view of the Soviet Union's failure to honour its human rights obligations, will the Minister make further representations to the Soviet Foreign Minister? Will he approach Mr. Gromyko and ask him to use the occasion of the 40th anniversary of VE day to

progress on the completion of the internal market. This is one of the most important priorities for the British Government.

Expenditure

82. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the most recent estimate of the date by which European Community expenditure could not be met by the present rate of Community receipts, without recourse to an increase in the own resources value added tax rate or supplementary finance.

Mr. Rifkind: Uncertainties surrounding the rate of Community expenditure do not permit a precise estimate of the date by which additional resources will be required. In forwarding the draft 1985 budget to the European Parliament, the Council undertook to meet additional budgetary requirements by 1 October 1985.

Mr. Freeman: If and when the Government come back to the House for authority to increase the net contribution to the Community above the £900 million provided for next year, will he assure us that, first, the Government will consider the relative merits of that increased finance against other means and, secondly, that the House will have an early opportunity to debate the wisdom of that supplementary finance?

Mr. Rifkind: I have no doubt that, if it is necessary to ask the House to approve supplementary finance for this year, the House will have the same very full opportunity as it had recently to express its views. It has been made clear to the other member states that the approval of the House of Commons is required before any additional expenditure can be agreed.

Mr. Deakins: Why has the Community not budgeted to spend within its anticipated income?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there is a conflict of responsibilities within the Community because of the way in which the treaty is drafted. There is a limit on the resources available to it this year, and that is a legal responsibility that it has to accept. There are also certain legal responsibilities to meet the entitlement of private citizens and others who benefit from Community expenditure. It has not been possible to reconcile these two requirements.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my hon. Friend accept that most right hon. and hon. Members think that there is nothing uncertain about Common Market expenditure and that it will continue to be out of control? May I remind my hon. Friend that the Economic Secretary to the Treasury promised us, almost on the Holy Grail, that we should not be asked for more money? Yet even today we are told that the House will be asked to give more money to the EEC. When shall we get this monstrous organisation under control?

Mr. Rifkind: I read the minutes of the evidence that the Economic Secretary gave to the Committee of which my hon. Friend is a member. I can assure him that the Economic Secretary gave no such assurance. He has gone out of his way, at the Dispatch Box and elsewhere, to say that it may be necessary to have supplementary expenditure this year. Her Majesty's Government have striven more than most to control Community expenditure. It was because of the Government's efforts that the very substantial new proposals on budgetary discipline were finally agreed by the Community.

83. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Foreign Affairs Council has considered a further supplementary loan as a way of financing European Economic Community expenditure in the coming year.

Mr. Rifkind: Council discussions are at present continuing about the best way of financing Community expenditure in 1985.

Mr. Davies: I should like to remind the Minister of the precise words of the Economic Secretary to the Treasury on 22 January:

"I should like to think that supplementary budgets for the European Community would not be a thing of the future"—[*Official Report*, 22 January 1984; Vol. 71, c. 884.]

How can the Minister reconcile that statement with the statement that he has just made? If he is to request the House to approve a further supplementary loan, will he at least guarantee that that loan will not be supported by the Government until the burden of expenditure in the European budget is redirected away from agriculture and towards the reduction of unemployment?

Mr. Rifkind: This is the final year before the new budgetary discipline proposals come into effect. It is for that reason that expenditure that may be incurred by the Community this year has not had the benefit of the control and discipline agreed upon last year at Fontainebleau. Only when the budgetary discipline proposals have come into effect, beginning with the price-fixing discussions on agricultural prices within the next few months, will we be able to judge their effectiveness.

Mr. Budgen: Is it my hon. Friend's estimate that the supplementary finance that will be required for 1985 is likely to be even greater than the £120 million required for 1984?

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission has come forward with certain figures——

Mr. Budgen: Answer the question.

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission has come forward with certain figures which, at the moment, it maintains represent sums that will be due. We have not yet had an opportunity to consider them in detail. If the figures are correct, they represent a larger amount than for the previous year. However, the Government intend to scrutinise very carefully—as they did last year—any proposals by the Commission, in order to see whether the figures are unnecessarily high.

Mr. Healey: The result of all this Government voyeurism—these careful scrutinies—is always to give in to the Community. Does the Minister agree that, as a matter of fact and practice, there is no chance whatever of the Commmunity avoiding bankruptcy this year unless Her Majesty's Government pay over a large part of the rebate owed to us since Fontainebleau?

Mr. Rifkind: If the right hon. Gentleman had done his homework he would have appreciated that on the last occasion when voyeurism—as he so politely describes it—took place, the Commission's proposals were reduced by more than half through the efforts of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary.

Mr. Healey: The Government have not yet received the money.

Mr. Rifkind: Yet again, the right hon. Gentleman is incorrect. The rebate for the year to which I have just referred was paid and the House was not asked to approve any further proposals until that sum was paid.

Mr. Healey: What about this year?

Mr. Rifkind: At the discussions that have just taken place in the Foreign Affairs Council there was unanimous agreement that that sum has to be paid, in accordance with the provisions of the Fontainebleau summit. Her Majesty's Government are confident that that obligation will be properly satisfied.

Fontainebleau Agreement

85. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what benefits have accrued to the United Kingdom as a result of the Fontainebleau agreement.

Mr. Rifkind: The following have accrued to the United Kingdom as a result of the Fontainebleau agreement: payment of our 1983 refund of £430 million; an abatement of £625 million for 1984; a lasting mechanism for the future which will require the United Kingdom to contribute only half what it would otherwise have had to pay to the Community budget; and an agreement on the control of Community spending, including agricultural spending.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister's reply is amazingly complacent, as his replies have been all afternoon. The Fontainebleau agreement was supposed to have ended the haggling, but, as the agriculture budget for 1985-86 is to increase by 6 per cent., the haggling will continue. How can the Minister claim that there is any such thing as budgetary discipline in the EEC?

Mr. Rifkind: My answer was not complacent. I gave a factual answer to a factual question. As a result of Fontainebleau, over £1,000 million has already been paid to the United Kingdom, quite apart from the additional advantages to which I have just referred. That was what the hon. Lady asked, and that was the answer that I gave. For the first time in its history the EEC has agreed to a tight procedure for the control of expenditure. As I mentioned earlier, the agricultural price proposals of the Commission have to be framed within that procedure, and we believe that this marks a new opportunity for the Community properly to control its expenditure.

Viscount Cranborne: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Fontainebleau agreement would have been even more effective if it had included certain quid pro quos, notably a freer market on matters affecting EEC trade, such as freer access by the British insurance industry to the German insurance market, which has so far been denied us?

Mr. Rifkind: That is indeed a great priority of the United Kingdom and something which the President of the Commission has said will be one of his priorities during his term of office. The Fontainebleau agreement was concerned with ending once and for all the budgetary imbalance problem that the United Kingdom faced. By an overwhelming majority, the House has welcomed that agreement.

Mr. Healey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that, through no fault of yours or of right hon. and hon. Members who are deeply concerned about the many vital issues that are raised during Foreign Office questions, once again the House has managed to cover only a tiny handful of the questions on the Order Paper before going on to European Community questions at 3.10 pm. Are you further aware that approaches were made some weeks ago through the usual channels to abolish the distinction between Foreign Office and Community questions or, at a minimum, to extend the time available for Foreign Office questions by five minutes, at the expense of Community questions? Can you use your good offices to ensure that there is rapid progress on this matter?

Mr. Latham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Although I do not agree precisely with the proposal of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), there is widespread support for his general worry about the division between the 78 questions for the rest of the world and the 17 questions concerning EEC matters. The House has already agreed that questions relating to Overseas Development should be taken on a separate day. There might be a precedent there and I ask you seriously to consider this matter, as it worries many hon. Members.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This matter has been raised on other occasions and you stated at the time that it should be pursued through the usual channels, but so far, as you know, there has been no solution. Is it not worrying that, for example, yesterday, those of us who joined a picket outside South Africa House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that this is anything to do with me.

Mr. Winnick: I realise that what is happening in South Africa is of no interest to Tories, but those of us who are interested made it clear yesterday that, as the House was to have Foreign Office questions today, we would have an opportunity to try to catch your eye. In the event, it was not possible to raise the issue of the police action and repression that is taking place in South Africa on the few questions that were reached.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that you will ignore the request of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). Perhaps we need a special session of Common Market questions, but the idea that the needs of Guatemala and Nicaragua and all of those other places are more important than the nonsense that goes on in the Common Market is ridiculous. It is not that we have too many questions on the Common Market but that we have too few. I hope that you will see that we get more, not fewer.

Mr. Maclennan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. While I recognise the division in the ranks of the Labour and of the Conservative parties on the Common Market, do you agree that, if this matter is suitable for decision through the usual channels, the participation of the alliance parties is extremely important and should be acknowledged?

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you have noticed that, during the past 12 months or more, ever since the Common Market ran into extreme financial difficulties, almost

every hon. Member, including most of those who were eager to get into the Common Market, now make continuous and long complaints——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is nothing to do with me.

Mr. Skinner: I have not quite finished. I shall only be a minute.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is nothing to do with me.

Mr. Skinner: That point has nothing to do with it. I am just asking, Mr. Speaker, whether you had noticed, as I have, that no hon. Member, apart from those at the Dispatch Box, stands up to back the Common Market, which is one of the biggest uneconomic units in the world, whose reserves——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This does not concern me.

Mr. Skinner: I will get to it.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. Member will get to it. We have a very long day ahead of us and I am taking points of order. Perhaps this is an appropriate moment to say that this has absolutely nothing to do with me. I am taking points of order because I thought that it would be interesting for the Leader of the House to hear about this matter. There is nothing more for me to add.

Mr. Skinner: My point of order, Mr. Speaker, is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All right, come on.

Mr. Skinner: I was just getting to it. It was a long preamble, but it was not so long as the Minister's earlier answer. My point of order is that because hardly any hon. Member will stand up and support the Common Market, it would be a good idea if this country got out of it. Twenty minutes would then be saved and that time could be spent on Foreign Office questions.

Mrs. Clwyd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. While not wishing to challenge your ruling, which I respect, I should have thought that it was appropriate, on the day that the Prime Minister is meeting President Reagan to discuss star wars, for a statement to be made on the Floor of the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady and I have had some correspondence about this matter. She must not pursue it.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should be grateful for your assistance upon a very important matter for the whole House. As you know when we joined the European Community we did so on the basis that 1 per cent. of the nation's VAT resources should be applied in that direction——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has nothing to do with me. The hon. Gentleman must raise a point of order to which I can respond.

Mr. Marlow: It relates to the nature of the debate and discussion of the parliamentary measure which should be introduced to deal with such matters. As you know, Mr. Speaker, not long ago the House had to vote on the extended loan to the Community of £120 million of taxpayers' money. From the answer of my right hon. Friend this afternoon, the Chancellor——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying to do something which I thought we had stopped doing—that is, prolonging Question Time. I think that we should now proceed to the ballot for notices of motions.

Mr. Loyden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand the difficulties you have in this unruly place. May I ask you to have regard, when calling hon. Members, to those hon. Members who have put down questions on foreign affairs? I understand your difficulties, Mr. Speaker, but today several Members who have not shown sufficient interest to put down questions have been called while those hon. Members who have put down questions have been ignored.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has frequently heard me say that I try not to do that.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 8 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet
Mr. Peter Hordern
Mr. Paddy Ashdown

London Regional Transport (Consideration of *Bill*)

Motion made and Question proposed,

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House relating to the interval between the various stages of a Bill brought in on a Ways and Means Resolution, more than one stage of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with at any sitting of the House.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

3.39 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I beg to oppose the motion, Mr. Speaker. In doing so, I wish to point out to the House that it is most unusual to have such a business motion at the commencement of public business before even a ten-minute Bill. But this is an unusual business motion, because it was put down yesterday and it could have been taken at about 4 am this morning, but one of my hon. Friends from London turned it, technically, into opposed business. Therefore, it is on the Order Paper, quite properly, as first business this afternoon.

I understand that the Leader of the House wishes to vary procedure. The motion says:

"notwithstanding the practice of the House".

Whenever that happens, Back Benchers of all parties have to take some notice, irrespective of what may have happened in the usual channels—which of course do not exist. When I think of usual channels I think of rivers, and their usual channels are usually up the creek on either side.

Be that as it may, the motion is in respect of a Bill founded on a money resolution. When money resolutions are presented to the House, whether they relate to the Consolidated Fund or other moneys, power flows with them. The Bill authorises the payment to the Treasury of an additional £50 million by the ratepayers of London, which was not thought proper by many of my hon. Friends, and authorises the Secretary of State for Transport to do that.

The Bill only received its Second Reading yesterday at 10 pm. Originally, its Committee stage, its Report stage, if any, and its Third Reading were to be taken tomorrow. That left the minimum of two days for the preparation of Committee amendments. That was the minimum possible even for a Standing Committee let alone a Committee of the whole House.

We understood yesterday that there was an opportunity to rearrange business. We could have had a long debate on milk, which we missed yesterday, and perhaps a continuation of yesterday's debate on fluoridation, which did not get very far. I do not know. Instead, the Leader of the House not only does not arrange those debates but brings tomorrow's debate forward to today. Therefore, the time for preparation of Committee amendments on an important and controversial Bill is further reduced.

Hon. Members reading yesterday's proceedings in *Hansard* will find some difficulty in following the speech by the Secretary of State for Transport. I was in the House, I come from London, I take an interest in transport, and I found it difficult. We need at least two days for preparations to be made. But we are now confronted with the possibility of considering the Bill almost immediately.

It is also relevant in opposing the motion to mention why the Bill is particularly controversial. Not only is it likely to lead to rates being increased in London, by a party which, I understand, does not always approve of putting up rates, but it does so on a controversial action of the Secretary of State. Under section 49 of the London *Regional Transport Act the Secretary of State*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is arguing the merits of the Bill. We must confine ourselves in this debate to the point about taking more than one stage of the Bill at a single sitting. We are not concerned with when the Committee stage begins. That was agreed yesterday. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to address himself to the terms of the motion.

Mr. Spearing: I understand that, Mr. Speaker, but if we are to vote on Third Reading, there is a supposition in the House that there has been adequate opportunity for discussion in Committee. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House, and more importantly to the Leader of the House, that no such adequate opportunity has been afforded. It has barely been afforded for Thursday and it has not really been afforded for Wednesday.

I could rest my case there, but as we are discussing a money resolution it is in order to point out that the money resolution was brought in because, according to a High Court Judge, the Secretary of State had acted

"unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly in giving a direction which exceeded his statutory powers without consideration of all relevant material and without consultation with the Greater London Council." — [*Official Report*, 19 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 876.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is the sort of argument which should be adduced on Third Reading. It has nothing to do with the motion before us, which is a business motion.

Mr. Spearing: I will conclude, but the House could proceed to Third Reading today, though we may debate this motion until 10 pm, unless the Leader of the House wishes to move a closure motion, which would be possible, but would not go down well with my hon. Friends.

In view of the long list of business, to which you, Mr. Speaker, referred earlier, and the circumstances that I have outlined, the Leader of the House should consider whether we should proceed with the Bill at all today. We should certainly not proceed to Third Reading. The right hon. Gentleman may feel that his motion is lawful and rational. I believe that not only is it irrational, but it is procedurally questionable, if not improper.

3.46 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): It may be for the convenience of the House if I make my contribution at this stage of the debate.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) suggested that what is contained in the motion is improper. I reject that suggestion. However, I accept that the motion causes some inconvenience for the House and I made that point to the hon. Member for Newham, North-west (Mr. Banks) last night. I do not deny that for a moment. However, in this instance, as in so many others, the House has to make a judgment of where the balance should lie. Our proposal is unusual, but is by no means unparalleled or unprecedented.

The problems that have arisen to require the motion are within the recollection of the House.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): You can always withdraw the motion.

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

is taking place very late. People have let us know that they are watching to see what will result from the debate. Therefore, I hope that something of worth emerges from it.

All those devoted people who spend their lives pushing their loved ones around with such splendid unselfishness and care will also be giving us a great deal of attention because their lives are rendered miserable by the hard work they have to do, especially when they are getting older. Wives and husbands have to push their life partners around at a time when they are not feeling well enough to do it.

I was reminded only today by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), who takes an interest in this for obvious reasons as well as her own humanity, that more women are looking after sick and elderly relatives than are looking after their own children. That statistic came out recently. We would be helping not only the disabled but those selfless people who look after them.

In answer to a series of questions put down to the Department of Health and Social Security the Minister said that the Department does not provide battery-powered wheelchairs for outside use. Why in heaven's name does it not? Other expenditure could be cut so as to provide wheelchairs for these poor people. Let us hope that the working party reports soon and recommends both indoor and outdoor battery-powered chairs for all who need them. Compared with the cost of such horrific things as nuclear weapons, Trident submarines and so on the amount that would be needed would be trivial to ensure that these poor people have one of the necessities of life, a wheelchair.

We cannot afford not to do this. There is a growing demand among these people and among many who are humane enough to realise that so far they have walked past and not taken much interest in the subject. It is our duty to help change the quality of life for our suffering fellow citizens and to restore to them some of their lost human dignity.

I have one more question from a wheelchair-bound mother, aged 45, who lives in the pit village of Maltby in south Yorkshire. Among other things she said:

"I think every disabled person has the right to a powered wheelchair. My wheelchair is no good to me without someone pushing it because I am not strong enough to maneouvre it on my own. The national campaign for powered wheelchairs is a wonderful idea and I'm going to work very hard to make it a success."

I hope that the Minister, who is a compassionate man, will do his best to let us have some hope for people who need these wheelchairs so urgently to alter their quality of life and give them more human dignity.

3.28 am

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): It is with perhaps more than the conventional courtesy that I congratulate the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on having chosen this subject for the Adjournment debate. It is of great interest to everybody concerned with the welfare of disabled people with severely restricted mobility. Certainly we in the Government share that concern and interest. Of course, because of our direct role in the provision of services for disabled people, more direct than with most other parts of the Health Service, we feel a particular responsibility.

I should like to spend a moment making clear that role and putting into the perspective of the whole wheelchair and appliance service what the hon. Gentleman has said. The wheelchair service is one of the services provided through artificial limb and appliance centres in England. It is, as I said, unusual among health services for disabled people. Like the artificial limb and eye service, the provision of appliances for war pensioners and the provision of motor cars and three-wheelers for those who remain eligible for them, is the direct responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security rather than one discharged by the health authorities, and in that sense I have a direct and personal interest as the Minister with particular day-to-day responsibility for the artificial limb and appliance centres.

This rather odd arrangement, looked at against the background of the Health Service as a whole, reflects the historic development of this part of the service. The wheelchair service had its origins in the centrally administered provision of wheelchairs to ex-service men after the first world war, and although this provision was extended to civilians when the NHS was created in 1948, the service continued to be run by central Government. In 1953 the responsibility for the wheelchair service passed from the Ministry of Pensions to the Ministry of Health, and it subsequently became that of the present Department.

Running the wheelchair service in England is a big task. Apart from the headquarters organisation at Blackpool and a central store at Heywood, the Department has 25 centres and sub-centres through which wheelchairs are provided. The service is staffed by the whole-time equivalent of more than 600 medical, technical and administrative staff, and there is a network of more than 100 approved repairers who provide services under contract to the Department.

The expenditure on the wheelchair service in 1983-84, costed on a commercial basis was about £32.25 million. The rate of growth of the service—this point is not always appreciated—has been impressive. In 1954 there were only 17,000 wheelchairs of all kinds on loan. By 1974 there were more than 10 times as many, and today the figure is about 410,000, and over 160,000 wheelchairs of all types are issued every year.

I hope, therefore, that it will be common ground between us that this is a service in which provision has expanded dramatically over 20 or 30 years and which has gone a long way to meet the needs of the people with whom we are concerned.

The historic development of the service and the rapidly growing demands made on it have been important factors in determining the limits which have had to be placed on the range of wheelchairs it provides. As the number of wheelchair users has grown, so their constitution and needs have changed. From being a service designed for young disabled ex-service men, the wheelchair service has become one providing to a large extent for older people. Indeed, we believe that one user in four — this corresponds with some of the cases that the hon. Gentleman mentioned—is over 80 years of age.

Initially, wheelchairs were provided for a group of men who could be expected to use hand-propelled wheelchairs without assistance. Today, a great part of the ever-increasing demand is, as we see it at present, for simple,

mainly non-powered chairs for occasional use by elderly people when they are accompanied by able-bodied persons. Much of the energy and resources which have gone into the development of the wheelchair service have of necessity, therefore, been devoted to coping with the demand for wheelchairs of a fairly basic type.

Despite this, the service has developed its range of wheelchairs impressively. It currently offers over 250 variant models of non-powered wheelchairs. There are some 50 variants among its powered wheelchairs for indoor use, and there are two basic versions of a power-assisted outdoor wheelchair for attendant control. About 80 per cent. of these chairs are made to departmental specifications, and the rest are the proprietary designs of manufacturers, though the balance is now beginning to change. The Department also supplies a range of accessories, modifications and adaptations to suit individual needs, and custom-built wheelchairs are supplied where there is a medically established requirement.

I nevertheless recognise that, as the hon. Gentleman made clear, there are many disabled people who feel that the service is not fully meeting their needs. There are a large number of powered and manually propelled vehicles which could be added to the range if our resources were unlimited. There are younger wheelchair users who are urging us to provide chairs especially designed for sporting purposes, not powered chairs, but very much more manoeuvrable chairs, and chairs with different characteristics from the standard DHSS wheelchairs.

There are others who suggest that we should provide some of the newer and highly sophisticated non-powered wheelchairs; for example, those which enable the occupant to rise from a sitting to a standing position and to work at a bench or kitchen worktop. There are those, like the hon. Gentleman, who emphasise what they see as the need for powered wheelchairs for outdoor use or for use indoors and outdoors. The range of that sort of chair on the market has grown significantly in recent years. Some will climb kerbs, and some incorporate features normally found in a motor car; for example, lights, a horn and traffic indicators. There is also a range of so-called scooters generally based on three wheels, over which are mounted a platform with a control column and seat.

The cost of extending the Department's wheelchair service into these areas is something which, frankly, it is difficult to calculate. It is not known how many people might be eligible for or want wheelchairs of such kinds, but a conservative estimate would probably put the figure at several thousand pounds and again might correspond with the response to the campaign that the hon. Gentleman reported.

More than 10,000 powered wheelchairs are already issued every year for indoor use or outdoor use with an attendant, and over 18,000 are on issue at any one time. The average cost of an indoor-outdoor powered chair for occupant control is well in excess of £1,000, so it is quite possible that the cost of what the hon. Gentleman—and, indeed, the campaign — is urging could be several million pounds, without taking account of the costs of a repair service.

The cost of extending the service to the other kinds of wheelchair that I have mentioned—for example, for the more active younger users or those who require the more sophisticated kinds of chair with the self-raising capacity — would be considerably greater. Although I do not want in any way simply to put the emphasis on costs, that is obviously one of the points that any Minister in any Administration would have to bear in mind.

I should also remind the hon. Gentleman that a large number of people who need a wheelchair are also in receipt of a mobility allowance or a war pensioner's mobility supplement. If they choose to do so, they can use their cash benefit to buy a wheelchair outside the Department's range, and they can seek the help of the organisation Motability, which I am sure will be familiar to the hon. Gentleman, in obtaining one on favourable terms. It is not the case that the mobility allowance is tied to expenditure on a car, for example, or, indeed, that the activities of Motability are tied to help with the provision of a car. The Government meet the whole of Motability's administrative costs, this year to the tune of some £425,000, and that is something that we are glad to do in view of the way that it can help disabled people to turn their mobility allowance cash into a vehicle or, as I have suggested, a wheelchair on the road.

However, I accept that that is not a complete response to the aspirations of disabled people and those who, as the hon. Gentleman has done this evening, seek to represent their interests. It is for that reason that we are doing a number of things.

The most important is the one to which the hon. Gentleman referred and, indeed, on which he has corresponded with Ministers, that is, the setting up of the independent working party under the chairmanship of Professor Ian McColl to study all the services provided through the Department's artificial limb and appliance centres. That working party has already undertaken a fundamental analysis of the structure and costs of the wheelchair service, and is evaluating its effectiveness and the options both for evolutionary development and for more radical change.

One of the matters to which it is paying particular attention is the range of wheelchairs available through the service. We expect to receive the working party's report by the summer and, when it is available, we shall obviously give careful consideration to any recommendations that it may make.

In addition to the recommendations of the working party, we are looking to the efforts being made within the Department itself to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the wheelchair service, which would be of obvious relevance to any proposals to extend it still further. Economies are being achieved by measures such as the introduction of the computerised stock control system, which allowed stocks at the central store to be reduced by some £2·5 million in the second half of 1984. Internal studies, for example of the storage operation, together with several independent studies commissioned by the working party, are providing a basis for other economies that may in due course enable improvements to be introduced into the service without increasing its overall cost.

In a broader sense, I should also mention the work that we have set in hand to improve the information base for future planning of services and benefits for disabled people. The valuable pioneering survey of the disabled that Amelia Harris carried out some 15 years ago did not attempt to identify groups of people with specific wheelchair needs. We hope that in the new survey of disabled people, on which work is currently in progress, it will be possible to include questions that go some way

4.37 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Until the last intervention, which was fairly sharp, it was disturbing to note that all of the speeches, with the exception of those from the Front Bench, have come from the Opposition side of the House. I should have thought that this matter transcends party politics because it concerns all Back Benchers if they want to defend their rights, not just today but in the future.

It is true that there are precedents for railroading legislation through the House in one day, but in very special circumstances that do not arise on this occasion. If we allow this Bill to go through without any complaint the occasion will be used as a precedent. It will be pointed to in the future. It will be said, "You cannot complain now. We did it before. You should have prevented it on that occasion and you cannot stop it now."

We do not accept that. The reputation of the Leader of the House stands high in the House. He is admired for the way in which he stands up for Back Benchers. Therefore, it is all the more surprising that he comes forward unnecessarily, as far as we can gather from what he said, on this occasion. He has given us no reason why there is added urgency that requires the remaining stages of the Bill to be brought forward to today.

The Secretary of State tried to show that the Bill is urgent. We can accept that he sees it as urgent, as it was so urgent last week that he wanted it to be discussed on Thursday — tomorrow. Now, something has happened that means that he wants to have the debate on Wednesday. We want to know what has caused him to bring forward the legislation to today.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): If the matter is as apolitical as the hon. Gentleman says and cuts across party political lines, will he not accept that anything that is happening today should not be blamed upon the Secretary of State for Transport or even upon the Secretary of State for the Environment but upon the council of Haringey for not getting its figures out in time?

Mr. Lamond: I have been trying, in accordance with the instructions you gave us, Mr. Speaker, to confine myself to the motion that is before us. I may be wrong in blaming the Secretary of State for Transport. Perhaps he was told that his business was to be brought forward to today, whether he liked it or not, and he is trying to make the best of a bad job. We should not be swept away by something that is convenient for the Government. The rearrangement of the business has been done for their convenience, although the Leader of the House has said that it is a bit inconvenient. Because of that little bit of convenience we will set a precedent that may be used in the future against all Oppositions. Hon. Members should think twice about it.

After we have dealt with the Bill it will all be water under the bridge and no doubt it will be forgotten about in three weeks' time. But the precedent will not be forgotten and will be trotted out from time to time to push through legislation that is not agreed across the House but, rather, is highly controversial. That is the important point. This legislation is not agreed between the parties. Some of my hon. Friends regard it as highly controversial. Therefore, although he has already spoken, the Leader of the House should, with your leave, Mr. Speaker, speak again. It would be difficult now for him to bring on another debate. I understand that hon. Members who should reply to any other debate are probably away wining and dining. Even so, the Leader of the House should set his mind to thinking about it. If he wants to retain the high reputation he has on the Opposition Benches for standing up for Back Benchers and if he wants us to accept what he proposes in future, he must demonstrate today that he is as concerned about the rights of Back Benchers as we are.

4.42 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I think we can agree that this is a matter not simply for London Members but for the entire House. What is proposed in the motion is to rubber-stamp our procedure to make a mockery of a system that has been used for a long time, whereby there is an interval between the Second Reading and the Committee stage of a Bill. My hon. Friends who are concerned with the Bill which is due to be debated have said to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Leader of the House that there has not been time to table amendments. That is a very important point.

The Leader of the House may be surprised to hear that I have much sympathy for him. I do not believe that this is his mistake. I think he has been pushed into it by two of the most incompetent colleagues that he has in the Cabinet.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend agree that the remarks made earlier by the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) are disgraceful since the Department of the Environment withdrew its order because of its own incompetence and not the incompetence of Haringey council?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not manage to stop the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), but that has nothing to do with this motion.

Mr. Winnick: The only appropriate comment to make is that the more we hear from the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), the more we regret the defeat of Mr. Stan Newens.

The Leader of the House of Commons has been described as someone who generally tries to listen to the voice of Back Benchers. Therefore, it is all the more regrettable that on this issue, which is a House of Commons matter and not one confined to London Members, he has been pushed into bringing forward business which Back Benchers have not had the necessary time to consider to enable them to table amendments, if necessary.

The issue is important. That is why Conservative Members are wrong to ignore what we are saying. If this is done today, how do we know that it will not be done on other Bills? We are dealing with an authoritarian type of Government. If they come to the conclusion that the House of Commons is an easy pushover and that it does not matter what is said or done, they will again arrange the Second Reading of a Bill one day with the Committee stage the next. The Prime Minister may decide that the House of Commons can be dealt with easily and that there is no need to worry.

Mr. Deakins: We must not be a rubber stamp.

Mr. Winnick: As my hon. Friend says, we must not allow the House to be a rubber stamp. We must stand up for our rights and privileges.

Mr. Holt: If the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) had been present at 3 o'clock this morning, he would have seen the strength of Back Benchers.

Mr. Winnick: I was here at about 2 o'clock last Friday morning, and I did not see the hon. Gentleman. I am pleased that he was present for a debate which obviously occupies his interest. This is even more important in many respects for the House of Commons than what was being debated in the early hours of this morning, because it is a constitutional issue. Therefore, Conservative Members, particularly those who came into the House at the last election, should remind themselves that these procedures have evolved over many years to some extent to protect the interests of Back Benchers. That is all the more reason why we should be concerned about the motion that is before us.

As has already been said, it would be foolish for Conservative Members to think that if they remain Members of Parliament they will always sit on the Government side of the House. If they do not protest now, it may be too late for them to start protesting when another Government propose to do the same. That Government may say that they regret it but that it is urgent business which has to be discussed. What will Conservative Members say then? They can hardly say that they protested at the appropriate time—namely, today. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) has been so persuaded.

There would only be an excuse to do what is proposed if the legislation was not controversial. If there was unanimous agreement, so be it, but there is not. This is a highly controversial measure which has aroused much passion. Moreover, we are dealing with a Secretary of State who can hardly get anything right, a right hon. Gentleman who, if I may say so without being ungenerous, is notorious for his ministerial incompetence. This matter should occupy the attention of Conservative Members as much as it occupies ours. Therefore, the Leader of the House should consult in the appropriate manner through the usual channels to ensure that the motion is withdrawn. If it comes to a vote, it should be fiercely resisted. If it is not withdrawn and there is a Division I hope to see some Conservative Members in the same Division Lobby as us.

4.50 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): It is essential to make it clear who is responsible for this procedural debate. It is the Secretary of State for Transport. He introduced and got through the House the London Regional Transport Bill, and it is no one else's fault that, when the right hon. Gentleman started to administer the legislation, he got it wrong and acted in a way which a High Court judge described as

"unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper."

Mr. Mikardo: Is it all right, apart from that?

Mr. Dobson: I think so, yes. I have not read every word of the judgment, and it may be that there were other faults. But it is felt by those who have been initiated into the matter that those three criticisms carry some validity and ought to carry a great deal of weight.

Opposition Members who have taken a deep interest in what happened have objected strongly to every effort that the Secretary of State has made to change the law to suit himself. It is necessary to fill in a little of the background to demonstrate that we have not been particularly obstructive and that, if there is any great urgency for the present Bill, the fault lies with the Secretary of State.

One of the problems appears to be that when the Leader of the House and the distinguished panjandrums on the Treasury Bench met to decide what should go on to the agenda of the House, anything to do with an amendment to the London Regional Transport Act became a movable feast. As chairman of the Labour group of London Members, I am consulted from time to time about the Opposition's responses, and it was my understanding, before the Government suddenly decided that we had to have a debate on the Belgrano sinking on Monday, that in one of the original drafts of the business statement for this week this Bill was to be read a Second time on Monday, with the remaining stages on Thursday. That would have been right. We should then have had time, as we are entitled to have time, to consider what had been said in the Second Reading debate before we got to the remaining stages of the Bill.

Apparently that does not matter to many Conservative Members who purport to represent London constituencies. They have scarcely ever been present when the House has discussed this legislation. But my right hon. and hon. Friends and I who have spent a great deal of time looking into what has been happening feel that this procedural motion means that we are being robbed of the right and opportunity to do our duty and to attempt to protect the interests of the people who elected us.

If any right hon. or hon. Member thinks that our duty to our electorate can be performed properly today following yesterday's Second Reading, he has a very peculiar view of how hon. Members should discharge their responsibilities. We have not had the opportunity to consider in detail some of the new information given by the Secretary of State at the end of yesterday's Second Reading debate. We believe that we are entitled to scrutinise what he said and to consult others who are more expert in these matters than we are, so that we can attempt to protect the interests of those who sent us here with the sole job of protecting their interests.

We are being denied the opportunity to do our job properly. Therefore, we hope that the Leader of the House will have some regard for the rights of Back Benchers. We do not blame him for what is happening unless he forces through this motion. We are willing to accept that it is the Secretary of State who is at fault. The Leader of the House is well known for his skill as a wordsmith. Even leaving out of account what the judge said about the actions of the Secretary of State being unlawful, I think that the right hon. Gentleman must agree that, having had the Second Reading debate yesterday, for the House to be forced to go through all the remaining stages today would, in the immortal words of Mr. Justice McNeill, be "irrational and procedurally improper."

4.55 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I agree fully with my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that this procedure is wrong. I was about to quote Mr. Justice McNeill's statement about the Secretary of State, because it is very important. The learned judge described the right hon. Gentleman's actions as illegal and irrational, and said that he was acting improperly procedurally as well.

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

With this proposed procedure the Leader of the House is compounding that illegal, irrational and procedurally improper behaviour, and it is essential that the House has no truck with it. It is especially important for the House to get the procedure right when there has been a court judgment of this kind. It is ridiculous for us to compound procedurally improper behaviour.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will the hon. Gentleman do the House a favour and cut out those parts of his speech which simply repeat what has gone before, and give us something new?

Mr. Mikardo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member who has not been in the Chamber to walk in and then instruct the Chair on what may or may not be said?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) instruct me to do anything.

Mr. Cohen: At that stage of my speech I had made only one point, and that was about the judgment of the court that the Secretary of State had acted illegally, irrationally and procedurally improperly. I was not repeating what had been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, because what I said was that, that judgment having been delivered, it was very dangerous for the House to compound that conduct and go ahead with further procedures that were procedurally improper.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Like me, my hon. Friend is a comparatively new Member of the House. Does he not treat with suspicion legislation which seems to be trying to cover up a misdemeanour by a Minister which was condemned by the High Court a few weeks ago?

Mr. Cohen: I agree with my hon. Friend, and it was one of my arguments during yesterday's Second Reading debate. For the benefit of Government supporters, I shall not repeat it.

It is not just serious that the House should contemplate compounding an improper procedure. We are also compounding the deception of the House. It was clear that the Secretary of State did that in several respects. Again I shall not go over the right hon. Gentleman's speech yesterday, but he deceived the House when he said that there was no intention to create a surplus, which was untrue. He also failed to answer our question about his comment that the matter was sub judice. In yesterday's debate he made the excuse that, even though it was not actually sub judice, it was sub judice to him. Apparently he has some God-given right to say when a subject——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman keeps saying that he is not going back over yesterday's debate, and then does so. I ask him to confine his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Cohen: I shall do that, Mr. Speaker. I have no intention of going over the details of yesterday's debate. I made quite a lengthy speech, and I shall not repeat it.

Mr. Deakins: Now that the Attorney-General is present, would it not be advisable for my hon. Friend to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his opinion? When the Secretary of State was describing what led up to this legislation, which we are being forced to consider in all its stages today, he said that in his opinion the matter was sub judice. Is not that a new procedure for the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) will not be tempted to do so, because it is a question that has nothing to do with the business motion.

Mr. Cohen: I take your ruling on that, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the Attorney-General will answer questions on that matter at some future date. Indeed, he still has answers to give us about the prosecution of Mr. Ponting, but I shall not raise that matter now.

The motion flows from the fact that the Secretary of State got his figures wrong in his demands upon the GLC. The Bill is concerned with figures——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman is relatively new here, but he is rehearsing an argument which he no doubt rehearsed yesterday. His argument will be perfectly in order on the amendments or on Third Reading, but not on the business motion, which he must please stick to.

Mr. Cohen: I accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker. However, my point is related to the business motion.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cohen: In replying to the debate yesterday the Secretary of State introduced new figures. The Bill is a technical Bill and the figures have to be studied by hon. Members before any reasoned amendments can be put down.

Mr. Corbyn: Can my hon. Friend tell us what opportunities he has had since the Secretary of State finished his reply to the debate at 10 o'clock last night to discuss with either his local borough council or people at the bus garage in his constituency how many jobs will be affected by the revelations made last night by the Secretary of State? Does my hon. Friend now feel able to contribute adequately to a debate on the basis of any discussions that he may have been able to have with workers in London Regional Transport?

Mr. Cohen: I have not been able to have any detailed consultations at all on the implications of the new figures.

I had a constituency commitment this morning. I was unable to come here in order to pick up a copy of *Hansard*, and study what the Secretary of State had said, and put down amendments to the Bill. I am sure that I was not the only hon. Member who could not be here. It is very bad that hon. Members should not have an opportunity fully to use the proper procedures of the House. Rushing the Bill through in 48 hours is dangerous. It would not be a dangerous precedent in terms of any future Labour Government, but it would be dangerous in terms of a future Conservative Government, who might try to muzzle all opposition, even from their own Back Benches. When such a precedent is involved, we should speak for Parliament. Bills have been rushed through only in emergencies, and when there has been agreement between both sides of the House. It has been made quite clear that there is no agreement on this matter. This is therefore a dangerous new departure.

The Secretary of State for Transport justifies the procedure by saying that there is an emergency. Although that question was hotly disputed last night, it was clearly

shown in the debate that there is no emergency — certainly not as regards LRT's 1984-85 operating needs. LRT has the money for those needs.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are not concerned about what the Bill is about. We are concerned about the motion on the Order Paper—whether we should take the remaining stages of the Bill after the Committee stage. The Committee stage was agreed last night. I believe that the hon. Gentleman was present.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was present. The justification for the motion is that there is urgency. The Secretary of State made that point just now. My point is that there is no urgency in terms of LRT's operating needs in this financial year. That argument is spurious.

Mr. Tony Banks: Was my hon. Friend here when, in arguing the urgency case, the Secretary of State said that LRT would run out of money by the end of February? That statement was simply untrue. The Secretary of State has given LRT external borrowing powers. There is no question of urgency in terms of LRT's money supply.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend speaks for Parliament in shooting down another deception which the Secretary of State has tried to impose on us.

In arguing the urgency case, the Secretary of State showed considerable concern for the GLC and its budget-making process. In my recollection, this is the first time that the right hon. Gentleman has shown concern for the GLC. He has been singularly vindictive about the GLC. In my view, the Secretary of State's argument was purely an excuse. Has the GLC contacted the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the House or any Minister with a request for urgent consideration of the Bill? I suspect that it has not. There is no shred of evidence that it has done so. The argument is spurious.

We have not had time to study *Hansard* and put down amendments. I am thinking of both Back Benchers and Front Benchers. I have spoken to one of my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench. He told me that, although the Front Bench had studied the matter in detail, when a Front Bench spokesman attempted to put down amendments they were ruled out of order because of this unnecessarily rushed procedure.

The procedure is unfair, not just to hon. Members, such as myself, who have not had the opportunity to study the Secretary of State's speech, but to my Front Bench colleagues. Some amendments were submitted, I believe, but they were turned down. That is serious in itself. When the hon. Members sought to submit other amendments in their place, they were told that they were out of time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not perpetuate something that is wrong. I do not select amendments for the Committee stage and have no knowledge of whether or not amendments have been submitted incorrectly. The hon. Gentleman must concern himself with the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Cohen: I have no criticism to make of you, Mr. Speaker. I understand your role. I understand that this will be a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means. I was merely relaying to the House, in relation to the business motion, the fact that hon. Members had had no opportunity to put down amendments or that amendments submitted had been turned down or ruled out of time. The Secretary of State is ruling out an entire parliamentary process—the Committee stage. This is a dangerous messing around with our constitution. I see that the Leader of the House is nodding assent. I hope that that argument will be reflected in his answer to the debate.

Your role in these matters is carefully defined, Mr. Speaker, and you must protect the rights of the House and Back Benchers. If the Leader of the House does not have a re-think, you should seek means of having words in his ear in order to protect the rights of the House and Back Benchers.

The motion is procedurally improper, just like the Secretary of State's action towards the GLC, and unsatisfactory. I strongly urge the Leader of the House to withdraw it.

5.11 pm

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) said that Conservative Members were sitting smugly while listening to the debate. I was not one of them as I listened from the beginning and with increasing anxiety about what was proposed. Moreover, I did not want the debate to go by without that worry being expressed on this side of the House.

I mean no disrespect to Opposition Members present, but one of the reasons why some of my right hon. and hon. Friends treated the initial stages of the debate with some contempt might be that we have had to listen to a string of what might be regarded as bogus points of order or claims to parliamentary difficulties, so it was difficult to differentiate between them and this genuine worry.

Why does my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House think that there was no row about these matters last night? I assume that it was known last night during the business statement that taking the remaining stages of the Bill in one sitting would create difficulties. I wonder why there was no outcry last night from the Opposition Front Bench. There might be a procedural reason for that. I have great sympathy for my right hon. Friend in the problems that he faces with the rate limitation measure, on which I had hoped to address the House tonight if I caught your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman says that there was no objection last night. Has he read the *Official Report* and seen that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made all of these arguments after the business statement? If the hon. Gentleman reads column 950, he will see that what has been said today was also argued last night.

Mr. Proctor: I am sorry if I lost the point that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was making last night in the noise. Nevertheless, I am surprised that we did not have last night the rather lengthy debate that we are having now.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman is under some misapprehension. Extended points of order, which are sometimes in order—the House had points of order, all of which were in order, for 14 hours on the European Communities Bill—are one thing, and a motion such as this on which speeches can be as long as may be and in which interventions such as this, which the hon. Gentleman has kindly allowed me to make, can be made is quite another. This is not a protest but a discussion of a motion which should be tabled only for specific, well

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman's problem is that he never believes the truth. He would not recognise it if it hit him straight between the eyes. I hope that it will one day.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member confine himself to the business of the House and try to keep down the temperature a bit?

Mr. Banks: As those few hon. Members who were in the House yesterday will be aware, the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill is not just highly controversial, which puts it in a category different from those other Bills which it has been agreed should go through all their stages in one day; it is highly technical. If the Bill goes through, the GLC will have to find £50 million which it does not have at the moment. It is entitled, with hon. Members, to analyse carefully what the Secretary of State said yesterday, and to consider carefully whether to table amendments so that London ratepayers and Members of the House can obtain a fair deal and a fair hearing. Under the circumstances, it is not just inconvenient that we should be taking the remaining stages of the Bill today: it is grossly unfair to London ratepayers and to Members of the House.

I understand that because of the way that the stages are being concertina-ed, amendments have been turned down because they were technically incorrect or were not tabled in time. How, in all fairness, were those of us who were studying the Second Reading and tabling amendments to produce amendments that were in time and in order? It is unfair, and I appeal through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the House. There must be other business that can be considered which would give the Opposition sufficient time to study carefully what the Secretary of State said yesterday, and to come forward with reasoned amendments, giving everyone the opportunity to debate those amendments and achieve some resolution of a tricky technical and highly controversial measure.

The Opposition are not being obstructive. We are seeking genuinely to debate the Bill properly. The Leader of the House must have some other business that is not so controversial and detailed in its application that he can bring forward to allow us to have more time to discuss the Bill.

4.7 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I support the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) in opposing the business motion. I do not have as many years' experience in the House as my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) or the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). As an outside observer of the proceedings of the House for many years, it has seemed to me that the tradition has always been that business is rushed through all its stages in the course of 48 hours in extreme and unusual circumstances only. That is what is being proposed in the motion.

The Bill, which is about to enter its Committee stage, Report and Third Reading, if the Government have their way, is being dealt with with the most unseemly and undue haste. That has been one of the arguments of those opposing the Bill.

A further element of haste is added to the picture with the proposal that the Bill should come forward by 24 hours with Committee, Report and Third Reading all rolled into one. I cannot support the motion. I am surprised that the Leader of the House has brought it before us because he is in most circumstances a fair and honourable man.

We have had insufficient time to consider what was said by the Secretary of State on Second Reading. Because of other engagements, I was unable to attend the entire debate yesterday. However, I have attempted this morning, when not attending a meeting of a Select Committee, to read carefully what was said in the House yesterday. Some very important points were made by the Secretary of State in the course of his remarks. For example, in winding up, he gave some detailed information about the amount of money required by LRT from the GLC and the purposes for which that money was required. That was important, new and detailed information. It was not available to me until I collected my copy of *Hansard* this morning. I have been unable to table amendments. In the light of the Committee debate which is to take place later today, it may well be impossible to think carefully and deeply enough to table further amendments and to make comments on Report and on Third Reading.

It is not just a question of haste; it is in particular that detailed and grave arguments emerged in what the Secretary of State said yesterday, and we are now denied an opportunity to make full use of these in further consideration of the Bill.

The Bill is one of great importance to hon. Members who represent London constituencies. Our constituents will be affected financially by the measures proposed in the Bill. It is important that we have an opportunity to consult our constituents, the GLC, which is affected by the measure, and the London borough councils which will also be affected in consideration of their rating policies by whatever decisions the House takes. That degree of consultation has been denied to us by the haste with which the Bill is being brought forward.

I hope that the Leader of the House will consider the motion further because we have had insufficient time to protect the interests of our constituents, to give proper consideration to comments which were made yesterday in the House and to give fair and full consideration to what we will wish to put forward in the course of debate later today. I hope that the Leader of the House will think again before pressing the motion.

4.13 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): These are serious matters, as I think the Leader of the House, if he did not believe so before this short series of interventions took place, would readily accept now. Not for the first time, the House is indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for watching over our procedures so carefully and defending the interests of Parliament in so doing. I agree with virtually all that has been said by my hon. Friend and, indeed, by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell).

Here is a very special case in which the principle and practice of our procedures is put to the test. The principle from which the motion seeks to depart is that we should not simply run one stage of an important Bill into another without having time to reflect upon what has happened and without a chance to amend. The practice, of course, is that if one does not allow for such an opportunity, one runs into great difficulties.

No hon. Member who has considered the Bill can have any doubt that it is not a perfectly conceived Bill. It is a Bill which requires considerable discussion and, indeed, reasonable amendment. My right hon. and hon. Friends have not had—indeed, cannot have—the opportunity of tabling those amendments that they genuinely wish to table. Nor have people outside the House who have serious and legitimate interests in the progress of the Bill had a chance to consider what was said yesterday by the Secretary of State or to make represenations to their Members of Parliament on further amendment of the Bill in Committee.

What adds a special piquancy, indeed irony, to this attempt to accelerate our procedures is that the Bill arises out of an initial faulty judgment by the very Secretary of State who now presents the Bill to the House. If he had got it right the first time, he would not need to use this process now. The idea that he is going to get it right the second time without anybody having a chance to consider what he said yesterday is highly unlikely. What adds farce upon farce is that the very fact that we have a change of business arises from the misjudgment of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment who botched up an order yesterday.

Therefore, I think that there is here very special reason why the Leader of the House should take notice of what has been said to him from a wide-ranging body of opinion, and should seek to withdraw the motion and substitute something more acceptable for the business of the House today.

4.16 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I should like to say a few words, because hon. Gentlemen have made perfectly fair points, and I may be able to add a little further information from the point of view of the Bill as opposed to the point of view of the business of the House with which my right hon. Friend has been dealing.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to transgress your earlier ruling that in consideration of the motion we should debate merely the contents of the motion?

Mr. Speaker: The Secretary of State was present when I ruled on what was in order in consideration of the motion. He should not go into the details of the Bill. We are considering a motion on the business of the House with respect to further proceedings of the Bill.

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps I might be allowed to complete my sentence. Right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have made certain remarks and asked certain questions to which it would be right for me to reply. Obviously I cannot answer for my right hon. Friend in his arrangement of the business of the House.

On Second Reading yesterday I gave the reasons for the urgency of the Bill:

"because the GLC cannot be certain that Parliament will approve the Bill in the form that I have presented it. In order to give the earliest possible element of certainty to the GLC and to LRT the Government propose that the progress of the Bill be expedited. The House will have seen the motion on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the House proposing that the remaining stages be taken on Thursday. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that, whatever they may think of the contents of the Bill, it is right to decide the issue as quickly as possible." — [*Official Report*, 19 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 871-2.]

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I will give way, but I am trying to answer the point of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) that there is no urgency—a point raised also by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). There is urgency, because LRT will run out of cash later this month.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I will give way after I have finished my point. The GLC has to fix its rate precept for 1985-86 very soon, not later than the first week in March. These are what hon. Gentlemen called reasons of state. These are the reasons which give rise to the urgency.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I am coming to the point about tomorrow, but it may be helpful if I give way to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams).

Mr. Williams: The whole House heard the right hon. Gentleman say—he was quoting from his speech—that it was urgent to get this legislation through on Thursday. In that case, he must concede, and should consult the Leader of the House about conceding, that in all logic, if the Bill is not needed before tomorrow, we should have the Air Force debate today and the LRT debate tomorrow.

Mr. Ridley: That shows how important it sometimes is to complete one's argument before giving way. I was explaining why the Bill was required urgently. It is not as if that was not pointed out yesterday; those who heard me or who read my remarks in *Hansard* would have known that the Government attached urgency to the passage of the Bill.

The Leader of the House announced the change of business at 10 o'clock last night. Most hon. Members who have spoken in this brief debate were present on that occasion. My right hon. Friend announced that it was proposed to bring forward the further stages of the Bill from Thursday to today. The only Opposition Member to comment on the matter was the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Shore: So did I.

Mr. Ridley: And the right hon. Gentleman. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was merely concerned —I am grateful for his kind thoughts—about the state of my physical health. I assure him that I am in good trim and ready to undertake the debates on which we are, I hope, shortly to embark. There was no objection from him to the business being taken earlier than had previously been suggested.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Secretary of State aware that, because the Leader of the House has brought forward tomorrow's business to today, it is impossible for hon. Members to study what the right hon. Gentleman said in yesterday's debate, to consult anybody or to table considered amendments? Is he aware, therefore, that he is denying us the ability to conduct any serious consultation about the form of amendments that should be tabled to this nasty little Bill?

Mr. Ridley: I was about to come to the point that the hon. Gentleman raises. It is said that there has not been sufficient time, that considerable discussion is needed and that we are proceeding with undue haste. I remind the

[Mr. Ridley]

House that we had a considerable debate on the Ways and Means resolution, when all this ground was covered—*[Interruption.]*—and that we had a full day's debate yesterday on Second Reading, when all the ground was covered again. More than eight hours have already been spent debating the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney and others allege that there has not been time to table amendments. But Opposition Members have tabled amendments. They put down six amendments and this morning they tabled a new clause. I would not for a moment comment on whether those amendments should have been selected; that is entirely a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. It cannot be sustained, however, that Opposition Members have not had time to put down amendments, because in practice they have done so.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The right hon. Gentleman must not exaggerate. The amendments standing in my name and in the names of my hon. Friends were tabled at extremely short notice immediately after the Second Reading last night. That is not the way in which amendments should be tabled, because hon. Members could not have had time in which to consider them. We would have liked to table a number of other amendments and a new clause; we put those in this morning, but they were not found acceptable. It is nonsense to say that because we succeeded—by rushing at the Clerks in what I can only call a most undignified manner after 10 o'clock last night—in getting some form of words on the Notice Paper we had time to table amendments.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady succeeded in putting down some amendments, two or three of which will be debated later. They raise interesting new points to which I shall be glad to respond in due course. The fact that not all of her amendments were in order is not the fault of the procedure. I do not know what reasons Mr. Speaker would give for not selecting them. I am simply saying that it is not true to say that there was not time or opportunity for hon. Members to table amendments — *[Interruption.]* — because amendments have been put down, and the hon. Lady tabled a new clause this morning. Other hon. Members could certainly have put down further amendments this morning.

I do not know what attitude you, Mr. Speaker, would take to any further amendments—manuscript amendments and matters of that sort—because that is not a matter for me. I could not accept, therefore, that hon. Members have not had an opportunity to put down amendments. The contents of the Bill have been known for nearly a fortnight.

Any amendments that hon. Members might have contemplated could have been prepared, even though the Bill did not get its Second Reading until last night. I accept that the House is put to some inconvenience by the change of business which has brought the debate forward by one day, as the Leader of the House said, but I cannot accept that it is without precedent or that the House has not had ample opportunity to table amendments.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Unless my ears deceived me, I heard the right hon. Gentleman say that the GLC needed to know the outcome of the measure because it had to decide its budget on 1 March.

Mr. Ridley: I referred to the first week in March.

Mr. Dobson: The Secretary of State is still wrong, because Friday 1 March falls in the first week of March and the GLC does not intend considering making its budget until Thursday 7 March. There is therefore more time available than the Secretary of State thought there was.

Mr. Ridley: My last word in reply is that the hon. Gentleman neglects to remember that the Bill has to go to another place.

4.27 pm

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): The motion constitutes a dangerous precedent. I invite Conservative Members, who may be sitting smugly listening to the debate on this issue and thinking about the vast majority that the Government have in the House, to consider that this precedent could be used by a future Government of a different political complexion for purposes which they might wish strongly to resist.

We are discussing an issue which is for the House of Commons as a whole. The Leader of the House said that it was a matter of inconvenience to hon. Members. It was unusual for him to be mealy-mouthed about such a matter, for it is not just a question of inconvenience, but of taking away the right of Back Benchers to table considered amendments following the Second Reading of a Bill.

The only precedents that can be quoted are of Bills introduced by all-party agreement through the usual channels at times of national emergency. There is no national emergency for this Bill. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) pointed out, the Bill stems not from one but from two examples of incompetence by Cabinet Ministers, the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment, the actions of one compounding those of the other. I invite the Leader of the House to say whether there is any precedent for such a procedure to be introduced solely to cover up the embarrassment of a Government who have been doubly incompetent in handling their affairs.

Urgency was the theme of the remarks of the Secretary of State for Transport. If it was urgent to have the Bill on Thursday of this week—when a week ago notice was given of the day when the Report and Committee stages would be taken—what has happened to increase that urgency which makes it necessary for it to be taken today rather than tomorrow? The answer was not clear from what the right hon. Gentleman said. Indeed, I thought that he evaded the point. Neither the right hon. Gentleman nor the Leader of the House has so far addressed himself to that feature of this issue.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend will have heard the Secretary of State say that the money was needed urgently by LRT. I do not know whether my hon. Friend was in the House yesterday when the Secretary of State detailed the use to which the money would be put. The right hon. Gentleman said that it included £21 million for voluntary severance payments that had been agreed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We had this out yesterday, as the hon. Gentleman has just said. It is nothing to do with the motion that we are debating now. The hon. Gentleman must confine himself to the motion.

Mr. Williams: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I submit that the point that my hon. Friend the Member for

Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is making is relevant to the motion that we are discussing because he is trying to demonstrate that the purposes for which the money will be used are not urgent purposes. Therefore, it is necessary to consider this point.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If that were the case, the shadow Deputy Leader of the House would find it on the Order Paper. It is not there, so we must confine ourselves to the motion that we are discussing. If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is arguing for urgency. that is one thing, but to start reading from the debate last night is a rather different thing.

Mr. Tony Banks: With great respect, Mr. Speaker, I point out that the Secretary of State has just said that this business motion was introduced because of the urgency of the payments to LRT, so it is germane to that argument to say what the money is to be used for. Yesterday the right hon. Gentleman gave a whole list of things, and if you will not let me read it out, Mr. Speaker, I cannot do so. However, it clearly——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has made one speech. This is supposed to be an intervention. I am stopping him making a second speech. An intervention in the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) is another matter. The hon. Gentleman is rather banging on.

Mr. Deakins: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but the point that I am making is narrower than the point that he was making. I am asking what change in urgency there has been since last Thursday's business statement that warrants bringing the Bill forward from Thursday to Wednesday.

I have a simple question for the Leader of the House. The Government have a difficult problem as a result of the double incompetence of two Ministers. Why, when faced with such a dilemma, did the Government choose the difficult way out of the problem—bringing tomorrow's business forward to today and bringing some extraneous business in for tomorrow—rather than the easy way out, which would have been to bring in the extraneous business to fill in the gap of the rate-capping order today?

4.32 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The only national emergency that we face today, which we faced yesterday and will face tomorrow, is the incompetence of the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport. We are in this mess because the Secretary of State for the Environment cannot get his figures straight before he goes on his merry way of destroying local government services, and the Secretary of State for Transport cannot get his figures right when he is trying to rob the ratepayers of London of a further £50 million to continue on his course of privatising London transport, which is what he is trying to do at the end of the day.

Before I came to the House I was always alarmed and concerned at the way in which Parliament could apparently drop everything, for no good reason, apart from the convenience of a Department or a Minister, and force through special legislation without adequate consultation or debate. I was concerned about that as somebody who was not then a Member of Parliament but who was watching from outside. I could not believe that hon. Members would give even less consideration to a matter than part-time councillors faced with an emergency at their monthly meeting. We are being confronted with this situation because the Secretary of State for Transport has been asked to bail out his friends in the Government by bringing the Bill forward today. If the Bill goes through and the Government get their way, it will result in £10 being taken from every Londoner to pay for the Secretary of State's earlier cock-ups and in a further deterioration of transport in London. More importantly, it is impossible for me or for any other London Member to have any opportunity to consult anyone about the details of the Bill.

Yesterday the Secretary of State for Transport spoke at great length twice. During his winding-up speech, he released what I now understand to be new figures and information on the funding of London transport. I do not intend to quote at length, but I can give examples. He talked about

> "£21 million for voluntary severance payments . . . £6 million for insurance claims . . . £4 million for claims outstanding on the Jubilee line". — [*Official Report*, 19 February 1985; Vol 73, c. 945.]

Various other figures were mentioned. I need an opportunity to analyse those figures. I need to consult the National Union of Railwaymen, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the GLC and the many transport consultative and advisory groups in London, including the transport consultative committee set up by the Secretary of State. There is no opportunity to do that. If an hon. Member was not here yesterday—for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) could not be here—he would not have heard those pearls of wisdom from the lips of the Secretary of State. He would not have known about them, and therefore he would have been denied the opportunity of tabling any amendment.

It is inconceivable that the House should now start debating this measure after many amendments have been rejected. It is impossible to take any advice on the detail or the substance of the matter and there is now to be another debate on London transport. It is a farce, and it is occasioned by a series of cock-ups in Ministers' zeal to destroy local government, public services and transport. Anyone listening to the debate would ask where is the urgency in this matter when there is the Prime Minister in Washington discussing Star Wars, a famine in North Africa, a miners' strike and all manner of disasters around us. Instead of discussing those matters, we are asked to put through a motion to save the face of the Secretary of State for Transport and the competence of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I ask through you, Mr. Speaker, even at this late stage, the Leader of the House to withdraw the proposal to discuss this matter today and bring forward some other much more serious, much more urgent matter than saving the face of the Secretary of State for Transport.

4.36 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will not be persuaded by the siren voices on the Labour Benches. However, if he were to be, and if he were in a mess, perhaps we might use the time usefully by having a debate on a subject that would find universal favour throughout the House—the funding of the BBC and television licensing. In that way, all of us would be made happy.

[Mr. Spearing]

tried and well justified purposes. Such motions usually go through on the nod but, because the Opposition believe that this purpose is not well founded, we are having proper debate and speeches. I hope that my extended intervention has been helpful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Proctor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for explaining why he thinks there is an extended debate on this motion and why there was none last night. My point is that if the anxiety had been as great last night as it obviously is today, it might have been possible to make some changes in today's business last night. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House must be aware that if such an adjustment had been made last night we might not have delayed the House so long on this motion. The debate on the Royal Air Force might have taken place today rather than on Thursday, although my right hon. Friend might give reasons why that was not possible.

I did not want anxiety on this matter to come only from the Opposition. Perhaps the only time that I have agreed with the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was when he said that there will come a day when Conservative Members will find themselves on the Opposition Benches, including my right hon. Friend, who has rightly been called a House of Commons man. I am sure that he would be the first to object to such a motion if the roles were reversed.

5.17 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I do not represent a London constituency and I have not taken part in previous debates on the Bill, but I have given my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport my general support.

When I came to the House today, one of my first actions was to see how long was the list of amendments tabled for the Committee stage. I assumed that it would run to a full page. I was amazed to find that only two groups had been selected, so I came to this debate. It occurred to me that if the Opposition Front Bench, with the resources available to it, had found it difficult to table the number of amendments that one normally expects, how much more difficult it must have been for Back Benchers.

If any point is missed during the Committee stage of a Bill by hon. Members or Front-Bench spokesmen there is normally time for reflection, consideration and consultation before Report stage. I believe that on this occasion the procedure proposed by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is wrong. It removes the fail-safe opportunity to pick up at the Report stage the points that were either missed or could not be presented during the Committee stage.

This point goes wider than the merits, or otherwise, of the Bill that is to be discussed in Committee. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider whether it might be in the best interests of the House of Commons and of Back Benchers on both this and later occasions, when this procedure could be described as a precedent, if he were to accept that there is a belief on both sides of the House that it is undesirable for the Committee stage of a Bill to follow closely upon Second Reading and that it is even more undersirable for the Report stage of that Bill immediately to follow the Committee stage. Today's business covers not only the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill. The Trustee Savings Bank Bill is to be considered, followed by the milk supplementary levy motion. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider whether it would be a reasonable day's work for the House to complete the Committee stage of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill and all stages of the Trustee Savings Bank Bill and the levy and to return to the Report and Third Reading stages of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill on a later occasion—if necessary, tomorrow after the debate on the Royal Air Force.

5.21 pm

Mr. Denis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) has now broadened the attack on the Government for their handling of the business of the House. During this relatively short debate contributions have been made by hon. Members with many years' experience of this House, initially by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow——

Mr. Mikardo: No—Bethnal Green and Stepney.

Mr. Skinner: He is not right hon?

Mr. Mikardo: Yes, but he is the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney.

Mr. Skinner: My right hon. Friend made it clear that he could not remember any occasion when such a controversial matter had been brought before the House at such short notice. My right hon. Friend compared it to certain examples that he remembers well. I referred to Rolls-Royce which was in one hell of a mess. There was general agreement that Rolls-Royce ought to be nationalised. Rolls-Royce was nationalised under the last Tory Prime Minister. The present Prime Minister and the Leader of the House joined in that little escapade. On that occasion they were all in favour of nationalisation. We went into the same Lobby shouting and cheering and saying that Rolls-Royce should be shifted from the private sector, where it had failed, to the public arena.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I was against it.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman has made an important point. There was no vote. I imagine that on that occasion the right hon. Gentleman shouted, sometimes strongly and sometimes weakly, "No." The point is that the right hon. Gentleman threw the towel in at Wolverhampton before the general election in 1974. When he threw the towel in, he did a pretty fair job. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that on this occasion you have grave doubts about the predicament in which you have been placed. On occasions like this it is apparent that you are stuck there like piggy in the middle. Hon. Members do not want you to be placed in that predicament. We will argue the toss with you, Mr. Speaker, when it matters, but this is not one of those occasions.

On this occasion, the Government have a massive majority of 147. It makes one wonder what the Government are up to. With their 147 majority they are trying to wheedle through this Bill on two successive days by means of their payroll vote and their prospective payroll voters who are waiting to go into the Lobby at a moment's notice. But last night, on fluoridation, they were not very keen. With all those payroll voters behind them the Government are capable of getting any piece of legislation through the House. Therefore, one is bound to come to the conclusion that there is something much more sinister

about it. It is because it is sinister that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), with all his experience, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who began this procedural debate and who examines these matters in detail, raised this matter. When my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has spotted something on the Order Paper and raises a point of order in the PLP and subsequently on the Floor of the House, you can bet your bottom dollar that, 85 to 40 on, he is right. That is so on this occasion.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): My hon. Friend says there may be something sinister about this. Does he think it is sinister that the Attorney-General is sitting on the Back Benches? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]

Mr. Skinner: I have a little note here. When the Attorney-General walked in I put down, "Attorney-General. Prime Minister missing, on holiday." *[Laughter.]* Yes, I believe that it is sinister. The Attorney-General wandered into the debate because he, too, is concerned. The Attorney-General can get up, if he likes, but I do not expect him to jump up and contradict the Leader of the House. However, as a Law Officer who is not on holiday and who is taking a long and detailed interest in the matter, perhaps we ought to hear his view, along with all the other many and varied views.

During this attack there have been speeches from only two Conservative Members, apart from the Leader of the House and the Secretary of State. Both put forward the constructive argument that the Leader of the House should take this back whence it came. In fact, the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) made the constructive suggestion that the House should deal with whatever is on the Order Paper today. The Trustee Savings Banks Bill was opposed on Second Reading. It will no doubt be opposed during its remaining stages. There will be argument and discussion and, no doubt, a vote. Is that not sufficient? It is to be followed by the milk supplementary levy.

Then the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) joined in. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that although we may not agree on some issues, we are not all that far apart on the Common Market, as we see this ramshackle organisation fall to the floor. We are enjoying that. However, the right hon. Member for South Down follows these matters meticulously, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South. He made it clear, in as strong a voice as possible, that this matter should be reconsidered. The right hon. Member for South Down is an old ex-mate of the Leader of the House. I wonder whether he has paid sufficient attention to the remarks of the right hon. Member for South Down? If we allow this Bill to proceed, there will be more occasions of this kind. It is a scandal. With a majority of 147 the Government can push anything through the House. With their majority they can trample all over parliamentary democracy. They say that they were elected to look after the freedom of the people of Britain, yet this is what the Government are up to.

The breadth of the attack has not included the Social Democrats and the Liberals. They talk about freedom of information, being in favour of peace and other wonderfully abstract things, but when it comes down to the real nitty-gritty of fighting for parliamentary democracy, where are they? Not a single Social Democrat has spoken in the debate. *[Interruption.]* Here they are. It is just possible that at the tether end of the debate one of them will be trying to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker—a typical Liberal intervention. They have probably had a meeting about joint selection and failed to reach agreement again.

Many hon. Members who pay a lot of attention to procedural detail have said, almost in unison: take it back. Look at all the time that we have wasted, Mr. Speaker. You could have been having your tea, but you are very concerned about the matter. I do not know what discussions you had with Mr. Deputy Speaker but the chances are that you said to him, "Look, I am not leaving the Chair on this important House of Commons matter. It is one at which I should be present." That in itself broadens the attack. Hardly anyone is left to support the motion.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He was referring most solic—most solicit—he was referring to the close relationship which existed between the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the Leader of the House. Is it not a shame that former philosophical bedfellows should now be kicking each other out of bed?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that the hon. Member for Bolsover is solicitous of my welfare, but he must stick to the motion. I really would like to go and have my tea.

Mr. Skinner: I do not think, Mr. Speaker, that you should go for your tea until I have done.

Before my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) intervened, stuttering and stammering — unusually for him because he has been in the law courts and knows all about it and will probably try to catch your eye later—I was going on to say that sometimes Back Benchers argue with the Leader of the House about business. That is fair and above board, but often the issue is a bit narrow.

However, this time it is different, because the Opposition Front Bench has sussed this out as well. It is not just the Back Benchers who are saying it is wrong. The Opposition Front Bench has said it is wrong as well, so there have been none of the usual arrangements to get the matter through. Why? They have been trying all day to table amendments. Any hon. Member knows that any Front Bench Member should be able to table more than the paltry few amendments that have appeared today on a matter of such major importance. The real reason is that they have not had the time to table them and to make sure that they are acceptable to you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing that worries me is that the debate might be closured. The Government have a majority of 147 and many Tory Members are stuck outside the Chamber who, unlike the Attorney-General, have never come in to listen to the arguments. They are stuck in the woodwork somewhere. If you, Mr. Speaker, decide to go for your tea at about 6 pm, a Tory Whip could move the closure of the debate. That would make the matter even worse. We are arguing why the business should be taken off, but the Government can come along, in almost dictatorial fashion, and move the closure. It is not for me to tell you your job, Mr. Speaker, but I am suggesting that the debate should not be closured, in view of the number of hon. Members who have taken part and who still want to take part.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend remember that when I first opposed the motion I said that a closure would be a possible course of action for the Leader of the House and that I hoped that he would not take it? But my hon. Friend is perhaps slightly mistaken. As I understand it, a Government Whip may claim to move the closure but whoever is in the Chair at that time—be it you, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker — is under no compulsion to accept it. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you or your Deputy, in view of the importance of the principle of what we are debating, would not accept that closure until there had been a proper debate. My hon. Friend is on an important point when he mentions democracy. If the Government really cared for that, the motion would not be before us at all.

Mr. Skinner: In contrast to my attempts to be more delicate, my hon. Friend has, in his blunt fashion, put his finger on it. I would not try to put words into your mouth, Mr. Speaker, but my hon. Friend, who studies such matters in great detail, has put his finger on it. We would not look kindly on a closure motion on this debate.

There was a lot of talk last week—we all heard it—about agreement between the two sides of the House. There is no agreement on this matter, yet the Prime Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and played merry hell because my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition would not tell her that he agreed with her or believed her on this, that and the other. What nonsense it makes. Last week all the newspapers said that the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister could not agree and that parliamentary democracy was at stake and would be ruined. Yet here we are a week later and the Government are saying, "To hell with agreement. We are not bothered about agreements with the other side. We are going to steamroller this thing through and we do not care what the Labour Front Bench says. We do not care what the Liberals say." They have just arrived——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose——*

Mr. Skinner: —and one wants to speak. Yes, the hon. Gentleman may, in his squeaky, piping voice.

Mr. Hughes: I do not know whether I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that introduction, but I should like to remind him that it is not just the Opposition who can make life difficult. When the hon. Gentleman and I were here at 2 am today, we had another closure. On that occasion, Conservative Back Benchers were making life difficult. It is now becoming apparent that almost no business can be got through the House with agreement without resorting to procedural devices. I have not been here as long as the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he will tell us when that was last the case. It is certainly the first time since I have been here that we have had so many procedural tricks.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not pursue something which is purely hypothetical.

Mr. Skinner: That admonition is absolutely right, but the hon. Gentleman has made a germane point and yet missed it. The hon. Gentleman said that he was up all night —at least, he was up until about 3 am—and that the Government were in a mess. That is part and parcel of the problem. The Government have lost control of their business, so much so that last night they could not keep 100 Tory Members here to closure the debate. This is germane, Mr. Speaker, because the hon. Gentleman wanted to table an amendment to the Bill and he was in bed. He did not get back until 4 am. All those hon. Members who did stay, especially Opposition Members, who were worried about fluoridation got home late and could not get up in time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is interesting to hear about last night, but the motion on the Order Paper is about today's business. The hon. Gentleman is a good parliamentarian and must stick to the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Skinner: The point that I am trying to illustrate is that every hon. Member can play his or her part in the Bill. If they wish, they can table amendments. It should have been debated tomorrow. Anybody who stayed up late last night and did not get here as early as they otherwise might—especially the Liberals, who are not as quick on their feet as most people—has been unable to table amendments. Because this business has been brought on today, hon. Members have not had time to put down amendments. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) inadvertently stumbled across an argument, but failed to appreciate it fully.

Then there is the question of the urgency of the matter.

Mr. Deakins: Before my hon. Friend leaves the question of amendments, will he bear in mind the fact that not only do hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to table considered amendments for the Committee stage, but we may wish to take amendments if there is a Report stage? If we go straight from Committee to Report, there will be no time for us to table amendments.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) is absolutely on the point. That is what the motion is about and that is what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) should confine his remarks to.

Mr. Skinner: I am confining myself to the generality of the argument and my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) has put his finger on the nub of the issue. We have been prevented from carrying out our duties.

Mr. Mikardo: There will be no Report stage.

Mr. Skinner: That is correct. My hon. Friend is on the button again.

The Secretary of State for Transport talked about the urgency of getting the Bill through. We believe that that is a phoney argument. I suggest that it is as phoney as the arguments used by, let us say, the Central Electricity Generating Board, which has lost £2,000 million and is being allowed by the Government to borrow ad nauseam as long as the Government can drive the miners into the floor. The Government allow the CEGB to borrow £2,000 million, but they are not prepared to allow London Regional Transport to borrow £50 million. It is a bit of nonsense.

Mr. Tony Banks: In fact, LRT has external borrowing powers which it could use. The Secretary of State gave it those powers. There is no question of urgency about its money.

Mr. Skinner: The same is true of a lot of industries and organisations. The Government will allow them to borrow. The Secretary of State says that the Government

need to get the Bill through today to get the £50 million so that the matter can be resolved. It is nonsense, because the Government are prepared to let other utilities borrow £2,000 million or any other amount when it suits their purpose. They are not worried about bringing Bills before the House then.

Those are the arguments that have been relayed by my hon. Friends. There is no alternative to the case that they have put. Unusually, the Leader of the House was not able to sustain his argument against the right hon. Member for South Down. He has not been able to convince hon. Members that the Government's proposal makes sense. There ought to be discussions between the usual channels to facilitate the proper progress of business today.

There are various options. One was put by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) and I have put another. No doubt my hon. Friends on the Front Bench have other ideas in mind. It is a scandal that the House should be asked to allow the Bill to go through in one day. It is a vital piece of legislation. The Government should withdraw the motion and let us get back to normal business.

5.44 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It is a pleasure to speak in the debate and I feel humble to be following so many distinguished hon. Members from both sides of the House.

It is with some trepidation that I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The last time that we spoke together was at the Chesterfield by-election, when he followed me. My reception was excellent, but his was stupendous. It is always that way; he is always pinching my lines.

The debate is important because it goes to the heart of the British constitution. As it has unfolded, it has reflected enormous credit on Back-Bench Members and one cannot help contrasting that credit with the grave dishonour that the debate has reflected on the Government. We are witnessing the arrogance of the Executive. We have tried to put aside party politics and no one has tried to score party points. We have treated the matter as a high constitutional issue.

One of the most difficult aspects of the British constitution is the awkward relationship between the Executive and the legislature. There is a series of checks and balances—an ebb and flow. Sometimes it seems that the Executive is in charge, and occasionally it seems that the legislature is in charge. Today, the Executive is seeking to trample on the legislature.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is involved in the Committee stage of the Bill that will abolish much of local government in this country. Will he advise the House on the close relationship between the attempt to destroy local government in London and other places through rate capping and the attempt to get this Bill to precepting authorities before 6 March?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That would not be in order. Hon. Members must stick to the motion.

Mr. Sedgemore: It would be improper for me to try to draw parallels between the guillotine on the Local Government Bill and the attempt to take the remaining stages of this Bill in one day.

It is important that the relationship between the Government and Back-Bench Members on both sides of the House should operate on principles of equity and natural justice. The Government must recognise that Back-Bench Members will make legitimate demands about the Committee, Report and Third Reading stages of a Bill. One demand will be that we have time to consider what has happened in Committee before we have to deal with the Report stage.

I can think of only two precedents for what the Government are doing. The first was the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974, which went through Parliament in one day. I did not agree with that. The second precedent was the Bill to nationalise Rolls-Royce when that company was going bankrupt. Although that company may have been trading illegally at the time, I do not believe that there was an argument for pushing the Bill through so quickly. Therefore, if there was no case for haste with those Bills, which appear to have been far more important and urgent than the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, there surely cannot be a case for haste today.

Mr. Barron: I was working in the coal mines when the Conservative Government nationalised Rolls-Royce and put the Bill through in one day. Can my hon. Friend tell me what opportunities there were for tabling amendments to that Bill? It seems that we are to have no opportunity to put down amendments on this Bill.

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend was working in the coal mines and I was working in the law courts, so neither of us can say with clarity what happened on that occasion. If the Leader of the House is given leave to speak again, perhaps he will be able to enlighten my hon. Friend.

If we follow precedent, our position must be based on trust and agreement between both sides of the House. It is difficult to understand how there could be agreement between both sides of the House in this case. We are dealing not only with a Bill that is consequent upon a previous public ownership Bill and certain borrowing requirements, but with an astonishingly important consitutional issue — retrospective legislation. This legislation seeks to legalise the illegal actions of the Secretary of State for Transport. How could there be agreement that the Report stage should follow immediately on the Committee stage when we are dealing with this constitutional issue? How could there be agreement when we note that Mr. Justice McNeill did not merely criticise the Secretary of State? His criticism was so condign as to make those of us who are capable of reading between the lines of the law reports believe that he was talking with incredulity about the right hon. Gentleman's irrationality. That is why it is extremely difficult to have any agreement on the truncating of debate.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I do not wish to dwell too long on that fact, even though I was at the Rolls-Royce technical college when Rolls-Royce was nationalised. I remember the occasion very well because, as an apprentice, I was called into the main meeting room to hear the decision. Does my hon. Friend accept that the principle of retrospective legislation, of which the Secretary of State may well be in favour at present, will not sit so easily on the right hon. Gentleman's shoulders if, as I hope, a future Labour Government use that same principle to bring back those Clay Cross councillors who, 13 years ago, under the Housing Finance Act 1972, were disfranchised for defending working people?

Mr. Biffen: Please—may I be allowed to proceed? Objection was raised to the taking of the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order which was set down for consideration today and it was agreed that that consideration should be postponed until Monday. As a consequence, we had to rearrange business. There are a variety of ways in which that can be done, but this was the means chosen by the Government. It gives rise to the characteristics—I understand that it also gives rise to anxiety—that all the remaining stages are to be taken in one sitting and that that is to follow the day immediately after Second Reading.

No one would suggest for a moment that our proposal is the most leisurely and ideal way of setting about the matter. However, the procedure has been used in the past. The neatest precedent that I can use to demonstrate the fact that the procedure is something with which the House is at least familiar, if not on a frequent basis, is our consideration of the Oil Taxation Bill in November 1983. Not only were all remaining stages taken in one sitting, but, as in this instance, they were taken on the day after Second Reading.

The reasons that have prompted some expedition in the legislation lie much more within the province of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who will seek to catch your eye later, Mr. Speaker. However, what has been proposed, although inconvenient, is a reasonable working way to go forward.

3.49 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): The Leader of the House has explained the reasons why he tabled his motion, but I do not find those reasons satisfactory, much less convincing.

There are good reasons for the existence of what the motion calls

"the practice of the House".

We commit a great error if we do not give ourselves adequate time to consider legislation.

The practice of the House is based on the concept that, at each stage of the proceedings, hon. Members have an opportunity to consider what happened during the previous stage and, in that light, to determine what action, if any, should be taken during the subsequent stage.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend not agree, therefore, that this subject must concern all hon. Members, not just those from London? If a Government intend to act as this Government are doing with this Bill, how do we know that they will not act in precisely the same manner with a number of future Bills? How do we know whether the Government will do what my hon. Friend says should not be done—not give the House sufficient time to consider amendments after Second Reading?

Mr. Mikardo: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. My observations, as you will have noticed, Mr. Speaker, do not concern the contents, merits and demerits of the Bill. They concern the general question of the practice of the House.

We cannot table amendments in Committee until a Bill has had its Second Reading. To decide which amendments, if any, should be tabled, one needs to study the speeches made on Second Reading. Otherwise an hon. Member—I speak from experience; you, too, Mr. Speaker, may have had the same experience when you were on these Benches—may be proposing to table an amendment about a matter which, if he had been present for the whole of the Second Reading debate, he would have know had been dealt with. For that reason, we always assume that there will be times between Second Reading and Report for hon. Members to study the *Official Report* of the Second Reading debate.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, because you have the duty of selection, one's attitude and action during the Report stage must be based on what happened in Committee. The Chair often makes its decision on whether to select amendments on the basis of the extent to which those amendments were discussed adequately in Committee. It is, therefore, virtually impossible for hon. Members to table amendments on Report unless they either sat through the whole of the Committee stage or, even better, had the opportunity to read the proceedings. Third Reading does not present so difficult a problem and does not give rise to the type of difficulties I have described.

The Leader of the House has rightly said that there are precedents for this procedure. He has, equally rightly, said that there are not many precedents, because there have been few occasions on which this procedure is indulged in. We all know that it is a bad procedure and we therefore use it only as a last resort, when there is an especially good and weighty reason. I have been present in the House as I believe you have, Mr. Speaker, on occasions when all the stages of a Bill were considered by agreement between the two sides on a single day. That process almost always occurs by agreement. The exceptions are occasions when there is a pressing emergency—to use a grandiloquent phrase, when there is an urgent reason of state.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend has got to the heart of the matter, which is that the House reaches agreement on these occasions. One of the most famous occasions was when the Tory Government discovered that one area of private enterprise was in a dire mess. Its reserves had become exhausted and it was an uneconomic unit of production. I refer to Rolls-Royce. On that occasion Labour Members agreed with alacrity to nationalise Rolls-Royce right through the night, because otherwise thousands of workers would have lost their jobs. A second example of agreement being reached was on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974, after the Birmingham bombing. The Government, represented by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins)—the Social Democrat bloke whom we never see these days—said that the measure would last only a year or two, and it still exists.

Those are examples from the past of instances where there was agreement. But this time the position is completely different. The reason for the procedure is that the Secretary of State for Transport has made not one cock-up but an almighty cock-up of the entire proceedings during the past three months.

Mr. Mikardo: My hon. Friend has reinforced my argument, but I was being terribly—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member does not need help.

Mr. Mikardo: My hon. Friend produced some examples to reinforce my case. I was being extremely careful not to refer to particular measures, just as I do not

wish to refer to the measure before us today. I am urging the House to consider the general principle, unrelated to the merits or demerits of this case.

No one will dispute the fact—I know that the Leader of the House will not — that when in the past we adopted this admittedly bad procedure, we always did so because there was a compelling reason of state. No one can pretend that there is a compelling reason of state on this occasion. The procedure is not being introduced because of circumstances outside the Government's control, which they must take emergency measures to deal with because they could not have anticipated what happened. It has arisen solely from a matter within the control of the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) described the reason for it in language more colourful than I normally use—that is, as a "cock-up" by the Secretary of State. I would have been inclined to use more euphemistic phraseology, but the facts are the facts. There has been an error in procedure, and the right hon. Gentleman is asking the House to carry the can for a mistake, perhaps more than one mistake, made by one of his colleagues.

I do not see why that is necessary. The remaining stages were tabled for tomorrow, and we could have had the Royal Air Force debate today. Last night the right hon. Gentleman told us that he was being pressed from all quarters for that debate and that he had to have one quickly. If we had debated the Royal Air Force today, we could have had 24 hours to read the report of yesterday's Second Reading debate, and all hon. Members would have been better able to decide which amendments, if any, they wanted to table in Committee.

I strongly support the observations of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). They should strike a chord among Conservative Members, because this will not be the last occasion on which a Minister will seek to get this slippery short-cut procedure through the House, and the victims of it may not always be on the same side of the House. All Back-Bench Members should unite against the Front Bench. We should not be asked to carry the can for the mistakes of those on the Front Bench. I hope that the motion will be withdrawn, but, like my hon. Friend, I shall certainly oppose it, if need be, in the Lobby.

3.59 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I hope that well before the end of this short debate the Leader of the House will find severer terms to reprobate the proposal which is before the House. The strongest thing he said against it was that it was inconvenient to hon. Members. A more severe term than that is required to describe a procedure which makes it, in effect, impossible for hon. Members to put down amendments to a Bill which has had its Second Reading and to have the chance of them being considered.

The House is ready and capable of doing almost anything, irrespective of its Standing Orders, when there is an evident necessity for it. It is not the urgency of what is contained in the Bill that is the reason for the opportunity being denied to the House by the motion.

With great respect to him, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), whose duties in Committee have obliged him not to be in the Chamber at the moment, was correct to say that the objectionable effect of this motion derives from the fact that the Bill is being put down for Committee on the day after Second Reading. That has happened not because of the urgency of obtaining the contents of the Bill; it is due to the fact that, owing to other matters altogether unconnected with the Bill, the business of the House had to be rearranged. The business of the House has been rearranged in such a way that a motion which in itself is not at all unusual, has an unusual and far-reaching effect — it deprives the House of any genuine opportunity to have a Committee stage on the Bill.

The Leader of the House cited a precedent for the motion being applied to a Bill which was being taken in Committee on the day following Second Reading. There may be that and other precedents, but it would be wrong for the House to allow the motion in these circumstances, when no conditions of urgency and emergency can be pleaded, to remain without reprobation whatever the precedents, otherwise we shall soon find ourselves in circumstances where a Government, in arranging their business, and short of parliamentary time, can do this again. Another Leader of the House, not this one, and not necessarily of that party, will say to the House, "You ought not to be surprised to find this on the Order Paper. You ought not to be surprised at this procedure. This is a procedure which has happened before. There are precedents. Keep quiet."

I hope that on this occasion the Leader of the House will recognise, as he is a House of Commons man, that the House of Commons is right not to keep quiet about the motion that is before it.

4.3 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As Ministers have flown in the RAF to help them rescue Thursday's business, I raise this point. All the trouble is about £5 million with regard to the London borough of Haringey. A certain airport in the South Atlantic is having 70 times that figure spent on it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is wrong. All the trouble is about the business of the House motion. That has nothing to do with what I think he is about to say. The motion is about whether the remaining stages—not the Committee stage, because taking that was agreed yesterday and passed by the House—Report, and Third Reading should take place today.

Mr. Dalyell: I wish to get things into perspective and to be helpful. As the RAF debate is to take place tomorrow, would it not be desirable for a Minister from the Department of the Environment, if he can be spared from rate capping and the like, to explain in the RAF debate the reason for the rise in the cost——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That could have taken place, if the hon. Member had been called yesterday, when we were discussing the change of business. That does not arise today.

4.4 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I hope that we can convince the Leader of the House that the Opposition are not being obstructive by opposing the motion.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): We do not believe the hon. Gentleman.

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

deaths in the district, and as these are not higher than the national average, the excess mortality from chronic bronchitis and emphysema might reasonably be attributed to other factors. The most likely of these are air pollution and occupational factors of which, of course, mining is by far the most important.

Of the hospital admissions in the Pontefract area health authority, over 7,000 bed days were utilised by patients with respiratory disease in 1983. This is most certainly a conservative estimate. In 1984, approximately 300 patients had to be admitted to the chest unit at the Pontefract general infirmary for chronic bronchitis and emphysema, out of a total of 1,000 inpatients in all disease categories over the same period. Of these, male patients outnumbered female patients by three to one. Of these men, approximately 80 per cent. were, or had been, miners, strongly suggesting an occupational factor in the aetiology of the disease. It is fair to say, however, that almost 100 per cent. of them were also smokers. I think that here we are seeing an additive effect of two potent causes of chest diseases.

Over the same period, the outpatient figures show that general practitioners referred 150 new cases of chronic bronchitis and emphysema to one consultant, and a further 800 patients with this condition were followed up in his clinic. The same male to female ratio applies to these patients as to the hospital admissions, as does the occupational history. Many of these men had simple and, usually, low-category, pneumoconiosis.

There were only 12 new referrals of patients with complicated pneumoconiosis where a high percentage of pension was being awarded. Some 88 follow-up patients fell into this category. It is obvious that chronic bronchitis and emphysema, with or without simple pneumoconiosis, is a much larger problem than the more severe forms of pneumoconiosis.

Section 76(2) of the Social Security Act 1975 provides that, before any disease can be prescribed for which industrial injury benefit is payable, the Secretary of State must first be satisfied on two points. First, he must be satisfied that the disease should be treated, having regard to its causes and incidence and any other relevant considerations, as a risk of occupation and not as a risk common to all persons. Secondly, he must be satisfied that the disease is such that, in the absence of special circumstances, the attribution of particular cases to the nature of the employment can be established or presumed with reasonable certainty.

As I told the House before when I presented my Bills, I understand from the medical profession that the individual can never be truly assessed during the course of his life. He can be assessed only by a post mortem examination after death, and that is too late. The evidence is such that these men should have to wait no longer.

In those circumstances, I hope that the Government will at least reward my consistency and examine this situation seriously. I am well aware that the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council is looking at evidence on this disease. It is 10 years since it last looked at the subject, and I am pleased that it is doing so again. I hope that, if the council decides to prescribe, the Minister will accept the recommendations. I hope that the House will support my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Roy Mason, Mr. Alec Woodall, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. J. D. Concannon, Mr. William O'Brien, Mr. Walter Harrison, Mr. Terry Patchett, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Martin Redmond and Mr. Kevin Barron.

EMPHYSEMA (COMPENSATION OF COALMINERS)

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse accordingly presented a Bill to provide compensation for mineworkers under the Industrial Injuries Acts for emphysema: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 19 April and to be printed. [Bill 91.]

Orders of the Day

London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

6.48 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point or order, Sir Paul. The circumstances of the Committee stage are a little hurried. I wish to raise a point of order on the selection of amendments. New clause 1, which some of my hon. Friends have tabled, relates to sums payable under the Act to be put into a special fund for the direct enhancement or improvement of the services provided by London Regional Transport.

I had hoped that there would be an opportunity to discuss that because yesterday, during the Second Reading debate, I put a question to the Secretary of State which bore directly on this matter as I regarded a statement that he had made on 7 February as incompatible with some of the things that he said yesterday. I cannot go further than put it to you, Sir Paul, that it is only through the selection——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. I realise that he and the Committee are in difficulty, but new clause 1 is not on the Amendment Paper because it was out of order. Therefore, I cannot allow him to develop points about a new clause which was out of order.

Clause 1

GRANT BY GLC FOR INITIAL YEAR OF LRT

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 11, at end insert

'after deducting therefrom any money paid pursuant to the said section 49 and in anticipation of a direction under the section being money paid prior to the passing of this Act'.

Normally when we move amendments we have had sufficient time to study the implications of the speech by the Secretary of State on Second Reading and also to ensure, with the assistance of the Clerks, that our amendments are within the rules of order. One of the problems about the debate on this shoddy little Bill has been the propensity of the Secretary of State to throw around various sets of figures, as though he were Will Hay in one of his madder sketches. This has caused considerable difficulty. We are still not clear exactly what the GLC will be required to provide and whether the Secretary of State is prepared even to accept the arrangements that have already been entered into.

It is important to remember that we are talking about large sums of money and about an authority which has to raise that money properly. The GLC will be asked to pay London Regional Transport £258,179,588 for the remaining part of 1984-85, which is called the initial year after the transfer of control of London Transport to the Secretary of State, between 29 June 1984 and 31 March 1985.

We must make certain that, as the GLC has already paid £177 million, the Bill will not add to that sum but will give the GLC credit for the amount that has already been paid. There is doubt about it, because the Secretary of State said on Second Reading:

"Subsection (2) provides for the phasing of payments by the GLC. Its intention is to avoid requiring the GLC to pay money to LRT in advance of when it would have had to do so under the section 49 direction.

It allows for two possibilities. If Royal Assent is received before 25 March, the first instalment of grant is payable on the day following Royal Assent. That instalment is the amount which would have been due under the section 49 direction by 25 February, less the two sums of £10·2 million and £12·9 million now conceded to the GLC. A second instalment will then fall due on 29 March and under the section 49 direction this was divided into two payments, due on 25 and 29 March." — [*Official Report*, 19 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 874.]

That may be factually correct, but the basis is wrong. The figures that should have been used are the current cash flow needs of LRT, not what was estimated last June. Had we been given more time to consider the Bill, we would have tabled amendments relating to this point. The narrowness of the amendment has been dictated by the narrowness of the Bill and the speed with which it has been dealt. It is a fundamental consideration. We should ensure that credit is given for the £177 million that has been paid by the GLC since the appointed day for the operation of the London Regional Transport Act 1984.

It has been noticeable throughout the entire battle—a word which I use deliberately because it has been a battle; the Secretary of State has tried to ride roughshod over the interests not only of London's ratepayers but of Members of Parliament—that the GLC has behaved properly. It explained to the Secretary of State in the first instance that it did not believe that the sums of money that he was demanding were accurate. However, because of LRT's operating needs the GLC continued to pay the money, explaining that it was doing so without prejudice. The GLC also made it clear that it would appeal against the actions of the Secretary of State.

Since that is the case, the Secretary of State has a responsibility to write into the Bill a much clearer undertaking that he has taken account of the £177 million that has already been paid over. If the GLC had been seeking to cause untold difficulty, it could have withheld, until the court case was over, the amount of money that the Secretary of State was demanding. Because it knew that the money was needed for the operating costs of LRT, it behaved properly by warning the Department of Transport what it was doing, but nevertheless continuing to make the payments. Therefore, it is all the more dispiriting when there is no clear indication from the Secretary of State that he will take account of the money that has already been paid.

So far the Secretary of State has shown no intention to take account of the needs of the passengers of London Transport, the wishes of elected London councillors or the needs of the House of Commons. The Secretary of State would show a welcome and astonishing degree of flexibility if he were to accept that his calculations were done on the wrong basis. The figures that should have been used were the current cash flow needs. Therefore, I ask the Secretary of State to accept the amendment.

7 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): It may be convenient if I intervene now because I can give the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) a categorical assurance that the money paid by the GLC to LRT since 29 June will be taken into account in calculating what the GLC owes in future.

To help the Committee, perhaps I may be allowed to take the hon. Lady through the figures. She took me to task for what she described as throwing around sets of figures. I am certain that she would have been even more critical if I had not tried to give the maximum information during our many discussions about the Bill. I think that I can give her a little more information, provided that she does not then blame me for having done so and accuse me of throwing around even more figures.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman quite understands my argument. I am happy that he should give accurate information. However, we are extremely worried because, during our different debates, different sets of figures have been given to the House at different times. We are told that this is simply a case of interpreting them in different ways but, frankly, everyone would be happy if we knew the basis on which the Department was doing its calculations.

Mr. Ridley: I do not think that that is sustainable. All the figures that I have given are totally compatible. I think that the hon. Lady is trying to say that the GLC would have preferred to work them out in a different way and to have got a different answer.

Before 29 June of this year, the GLC had paid, taking into account the £10·2 million, a total of £88·9 million. Section 49 and this Bill do not apply to that. We leave that on one side, because it was before the date of the LRT Act.

Since the Act, the GLC has deposited £177 million with LRT. We agree about that. The Bill requires that £258 million-odd should be paid when the Bill becomes an Act. The difference which will have to be paid is the difference between £177 million and the £258 million — £81 million-odd which is not yet paid. It has to be done this way because the section 49 direction that I made in June was quashed by the court and is therefore invalid. That means that there is no basis for regularising the money which has already been deposited by the GLC.

As the hon. Lady said, the GLC has behaved correctly in this respect and has left the money there, but it cannot be said that that money is there as part of any instalment or debt or obligation which lies upon the GLC. There would be such an obligation only if the direction had been upheld and had come into force. With the quashing of the direction, that money was left by the GLC as an instalment of what it expected to have to pay either when there was a new direction or, as it turns out, when this Bill becomes law.

To have specified in the Bill that the £177 million had to be paid would have been retrospective, and retrospectivity is an accusation which has been thrown about frequently in these debates and which I deny. But if I had so drafted the Bill that the £177 million which the GLC has already paid was included as if it was required to be paid, it would have been retrospective because, when the GLC deposited it, it did not know that it would have to pay it.

The GLC now knows that the total will be £258 million-odd and I give the Committee the categorical assurance that under the Bill, as drafted, there is no suggestion that the £177 million already deposited will not be counted against the total sum that is owed.

That means that the amendment is unnecessary. The Bill is drafted exactly to take account of the hon. Lady's point. The amendment is also defective. As it is neither correctly drafted nor necessary, I hope that the hon. Lady will feel able to ask leave to withdraw it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Since what in this case is sauce for the gander should be sauce for the goose, if the amendment is neither necessary nor well drafted, it appears to be in line with all that has happened in relation to London Regional Transport ever since these debates began. But having a degree of graciousness which is not always found on the Government Benches, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 13, leave out from 'paid' to end of line 16 and insert

'on the third day upon which banks are open for business after that on which this Act is passed'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 13, leave out

'on the day after that on which this Act is passed'

and insert

'on the third day upon which banks are open for business after that on which this Act is passed'.

Mr. Stott: These are two inconsequential amendments in respect of the main purpose of the Bill. They have been tabled merely to make sense of a measure which we thoroughly oppose.

You, Sir Paul, will not permit me to go into the argument conducted up until 10 minutes ago about the way in which we have arrived at this position. It is a great pity that only three Opposition amendments have been selected. That is not my fault. I was not a party to the usual channels negotiations last night, and I have to tell the Minister of State that it was the Opposition's wish to table a great many other amendments of much more substance if we had had the opportunity to do so.

I was one of those hon. Members who spoke at great length and in great detail in last night's debate. The Secretary of State had some very serious questions addressed to him which he answered by bringing in new figures which we are not allowed to challenge. I feel that I ought to make that protest even though I may be out of order.

The amendments are designed to assist the GLC if this measure is carried into law. I was reminded of the speech made by the Secretary of State for Transport at the annual dinner last week of the Bus and Coach Council, when he referred to another Transport Bill and said:

"We should really try to fashion a better Bill in Committee."

I hope that we can fashion a better Bill in Committee today. If these amendments are accepted, in my view the Bill will be marginally better.

The amendments attempt to ensure that the GLC is given two working days in which to arrange to have available the money that the Secretary of State is about to take from the GLC, money which a court of law found to be unlawful. The Secretary of State has not accepted that judicial decision. He has introduced legislation to overturn

that decision. That being the case, having secured a Second Reading for his Bill, he will appreciate that the GLC is anxious to be given time to provide him with the money. Simply because the GLC may have budgeted for the money does not mean that tomorrow morning it can lay its hands on £80 million. It cannot. It needs time to do it.

That is the reason for these amendments. The GLC needs time to ensure that the Secretary of State cannot require the money to be paid on a non-banking day.

If the amendments are defective in drafting or inhibiting in any way, I have no doubt that the Minister of State will say so, but I hope that she will take on board the spirit behind them. It is simply to ask that, if the Bill is passed, having been rushed through the House tonight, at least she will be gracious enough to allow the GLC time to marshal its forces and come up with the money.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I understand what the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said about the spirit behind the amendments, but I hope that I can assure him that there is no difficulty here.

I assume, although he did not say so, that the hon. Gentleman considers the amendments as alternatives. If he does not, they can be shown to be contradictory. I shall not discuss that point. I understand the hon. Gentleman's difficulty only too well. If I understand his intentions aright, amendment No. 3 makes the whole sum payable to LRT on the third working day after Royal Assent and amendment 4 retains the framework of the stage payments as set out in clause 1(2)*(a)* and *(b)*, but also involves payment by the third working day. The two amendments are exclusive rather than to be taken together.

Mrs. Dunwoody *indicated assent.*

Mrs. Chalker: I see that the hon. Lady and I understand each other, on that point at least.

The amendments are unnecessary. There is nothing in law to prevent the GLC from paying up on the day after Royal Assent, which may well be some time away. It does not need more time. The money could be paid by electronic transfer within a single day, or the GLC could write—*[Interruption.]* It is perfectly possible to transfer money in a single day.

Mrs. Dunwoody: If you have it.

Mrs. Chalker: We are discussing these sums and it is obvious, from other decisions that it has been making, that the GLC has the money. It has undoubtedly been warned in the past and by means of the passage of this short Bill. As the Bill progresses, it will be up to the GLC to have the money ready to pay over in good time. There is no way in which amendments such as these could be made in terms of other transactions that pass between public bodies, referring to a specific third banking day after the due date. The whole process is designed to take place when the sum becomes payable.

I think that, if the Bill is passed before 25 March, there will certainly be enough time—that is the reason for bringing the Bill forward now—for that money to be raised and paid over as agreed in clause 1(2)*(a)* plus the remainder at the end of March.

My right hon. Friend explained just now why the total figure was in the Bill. We are really talking about a remainder figure.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It is a big remainder.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not dispute the fact that it is a large figure. The figures have been around for a long time. They were fully known during the court case. There is no reason why the money should not be available when it is required to be paid over.

I shall not indulge in any nit-picking over the wording of the amendments. I could do so, but that is not my purpose. I understand the spirit behind the amendments, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no need for the concern that he has expressed, and no need to press the amendment.

7.15 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The Minister graciously tells us that she is not going to involve herself in nit-picking about the details of the amendments which have had to be cobbled together by the Opposition. We do not in fact regard that as especially gracious on her part, because it was only because we were not given sufficient time to consider the matter that we had to produce the amendments in a rush. Still, perhaps we should be thankful. No doubt, had the Secretary of State dealt with this part of the Bill, he would have made nit-picking criticisms.

The GLC may have the money in its budget. It may have raised the money. However, that does not mean that the money is instantly available to be handed over to someone else without damage to the ratepayers' interests. Conservative Members—there are not many of them here—know more than I do about having money on account. They are probably aware that local authorities, other organisations and rich individuals may invest money in such a way that an instant withdrawal to meet the needs of instant payment will damage the person who has invested the money. It is quite conceivable that, like other local authorities, the GLC invests the sums at its disposal that are not needed at once in such a way that an instant demand to hand money over to LRT would result in a loss of interest to the ratepayers. There might be genuine difficulties and genuine losses as a result of what the Government are demanding, if they will not accept either amendment or something on these lines.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) is not slavishly committed to the wording of the amendments and would be happy to accept a Government amendment on Report——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dobson: —that was better than the ones that she was able to devise in the few minutes available to her yesterday.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Given all their resources, the Government do not seem to have done very well up to now.

Mr. Dobson: It is true that most faults discovered in legislation spring not from things that happen in the House or in Committee but from the parlous standard of parliamentary draftsmanship. It may well be that our innocent efforts will produce better and more accurate legislation than the Minister could achieve.

We have to have this debate, either because the Bill that became the London Regional Transport Act 1984 was a mess or because the Secretary of State has administered the Act badly. In either case, as the right hon. Gentleman

[Mr. Williams]

The Secretary of State tried to justify the accelerated timetable. In his speech last night he said that the money was needed for the transport authority to be able to pay its development land tax. I invite him to tell us what change has taken place since last Thursday in relation to the transport authority's commitments on development land tax. Secondly, he said that the action was necessary because of the transport authority's duties in relation to voluntary severance pay. I invite him to tell us what changes have taken place in that regard since last Thursday that make it necessary to bring the timetable forward.

The third and final support for the Secretary of State's case was that insurance claims would have to be met by the transport authority. This is my third invitation. Will the Secretary of State tell us now what has happened since last Thursday in relation to insurance claims that has made it necessary for us to deal with this legislation today rather than tomorrow? I look forward to hearing the right hon. Gentleman's list of changes.

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman is mixing two completely separate matters. If he had followed our debate yesterday he would be aware that we were talking about the cash surplus that was carried through into the next financial year and the accrued liabilities which could be set against it. He has been quoting some of the figures partially and incorrectly. What I said this afternoon was on a completely different matter. It was that LRT's cash balances will go into the negative before the end of February—that is different from before the end of the financial year—unless those sums are paid.

Mr. Williams: Let me be clear about what the right hon. Gentleman is saying. He is saying two different things. First, he is making it clear that nothing has changed since last Thursday and, secondly, he is giving us our point. He is saying, "Because you have not had time to read *Hansard* thoroughly to study what was said last night, it is conceivable that you might not have understood what was said." That is what my right hon. and hon. Friends have been saying. Conservative Members could be in the same position at some time.

The stages of the legislative programme in the House have not been arrived at accidentally. They are not arbitrary. They are not pure quirk. They are there because they serve a purpose. There is a gap between the stages because it serves a purpose. It is necessary, for example, as the right hon. Gentleman has tried to demonstrate, for hon. Members to have an opportunity to check what happened during the previous stage. That is especially important when we are dealing with someone like the right hon. Gentleman who has such a remarkable record of getting things wrong. That becomes doubly important——

Mr. Ridley: No.

Mr. Williams: If I got it wrong, why are we going through this farce today? Who got it wrong? Whose legislation was wrong first time round? The right hon. Gentleman does not just have a proven track record of inaccuracy and ineptitude; in his reply last night in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) he introduced a new set of figures about which no one had previously heard. We should have wanted to check them if they had come from a competent Minister. We certainly want to check them coming from him.

After Second Reading it is normal for hon. Members to want an opportunity to consult, check and consider their amendments. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said in an intervention, last night she had to dive straight from handling the debate to handing in amendments which were due to be debated today. Most of us are not lawyers. Unlike some right hon. and hon. Members, we do not have a legal training. It is not uncommon for some of our amendments to be ruled out of order or be improperly drafted. That is not shameful; it is normal. We know that. The way in which we conduct our affairs normally ensures that if we get things wrong we have time to obtain advice from the Clerks and to put in suitably worded amendments. That will go if we accept the precedent that the Leader of the House is in danger of imposing.

We have heard constantly from the Government—I say this sincerely enough, I hope, for the Leader of the House to take note—about the sanctity of the law, but we must understand that in the House there is also the sanctity of the law-making process. Arbitrary law is not just bad law, it breeds disrespect for the law. We should honour procedures, and breach, change or bend them only when there is no alternative for the working of the House.

A Government with a majority of 147 could have bulldozed the legislation through the House tomorrow as they had originally intended. Instead, they are bringing it forward by a mere 24 hours. They are treating the House with disdain. Neither the Leader of the House nor the Secretary of State has given a significant or meaningful reason for the change. The only reason given is that it is for the convenience of the Executive. It has nothing to do with the needs of the House or the legislative requirements of the transport authority.

Mr. Deakins: My right hon. Friend is being overfair to the Government by saying that it is for the convenience of the Executive. I should have thought that it was extremely inconvenient for the civil servants and the Ministers in the Department of Transport who had been working on the assumption that they could consider amendments. Amendments must be considered in the Department. The Department is suffering as well. I suspect that this is being done solely for the convenience of the Ministers who were leading the debate on Monday.

Mr. Williams: With the Secretary of State's record, I suspect that he does not want us to have time to check the figures that he provided last night. We are due to have a ten minute Bill to which we are all looking forward with great anticipation. I ask the Leader of the House not to give a final decision now. He should take the opportunity to have a discussion through the usual channels to see whether they can find a way to resolve the matter, because the principle that is at stake tonight is important to Back Benchers on both sides of the House.

If we are not careful and we do what the Leader of the House is asking, we shall be adding to the Secretary of State's proven contempt for the law-making processes of the House.

6.17 pm

Mr. Biffen: By leave, Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a few remarks to the House to conclude the debate. It has

been a wide-ranging and, I think, truly important debate, which reveals how the House feels about its procedures. The House has tackled the issue from a variety of standpoints, and I must at once acknowledge, I suppose, with some charity the concept that I have become the victim of fallen innocence in this matter. I feel no different now than I did 24 hours ago—to every problem I bring the same wearied sense of realism.

I should like to assure the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that none of his opponents would in any sense characterise what he or his hon. Friends have said as obstructive. The debate has truly been about the relationship between the House and the Executive, which is as old as Parliament itself. Anyone tracing the debate will conclude that the measure outlined in the business of the House motion is not one that would ever be lightly sought by the Executive. It is not a measure that is readily granted by Parliament. Much of this afternoon's debate has demonstrated that.

The objections to the motion are, first, that all remaining stages are taken in one sitting. That was objected to, especially by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). That prospect for the treatment of this Bill was always evident, in the sense that the motion was published to relate to the Bill had it been debated tomorrow rather than today. However, added to that was the second and in a sense fortuitous factor that all the remaining stages should be taken upon the day successive to Second Reading — the point made particularly by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell).

I was immediately aware that that was the particularly controversial aspect of the arrangement of Government business, and that is why I readily agreed with the point observed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). It was one of the consequences, fortuitous and unintended, of the altered business as a result of the different treatment of the rate-capping orders. I had to make the judgment—bearing in mind that I wished to recreate the business at extremely short notice and to take account as far as possible of the desire for a continued responsible working programme for Parliament — whether I would undertake this device which is sanctified by precedent and in my hands, I realise, creates a precedent.

Although that was not an easy judgment, I was none the less much persuaded by the problem of speed which was implicit in the legislation. The word "crisis" is not perhaps the one that I would choose, but often when a matter becomes relevant consideration turns on the speed with which measures are required. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport spoke on that matter.

Mr. Williams: Will the right hon. Gentleman amplify why it is so important that this legislation should be considered today rather than tomorrow, and why tomorow was adequate when he announced the business last Thursday?

Mr. Biffen: The split between today and tomorrow arose as a consequence of the general upheaval that flowed from the necessity to take the rate-capping order on Monday.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Leader of the House will be aware that it was speed, undue haste, that got us into this mess to start with — undue haste on the part of the Secretary of State, and his failure to consult.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman said that it was a difficult choice to make. He could have brought forward the debate on the Royal Air Force, because no resolution is attached to that. A resolution is attached to this legislation, and it will cost the ratepayers £50 million.

Mr. Biffen: I realise that point. Doubtless we could all make business programmes, just as we could all select cricket teams for an Australian tour. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I had to go through the range of agonies before I made the judgment which is now at stake and will soon be subject to the vote of the House. The hon. Gentleman is of course right in saying that, whenever one operates under constraint of speed, the political process is that much more difficult.

I very much hope that the House will proceed to vote for the motion on the business of the House. I very much take account of the constructive suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), but I still feel that it is appropriate that the House should——

Mr. Williams: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way? This a is very important point

Mr. Biffen: I know that it is important, and for that reason I will shortly give way. I none the less feel that it would be preferable for us to proceed to authorise the business that was announced last night to give some certainty to a programme of business that has already been subject to overmuch adjustment.

Mr. Williams: I apologise for having interrupted the right hon. Gentleman. Will he consider accepting my invitation to have discussions through channels during the succeeding ten-minute Bill? Since he seems unwilling to make the concession for which we ask of removing the business from today's Order Paper, would he consider as an option that might meet some of our concern allowing a separate Report stage?

Mr. Biffen: I recommend to the House that the motion under consideration should be secured. I go further and say that of course I have noted what the right hon. Gentleman says about the usual channel discussions. I agree that this matter would be better discussed through the usual channels, so that it may proceed as he has requested.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Biffen: No, I will not give way. I am on my last sentence.

We are shortly coming to a vote. The House records its view by votes, but after the votes have been recorded the voices linger. I know perfectly well from the volume, intensity and quality of the voices that have been heard this afternoon that the House has the deepest unease about this kind of procedure. I think that that unease is common to both sides of the House and will moderate and qualify whatever sense of precedent may be held about the outcome this evening.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 256, Noes 180.

Division No. 116] **[6.25 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald

Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nigel Spearing and
Mr. Tony Banks.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House relating to the interval between the various stages of a Bill brought in on a Ways and Means Resolution, more than one stage of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with at any sitting of the House.

Emphysema (Compensation of Coalminers)

6.38 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide compensation for mineworkers under the Industrial Injuries Acts for emphysema.

This must be the latest hour on record that a ten-minute Bill has been presented to the House. However, the unfortunate miners of whom I am speaking — some cannot walk more than a few yards and some cannot dress themselves—would not mind waiting even another three hours, having waited for more than a century, for us to put right the injustice with which the Bill deals.

This is the fourth occasion on which I have brought this subject to the attention of the House. I presented Bills in October 1982, in March 1983 and again in November 1983. I make no apology for my persistence because the evidence, based on learned study, supports the view that emphysema is prevalent among coalminers.

In presenting my previous Bills, I put before the House a detailed list of research. I shall not cite that detail again. I assure hon. Members that it was scholarly and decisive, and I simply draw attention to it in support of my Bill. However, I wish especially to draw attention to the paper "Cockroft et al" published in *The Lancet* on 11 September 1982. This report brings together all the findings of the research since 1966.

In further support of my Bill, I submit to the House the strong, short and easily understood argument contained in *The Lancet* editorial on 19 March 1983, based on 20 learned papers. Since presenting my last Bill on 23 November 1983, I have studied another learned paper entitled "Emphysema and Dust Exposure in a Group of Coal Workers" by Ruckley *v.* Anne et al published in the respected journal *American View of Respirable Disease*. The paper outlines how a distinguished team of medical experts examined the lungs of 450 coal miners from 24 British mines. In its summary, the paper concluded:

"We conclude that the association observed between respirable coal dust and emphysema in coal miners indicates a causal relationship. However, because it can be demonstrated only for men whose lungs show some dust-related fibrosis, it is suggested that the extent and nature of such fibrosis may be a crucial factor in determining the presence of centracinar emphysema."

In presenting my previous Bills, I relied upon the evidence of learned papers. I now submit evidence of my own research within the catchment area of the Pontefract area health authority which is officially measured as having 169,800 people, although it is generally considered to be much larger in practice.

This research has shown me that, in the mortality rate over the period 1979-83 inclusive, there were 634 recorded deaths from chronic bronchitis and emphysema, which is an average of 177 a year. Expressed as a standardised mortality ratio, when the figure for England and Wales in 1981 is taken as an arbitrary 100, this comes to 169, which is a highly significant statistical difference from the national average. The standardised mortality ratio over the same period for lung cancer was 109·4, which is not significantly different from the national average.

It would be reasonable to assume that the lung cancer deaths are a reflection of the magnitude of smoking-related

[Mr. Dobson]

was responsible for both the Act and its administration, he takes responsiblity. The drafting of my right hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich may be better than anything that the ministerial advisers could produce for Report.

There is one further point to be made on the Bill, if the Government will not either accept the amendment or produce a variation of their own. If the crucial stage of the Bill were taken late on Friday, the GLC might have to find the money to hand over to LRT on a Saturday. Even using electronic means to shift money, the Minister must accept that Britain's financial institutions are not usually at their best on a Saturday. In practice, the demands might be difficult to meet. We are merely saying that we want to avoid such practical difficulties for the GLC to stump up the money on the instant, and the financial losses to London's ratepayers that might be suffered as a result of the precipitate withdrawal of GLC funds.

One would have thought that a touch of humility would have been appropriate from the Government now. It ought not to lie in their power, still less in their desire, to pass legislation which might prove difficult for the GLC, as all the difficulties that have led to the Bill spring from shortcomings on the part of the Government. Just this once, the Government might listen to what the GLC is saying.

If the Secretary of State had taken one minute's notice of what the GLC said about his direction under section 49, the courts would not have found that he had acted unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly. In those circumstances, we should not have to put up with listening to him again. I hope that the Minister will be able to accept the spirit of the amendment and do the decent thing.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): My hon. Friend made an excellent point when he said that it would be difficult for the GLC to stump up the money at a moment's notice from the Government. Does he agree that it is not beyond the Government, who have been vindictive to the GLC all along, to insist that the money be stumped up at a most inconvenient time?

Mr. Dobson: Yes. It beggars the imagination that any hon. Member should be expected to say that he is willing to accept the Government's good faith in their dealings with the GLC. The Government have had the ultimate in bad faith in their dealings with the GLC since the Prime Minister precipitately introduced at a late stage into the Tory manifesto a draft commitment to abolish it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) said, the Government might deliberately time the demand to cause maximum embarrassment and difficulty. They have always done that in other respects. The same is true of rate capping for other local authorities in London.

It is preposterous for Ministers to expect us to accept that they will act reasonably and in good faith. They sit there having been found guilty by Mr. Justice McNeill of having acted unlawfully, irrationally and procedurally improperly. The trouble is that in all three respects he found them acting characteristically. If we no longer accept their word or that they will act in good faith, they have only themselves to blame. I hope that the Minister will accept the amendment or agree to come up with a better Government amendment on report. Without such an amendment, we shall leave the GLC and the ratepayers of London vulnerable to more of the Government's malignance.

Mr. Stott: The amendments are contradictory simply because, at 10 o'clock last night, my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), after spending the whole day in the Chamber debating the Bill's Second Reading, had to cobble together some amendments to enable us to debate the matter today. We had no time for preparation, or to consult anyone, or to consider the Secretary of State's responses, and the amendments were put down as a marker to give the Committee something to talk about. If my hon. Friend had not had the foresight to table these amendments at the eleventh hour, we should have not one amendment to debate.

I accept that, in the circumstances that I have described, the amendments might be badly drafted or contradictory, but the spirit behind them is worthy of discussion. By virtue of his huge majority the Secretary of State will get his way and his money—well, not his money, but the money of London ratepayers. Unfortunately, we cannot prevent him from getting his way because we do not have the troops in the Lobby to stop him.

We are merely asking that, once the Bill receives Royal Assent, the Minister should please listen to advice that we have received from the GLC about getting the money together. The Secretary of State is requiring £80 million of it. Amendment No. 4 says that he should be able to do that

"on the third day upon which banks are open for business after that on which this Act is passed".

What is unreasonable about that? It gives the GLC time to marshal its resources and to give the Secretary of State his ill-gotten gains.

Mr. Ridley: Not me.

Mr. Stott: Well, LRT, but some of that money will be filched away to the Treasury, because LRT does not need it all.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Mr. Stott: The Secretary of State ought not to lead me down that line of argument. I am trying to concentrate on the amendments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) asked the Minister a simple question — whether, if the Bill became an Act of Parliament on a Friday, the following day, logically, being a Saturday——

Mr. Dobson: Not necessarily with this Secretary of State.

Mr. Stott: I have to take each point slowly so that the right hon. Gentleman understands. If it were to be a Saturday, the Secretry of State could demand that the Greater London council should pay over this money to him.

7.30 pm

I want to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that it is in Committee that hon. Members get down to the nuts and bolts of altering, changing, amending and improving legislation. If the Standing Committee that considered the London Regional Transport Bill had done what it should have done, or if the Secretary of State had responded to the suggestions made by my right hon. and hon. Friends, legislation of this kind would not have to be debated

tonight. We are engaged in writing legislation, and it is beholden upon the Committee to get it right. The Secretary of State must not be forced to introduce another Bill because he cannot get the money from the GLC on a Saturday. That might appear to be ludicrous, but unless this legislation is corrected that is what might happen.

I do not wish to labour the point. Both the Minister of State, Department of Transport and I want to make progress. We have both been involved in many transport Bills, and no doubt there will be many more. I ask the Minister of State to look carefully at the amendment and at least to take on board the spirit of it. If it is inadequately drafted, perhaps she will be able to say that in the other place she will meet the point that I have made.

Mrs. Chalker: Because of the complicated nature of the days when the money might be paid, I suspected that we might spend a little longer on this amendment than upon the previous one. However, since the amendments are based upon the advice that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have received from the GLC, I believe that it is unreasonable that the hon. Gentleman should have referred to the time that was needed to draft the amendments. This problem has been known for quite some time and the hon. Gentleman knows that. There is no reason why the GLC should need two extra days in which to transfer funds to London Regional Transport.

The GLC has already been given notice that it will be required to pay this money. If the payment has to be made on a banking day which, for the purposes of any Bill, including this Bill, is Monday to Friday inclusive under the terms of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971, it can be made immediately, on the same day. That is how the GLC has made payments to London Regional Transport during the past six months. If the due day is at the weekend, the GLC can discharge its liability to pay by dispatching a cheque on that day. The money would not necessarily have to be received on that day — *[Interruption.]* I am certain that the GLC would not do such a thing. The hon. Lady knows that only too well.

Mr. Dobson: What about American Express?

Mrs. Chalker: I believe that the hon. Gentleman's limit on his credit card might be exceeded by this particular sum. It is no part of our intention that the GLC should suffer any financial penalty by having to have the money ready for payment on the due date. When the Bill passes through the other House, the GLC will know when it has to have the money ready. Until that date there is no reason why the GLC should not continue to receive interest on the money that it will eventually pay over. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) suggested that Royal Assent might be given on a Friday or a Saturday.

Mr. Dobson: I did not say Saturday.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Member says that he did not say "Saturday". However, for the sake of argument, let us take either a Friday or a Saturday, in particular a Friday. The hon. Gentleman's fear is unfounded, because the Commission for Royal Assent hardly ever sits on a Friday or a Saturday. I can give that assurance to the hon. Gentleman and to the Committee.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Lady accept that if a measure is not urgently required to be passed into law the House of Commons very seldom sits on a Wednesday to debate the remaining stages of a Bill that received its Second Reading on a Tuesday?

Mrs. Chalker: If I were to stray back to the last business of the House I think that you, Mr. Chairman, would rule me out of order. Nobody has made any bones about the fact that this is an unusual situation. As the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) said, had the Committee which considered the London Regional Transport Act drafted that Bill in a different way, probably a far greater sum, namely £23 million, more would have been paid over during the year than will be paid over as a consequence of this amending Bill. There is no reason for Opposition Members or for the GLC who briefed them to believe that there will be any problem over this payment. The GLC can discharge its obligations by drawing a cheque or another payable instrument whenever it wishes to draw it. When the other place has considered the Bill, the GLC will know what sums will be owing and those sums can be drawn in due time.

These amendments are unnecessary. This procedure is designed to do no more than rectify the manner and the timing of the payments before the end of the financial year. The Bill enables the GLC and London Regional Transport to know exactly where they are over the payments due to LRT.

Mr. Stott: The only saving grace is that our proceedings are being recorded by *Hansard* and that their Lordships will have more time than the Opposition have had to study what has been said before they debate this Bill. I hope that their Lordships will take note of what the hon. Lady has said. At least they will have more time to consider what has been said than the Opposition have had between Second Reading and today's proceedings. Since the other place will have more time in which to study the response of the hon. Lady to these amendments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mrs. Dunwoody: In a two-clause Bill, in which the second clause simply relates to the name, clause 1 is almost inevitably at the heart of the Bill. Before we allow such a measure to be put on to the statute book we must look closely at its provisions. This entire saga has been a disgrace from beginning to end. It is appalling that we have had to sit through the proceedings on a Bill which ought to have been unnecessary. We should not be wasting the time of the Committee by debating clause stand part. It is putting right not only the sums of money that should be paid but the way in which they should be paid and the liability or otherwise to the interest payments to be made by the GLC if the sums are not paid on the due date. The Bill is the result of the Secretary of State's desire to push ahead with improperly drafted and ill-thought-out legislation.

This clause is part of the Bill for one reason alone— because the Secretary of State pushed through a Bill which was so badly drafted that he was found to be in default of his proper responsibilities. We cannot reiterate that too often.

I know that we are not supposed to use foreign languages in the House, although occasionally some of the gobbledegook that goes through in the form of legislation

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

constitutes practically a different language, but from the beginning to end of the Bill the Secretary of State has acted as if he had droit de seigneur over the entire transport system. He says what he wills will be done and then, irrespective of the needs of the ratepayers, the elected councillors, the House of Commons and anyone else involved in the legislation, what the Secretary of State wants shall be done. If that means bringing in the odd Bill every now and then to amend the Bill that he originally thought of before he got it wrong and had to redraft it and bring it all back, that is unfortunate. It becomes a rather complicated game.

We are told that we must discuss the clause today because the money is urgently needed. There is considerable doubt about that. LRT may go into deficit by the end of February, but it has considerable borrowing powers — of up to £10 million — given to it by the Secretary of State. Yet he stands at the Dispatch Box and says that he must push the Bill through because if he does not LRT will not be able to cope.

It may well be that LRT's borrowing powers need to be extended, but there is nothing to stop the Secretary of State extending them. He could do that if there were any question of LRT not being able to pay its operating costs. If there really were any urgency, why would this Bill say that there is a possibility of the Bill becoming an Act after 25 March? In other words, when the Secretary of State was having the Bill drafted by his own infallible means he wrote into it the assumption that if the Bill were not passed before 25 March it would be passed afterwards. That is the general level of assessment that we have had all the way through this bit of nonsense. Nevertheless, we should take account of it.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Does not that suggest that LRT would, if it were a commercial organisation, be trading illegally if the Bill were not passed by 25 March? Is not that what the Secretary of State and his departmental officials must have anticipated and therefore must have also anticipated that LRT would be able to use the borrowing powers which the Secretary of State asked the House to approve last year? What other reason is there for the borrowing powers?

Mrs. Dunwoody: My hon. Friend has hit upon it. The reality is, as the Secretary of State knows, that we do not have to push this completely inadequate two-clause Bill through tonight. He understands better than anyone that there is no real urgency because he has the powers to give LRT the right to borrow the money to keep itself solvent. That would not be difficult for him to do. Indeed, it would not be an unusual thing for him to do.

The Bill is being raced through the House with what can only be called indecent haste. It would not be unusual if the Secretary of State were to say that if LRT wants to extend its borrowing powers it shall do so. He knows that that is almost the norm. It has been done many times before. What has not been done many times before is for a Secretary of State to produce a measure which is found by the British courts to be illegal and irresposible and then to compound the difficulty by bringing forward another Bill in which he seeks for a second time to do that which he was not able to do legally on the first occasion.

The Secretary of State has done that with no apology and very little explanation to the House of Commons. He says that we debated the Ways and Means Resolution and have had a debate again today so why should we go through the whole affair again? We need to go through the whole affair over and over again because the message behind clause 1 and the arrogant way in which it has been shoved through the House of Commons is that the Secretary of State's political view of transport, which bears a strong resemblance to Dante's "Inferno", is that if he wants to change the system he will. It does not matter whether he is talking about finance for LRT, about the services that are provided for London ratepayers or even about levying extra sums on the ratepayers, which is what he has been doing in advance of this nasty little Bill. As far as the Secretary of State is concerned, his word is law and anything else must be subsidiary to his narrow and blinkered view.

7.45 pm

The Bill ought not to go through the House of Commons. It ought not to be pushed on to the statute book. The House should not be examining it today and we should not be asked to accept it. The Secretary of State will get it through, of course he will, because although Conservative Members are not prepared to make speeches about the Bill they will be prepared to vote for it tonight. If he is not ashamed of his behaviour, I hope that some of his hon. Friends will be. The Secretary of State's entire decision-making process on the Bill has been defective. It has been a disgrace from beginning to end and I am appalled that we should be asked to accept it tonight.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on presenting this clear, simple Bill which requires no amendment. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) talked about the droit de seigneur. She is certainly the dame aux camellias tonight. The hon. Lady has bored us to death, as did her hon. Friends in the tedious repetition of the same shabby little argument. My right hon. Friend was wise and sensible to introduce the Bill and we welcome it tonight.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): After the speech of the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page), I hesitate about addressing the Committee because that which the hon. Gentleman supports with such exaggerated and baseless language is so manifestly invalid that it needs no one to oppose it. I shall confine myself to a single point and make it shortly.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Does my hon. Friend accept that the description, la dame aux camellias, is more apt for the Secretary of State than for my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) because the tragedy of the heroine of "La Traviata" was that she could not get her accounts right?

Mr. Mikardo: If I followed that line of thought, I should not get far before I was ruled out of order. Therefore, I shall not follow that line.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) pointed out, the Bill seeks retroactively to validate an Act which was invalid at the time that it was passed. That is the obverse of a method of which the reverse is retroactively to criminalise something which was not a crime at the time that it took place. One has only to say that to show how repulsive it is to democrats that, except in emergencies, retroactive

legislation should be introduced. Such legislation is a common feature of police states. Totalitarian Governments who do not like what a chap is doing, but discover that it is not a crime, pass laws to make it a crime and make them retroactive for a couple of years to catch him. That is bad, but it is as bad to validate retroactively an action that was invalid.

When I first became a Member, everyone was horrified at the idea of retroactive legislation. A Minister who had to introduce it — it happened only when something drastic or deadly had to be coped with—came to the House in sackcloth and ashes, as a humble penitent, begging the pardon of the House for not having anticipated matters well enough to ensure that he did not need to be forced to legislate retroactively. It was considered to be a very nasty thing which Ministers should do only as a last resort, in a great emergency and on a matter of grave importance. It was also considered that they should apologise to the House for having to do it.

The mores of ministerial behaviour have changed since 1979. We saw some of that this week. I do not know whether the Secretary of State for Transport was an hon. Member when Sir Thomas Dugdale, who was an hon. Member in every sense of those words, was Minister of Agriculture, but someone in Sir Thomas's Department committed a not very grave impropriety. The Minister of Agriculture was not involved, but, being an honourable man, he took responsibility for the actions of his subordinates and resigned. There were later cases, one or two of which were painful, and on that account I shall refrain from mentioning them.

The standards of morality and decency that used to characterise the Conservative party and others have evaporated in what my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich rightly called the arrogance of Ministers, especially in their dealings with the House.

Ministers in this Government have ceased to see themselves as servants of the legislature, putting its decisions into practice. They now see themselves as masters of the legislature — deceiving and lying if necessary and, whether necessary or not, brazening and railroading things through the House. Today has been a prime example of that.

The Secretary of State is introducing legislation retroactively to make him an honest woman. He went whoring after false gods; he did not realise that they were false until a judge told him so. Now he has introduced legislation to make himself honest. It is a smelly business from start to finish. If I were in his place, I would be ashamed of it.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Clause 1, which the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) says is all that we are left to debate, is not, as the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) claimed, before us without amendment. It is an amendment itself.

The basis of the argument—if it can be accorded that description—of the hon. Member for Harrow, West is that this is a wonderful, tidy little Bill. I was able to be in the House only briefly for last night's Second Reading debate, because I was upstairs in Committee on the Local Government Bill. The Government spend so much time interfering with local government that many of us have to occupy most of our time in Parliament on local government matters rather than national Government issues.

However, I have read the arguments adduced on behalf of the Government yesterday and they do not begin to persuade me that the sum set out in the Bill is the right sum. The Secretary of State said:

"The sum of £258·2 million roughly achieves just that."

The "just that" was the amount that the Secretary of State regards as reasonable in relation to LRT's requirements. He said:

"It will leave a cash surplus of some £30 million at the end of the year. But LRT has liabilities of £21 million for voluntary redundancies and a further £15 million for other unfunded liabilities. Thus, the £285 million is certainly not more than LRT needs to balance its books this year."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 873.]

I am not a mathematician, but the figures in that paragraph alone do not justify the sum for which the Secretary of State is asking the House.

I remember the discussion in Committee on last year's London Regional Transport Bill. The reason for the clause empowering the Secretary of State to seek a direction was that when the governance of London Transport was broken in the middle of a financial and accounting year, the right hon. Gentleman would be allowed to do two things. Mr. Justice McNeill made clear what those things were. The first was to consult, and the second was to agree an appropriate figure to balance the books.

Clause 1 of this Bill seeks to produce that right figure; it is an accountancy figure. Yesterday's debate on Second Reading and today's debates on the business motion and the amendments were about whether we should agree a clause that gives a certain sum, under the control of the Secretary of State, from one authority to another. Is the sum that the right hon. Gentleman has determined is the right sum to go to the GLC and on to LRT to make up the balance for this year?

In considering those questions, we have to go on the evidence. There is no other way in which we can be persuaded. The only argument that we have been given and the only evidence presented to us is that contained in my quotation of what the Secretary of State said on Second Reading. That is not convincing.

We are being asked to agree the budget of LRT for this year. We need to know more about its liabilities for voluntary redundancies and whether they are attributable to the Capitalcard or are connected with the policies that LRT has implemented. We also need to know about its unfunded liabilities.

I have a duty to my constituents, who pay rates and travel by LRT, to find out whether we are providing the right sum. The money does not come out of the Secretary of State's pocket; he merely acts as the authority. The money comes out of the pockets of my constituents. Every extra pound paid to LRT means that my constituents have a pound less for something else.

We are talking about a substantial sum. The Minister of State says that she is not used to dealing in millions of pounds. We are talking about £258 million, which is a large sum. If it is divided equally among London citizens, of whom there are about 7 million, we are paying more than £10 each. Even if we knocked off a bit for the people outside London who use London's transport, we are still paying pounds as opposed to pence.

Mr. Deakins: It is £30 each.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) will not follow that line either.

Mr. Sedgemore: I can barely resist those temptations, Mr. Speaker, but, under your stern instructions, I absolutely refuse to follow my hon. Friend's point. I do not know why he is trying to lead me down those devious routes. I know that it will put me in bad favour with you, Mr. Speaker, and I shall be desperate to catch your eye next Monday afternoon during the debate on the rate capping order.

I know, if only because I discussed this matter with him before he stood up to speak, that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has an important point to make about the way in which the Secretary of State for Transport misled the House over fiduciary and financial issues. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman made out a case for bringing the Report stage on immediately after the Committee stage. He claimed that this had to be done because London Regional Transport would run out of money this week. I must say, for my sins, that I was trained as an economist. I know that it is not true that LRT will run out of money this week. It is grotesquely misleading for the Secretary of State to tell us that it will. Just as the Central Electricity Generating Board has external borrowing limits, so too does London Regional Transport. I am not saying that LRT has external borrowing limits up to £2 billion like the CEGB. I doubt that the CEGB has such limits anyway. LRT does, however, have external borrowing limits amounting to at least £50 million.

The Secretary of State for Transport owes us an explanation of why, in saying that the Report stage should immediately follow the Committee stage, he argued the fiduciary case. The right hon. Gentleman cannot justify that case. I am willing to allow him to intervene to apologise for misleading the House. I note that the right hon. Gentleman is not rising to meet the challenge. He is not prepared to apologise for misleading the House on important fiduciary and financial issues.

It is a sorry state of affairs when we have Secretaries of State who are prepared to mislead the House and who, when they are given the opportunity to withdraw, sit sullenly in their seats, turned away from the Member who is addressing the House of Commons. That is the kind of democracy in which we live. That is the arrogance of the majority and of the Executive which we have come to expect.

Mr. Cohen: Last night, when accused of misleading the House, the Secretary of State said that the matter was sub judice to him, although it was not sub judice to anyone else. Does the same consideration apply to what the right hon. Gentleman said today at the Dispatch Box about this matter being urgent? It might be urgent to him, although it is not to anyone else.

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch to resist that temptation as well.

Mr. Sedgemore: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I know something about the sub judice rule, but it would take much of the time of the House if I went into the various refinements of the arguments between my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and the Secretary of State for Transport. Again I accept your invocation, Mr. Speaker. It would be extremely remiss of me if I were to follow the path down which my hon. Friend tried to send me.

I am concerned about the practical difficulties that have been raised by this motion. I am one of those hon. Members who have been locked in a Committee Room for two days and two nights a week considering the Local Government Bill, which seeks to abolish the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. We sat until midnight last night dealing with certain clauses. The Bill is fiendishly complicated. The debate on it drains one of nervous energy and physical stamina. I went home feeling like a wet rag last night. I got up at half-past five this morning, knowing that I would have to read *Hansard* to ascertain what happened yesterday on Second Reading. I had barely started dealing with half a dozen letters and opening some of my papers—I do not have a red box; in fact, I have a blue box—when the telephone started to ring, and I have been interrupted ever since. My only chance to read yesterday's debate on Second Reading has come while I have been sitting here trying—occasionally, because the debate is so important—to glance at what was said yesterday.

I am a London Member and represent the poorest borough in this country which is desperately worried about having to pay a share of the £50 million to the Secretary of State. Is the House really asking me, as one who sat up last night until midnight dealing with a major Committee, who got up at half-past five this morning, and who has been interrupted in the middle of all his business, to table on Report amendments which will arise out of Committee proceedings which I have not even seen? No one in his right mind would ask a Member of Parliament to do that. It is asking too much, even of someone of my capacity and energy. I cannot do it. I honestly say that it is beyond my capabilities.

Mr. Skinner: Frayed at the edges.

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend may laugh and sneer. This is what makes Members of Parliament snap. I do not know why my hon. Friend is goading me in this fashion. We have on occasions walked around St. James's park talking as colleagues and trying to help each other. Now my hon. Friend is trying to put all these severe parliamentary pressures on to me. I do not find it funny, and I hope that my hon. Friend does not either.

Mr. Skinner: I have been reselected.

Mr. Sedgemore: It is not just a matter of how many hours there are in a day. The answer is 24, and that is not enough. I am concerned also because there are a number of bus garages in Hackney, South and Shoreditch and in Hackney, North. I had an agreement that, before the Report stage and after the Committee stage, I would go to some of those bus garages and consult the work force about possible amendments to the Bill. After going to see the work force, I would go to the GLC. I wanted to talk to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and Mr. Ken Livingstone about the kind of amendments I should table on Report.

That has become impossible because of the time scale. It need not be impossible, and that is where the Leader of the House can help us. There is no reason why that impossibility should be created. I do not believe that the motion was tabled for political malice or spite. All hon.

Members have said that we have an extremely good Leader of the House, who is interested in the wishes of Back-Bench Members.

Mr. Skinner: It is a lifetime tarnished.

Mr. Sedgemore: I do not believe that. We are having a series of rows, which there was no need to have.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am the last person who would wish the hon. Gentleman to snap. If he would bring his speech to a conclusion, perhaps we could both go and have a cup of tea together.

Mr. Sedgemore: That is the sort of offer that I cannot refuse. In fact, I should like a rock cake, if that is all right. However, before we have our cup of tea together, I wish to emphasise the point that we could have had the debate on the Royal Air Force today. I do not know why we cannot do that, and have the Committee and Report stages tomorrow, or the Committee stage today and the Report stage tomorrow. What prevents us from doing that? I know that there is a different Whip on the two matters.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to keep stopping the hon. Gentleman, but that matter could legitimately have been argued last night when the business statement was made. It cannot be argued on the motion this afternoon.

Mr. Sedgemore: That point has been argued today by at least five hon. Members. I bow to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I am rather shocked that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch should have fewer rights than more distinguished, older and abler hon. Members. However, I obey immediately because I am anxious for that cup of tea.

My final point relates to incompetence. Even when I am in control—I am at breaking point now—it seems appalling that because of the incompetence of the Secretary of State for the Environment, compounded by the incompetence of the Secretary of State for Transport—a parliamentary Tom and Jerry show—hon. Members should face this impossible position. It is time that the legislature stood up to the Government and asserted its rights.

Mr. Deakins: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The motion before the House is presumably amendable, as it is a motion. Would it be in order for the Leader of the House to move a manuscript amendment to the motion to remove from the motion any reference to Report and Third Reading, or to Third Reading, so that at least hon. Members would have a break and an opportunity to consider the stages that we are to rush through today, before the Bill is passed? If that were in order, would you accept it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a hypothetical question. No such suggestion has been made to me.

6.4 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that that can soon be remedied. Our two and a half hours of debate bear a remarkable, striking and important similarity to our five hours of debate between 10.30 pm and 3.30 am last night. Throughout the two debates there has not been one speech from Conservative Back-Bench Members in support of the Front Bench. Every speech from those Back-Bench Members has opposed the Government's proposal. We can hardly be surprised that that is the case. The Secretary of State, who has an unlimited capacity to turn almost everything that he touches to farce, is in danger of making a farce of the procedures of the House. That is not a trivial or laughing matter, although during the recent contributions the Secretary of State seemed to regard it as such.

Many hon. Members have said that we regard the Leader of the House as an honourable man, and we mean it sincerely and truly. We have a high regard for the way in which he carries out his duties, but he will know, as most hon. Members know, that it takes a long time to build up a reputation in the House, and that a reputation can be destroyed in one debate. I ask him to consider seriously our points. I call on him, as his hon. Friends have done, to protect the House from an important abuse that otherwise may be committed today.

The Secretary of State is in danger of creating a precedent that he, his party, me and many of my colleagues would regret. If the precedent is created and the course of action is acceptable to the Tory party when it is in government, it will be acceptable to the Labour party when we are in government. I do not want any mealy-mouthed interventions in future, if we behave——

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes) *rose*——

Mr. Williams: I shall give way in a moment. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has discovered an interest in the subject.

Mr. Brown: I have been here throughout the debate.

Mr. Williams: In that case the hon. Gentleman should have spoken because his interests and rights are endangered. The Secretary of State may create a precedent that the House will regret, especially the Conservative party when it is in opposition.

Mr. Proctor: Will the right hon. Gentleman think again about his comment that, if and when there is a Labour Government, he would use the same procedures that are threatening Back-Bench Members now? Will he reconsider that remark because it is not an appetising threat to my right hon. and hon. Friends?

Mr. Williams: The House runs on precedent. If the Government are allowed to create this precedent this week, they can use it again next week. If they create the precedent and use it again, the Labour party will also be free to use it. That is how the House works, and that is why it is important that we do not allow the precedent to be created. The hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) has been here longer than I and he knows that.

Mr. Michael Brown: I have grave misgivings about the resolution for all the reasons given during the debate. Although I understand that it would be entirely reasonable for any Labour Leader of the House to claim that precedent is the basis for using the device we are debating, the right hon. Gentleman does not strengthen his case to resist the precedent by suggesting that his party will use that device.

Mr. Williams: The hon. Gentleman must understand that today, as last night, the Leader of the House calls on precedent in support of what he seeks to achieve. Our argument, which is what the argument of every hon. Member should be, is that the motion is a gross abuse of any precedent for the timetabling of the activities of the House. The Leader of the House mentioned previous occasions of crisis, but there is no suggestion of a crisis today.

[Mr. Spearing]

motion earlier today, which means that there will be a plundering of London's ratepayers of £30 million to £50 million over what they should justifiably pay.

This is a contemptible Bill, and that is not surprising because it comes from a contemptible Government and from a Prime Minister who has contempt for the House. It may be that today, in two great democratic Assemblies across the Atlantic, both of which owe a great deal to the procedures of the House, the right hon. Lady will be praised for making a speech which she did not write. At home, that motion in her name has ridden roughshod over the procedures of the House. Even if she did not personally approve it, it is redolent and typical of the hon. Lady's attitude to this place.

It is not only typical of the right hon. Lady's attitude to this place, but typical of her attitude to the ordinary people of London—the least well-off people of London, mostly from Newham. It is mostly east London that has carried the debate today, and in previous stages, and that is no accident, because the Government do not understand ordinary people. There is anger in the country and it is being expressed in a way that Conservative Members do not understand.

Mrs. Chalker: Nonsense.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister says "Nonsense". She is entirely out of touch.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): It is a big act. The hon. Member deserves an Oscar for that performance.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful for the attribute. This is not an act, because there is growing anger among many people, particularly those who are the least privileged and who have to pay more and more taxes that are required by this unjust Government. The Government say stupidly to the electorate that they want to reduce rates, yet, as a result of the Bill, people will have to pay more rates. The Bill is contemptible because it is in contempt of Parliament and, therefore, in contempt of the British people.

8.59 pm

Mr. Dobson: Perhaps I might begin by referring to the diversion caused by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Had he listened to what the shadow Leader of the House said in the lengthy debate on whether all the remaining stages of the Bill should be taken today, he would have heard that the Labour party was not a party to any agreement to take the remainder of the Bill today. We were simply told that that was what the Government had decided. Had the hon. Gentleman been here at some ungodly hour this morning, at around 2.30 am——

Mr. Simon Hughes: I was.

Mr. Dobson: He may have had his eyes closed—he might have seen me sitting on the Front Bench shouting "Object" when the Government Whip moved that the Question be put.

The only reason why we had an opportunity to debate the business motion this afternoon, according even to the Leader of the House, was that I shouted "Object" at that time. I do not recall any brilliant Liberal or alliance contribution then. Instead of trying to suggest that there was collusion between the Labour party and the Government to try to smuggle the remaining stages of the Bill through today, the hon. Gentleman should get the facts straight. There was no collusion. Our response was complete opposition and we made use of the opportunities that were available, in a way that alliance Members did not.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I am not giving way.

The Bill is unnecessary. The Secretary of State, following the decision of Mr. Justice McNeill that his original direction in the matter was

"unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper,"

could have issued a new lawful direction that would have met the operating needs of London Regional Transport in 1984-85. He did not choose to do that because he wanted to go beyond the law that he had proposed in 1984. Section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 permitted him only to meet the operating needs of LRT. He told the Committee on that Bill that he would call only for the sums that were strictly necessary. We have to consider the Bill in this shabby and hurried way because the Secretary of State wants to do more than that. He wants to require the GLC to pay to LRT a sum that will mean that it will have £50 million surplus to its operating needs. That is why the law has had to be changed and why the Secretary of State has not relied on making another direction.

The Bill is not about redrafting, but about changing the law. The Secretary of State is going back on a solemn undertaking that he gave in Committee on the London Regional Transport Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), not a man given to making impassioned speeches, made an impassioned contribution. Conservative Members should ponder for a moment why he feels so passionately. It may be that, despite all their cant, he is upset about what has happened and feels that the people whom he was elected to represent are being robbed by the Secretary of State. They are sick of it, and my hon. Friend is sick of it. He is sick of being totally ignored by the Government when he is attempting to represent the interests of Londoners.

Mr. Spearing: Let us get the facts straight. It is one thing for the Government to do things legally and properly to the disadvantage of my constituents, immoral though the Government may be; it is quite another to do them by adopting an improper parliamentary procedure. That is why I was angry.

Mr. Dobson: That is right, and I do not think that my hon. Friend need explain his anger.

If we started awarding Oscars, perhaps the Secretary of State would get a few nominations. In 1984 he might have been Legislator of the Year, having introduced his own apparently inadequate section 49, or perhaps he might have been Issuer of Directions of the Year that have been found to be

"unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper."

Tonight we have his final effort, presumably as Parliamentary Mathematician of the Year. He sought to upbraid my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) by asserting that the Bill had only one clause. I can only plead that the Chairman of Ways and Means then proceeded to call a clause stand part debate on clause 2.

I shall always defer to Mr. Speaker or to the Chairman of Ways and Means if there is any dispute about the

number of clauses in a Bill. But if we have a Secretary of State who cannot even get that right, the chances of this legislation proving to be up to the job are not very good, and it is conceivable that we shall be back here again considering the London Regional Transport (Amendment) (Amendment) Bill if the right hon. Gentleman's track record is anything to go by.

In Committee, the Secretary of State said, and people took him at his word, that the GLC had asked that LRT's auditors should be requested to certify what its operating needs would be. The officials of the Department of Transport—democrats all, apparently—no doubt under instructions from the Secretary of State, refused that reasonable request on the ground that is was not germane to the issue. However, it was germane to the issue because, as the judge pointed out, the right hon. Gentleman was entitled to direct the GLC only to hand over money which was directed to meeting those operating needs. If he had been prepared to direct the GLC to hand over money to meet the operating needs, it would not have been necessary to bother the House with changing the law. The right hon. Gentleman could have made a lawful direction, but that is not what he has tried to do.

That is why my right hon. and hon. Friends representing constituencies in London have been most perturbed. We believe that if money which was paid by ratepayers to the GLC is not needed for the operating needs of LRT, it should not be handed over to LRT. It does not need it. If the money stayed with the GLC, it could be used for one of two purposes, or a combination of both—either to reduce the rate precept on Londoners, or to improve its services. In that way the ratepayers of London would gain 100 per cent. from the money staying with the GLC.

There is a further point which should appeal to the Secretary of State, who appears to believe that the paymaster should have some control over those to whom money is being paid. Both under the present Labour-controlled GLC and under previous Tory-controlled GLCs, it has always been the practice to hand over money raised by the rate precept to London Transport against performance by London Transport. If London Transport failed to carry out what the democratically elected GLC from year to year decided were its obligations, the GLC used to withhold some of the money. That is what the Tories normally call an incentive. It is wholly proper therefore that the GLC should not hand over money to LRT if LRT has not done everything that it was supposed to do or if the programme laid down by the GLC has not been carried out. The ratepayers are entitled to that degree of protection.

On the other hand, because of the relationship between central Government finance and rate finance for LRT, if the surplus goes to LRT, the ratepayers' maximum benefit can be only two thirds of the sum involved. Far from London ratepayers paying twice, it is in their positive interests not to pay over money surplus to the needs of LRT, as they will under the Bill. If the Secretary of State was willing to accept that the money to be paid over to LRT should meet only its operational needs, he could make a valid directon under the present law and would not need to change the primary legislation.

That is our case against this squalid little measure. We deeply deplore the way in which the measure has been put before the House. The situation is quite extraordinary. The ways and means resolution, which normally flows from a public Bill, was introduced and debated 10 days before the Bill itself. We then had the Second Reading debate yesterday. Today we have been expected to respond as best we can to the points made by the Secretary of State yesterday and to give proper and detailed consideration to the Bill.

It would not necessarily have taken a long time to give proper and detailed consideration to a two-clause Bill. What would take time—if we were properly to represent the Londoners who elected us and who pay taxes and rates—would be proper consideration of the detailed drafting and of what the Secretary of State has said, and the tabling of amendments which would explore further the points that the right hon. Gentleman has raised or perhaps make changes to the Bill. We have been denied the opportunity to do that job properly.

Having sat through the whole Committee stage of the Bill today, I do not think that we have done our job properly. I am not proud of the quality of debate this afternoon. The debate has been a mockery of the legislative process. If the Secretary of State does not agree, I do not know what he thinks would constitute a mockery of that process. We are all entitled, especially the London Members, to give proper consideration to these matters. We have been denied that opportunity. We deplore what has happened. What the Secretary of State has done is damaging not only to himself—I do not mind that—but to the interests of those who elected me and my hon. Friends. For that reason, we reject both the Bill and the Secretary of State who introduced it.

9.14 pm

Mr. Deakins: The Secretary of State has told us that the money is to go to LRT, not to the Government. We know that that is correct, not because the Secretary of State told us, but because that is what the Bill says. However, he did not tell us that the Government plan to cut their subsidy to LRT progressively and that if the Bill was not passed there could be no such subsidy reduction. Moreover, if the sum in the Bill had been reduced by the £50 million that my right hon. and hon. Friends wanted the level of subsidy cut would have been affected.

The Bill displays two types of incompetence — incompetence in the reasons for the Bill, and incompetence in the handling of it. The Government have anticipated the possibility of further incompetence by clause 1(2), which provides that if the Act is passed before 25 March one set of provisions will apply, and that if it is passed after that date there will be different proceedings for the transfer of money. There could be no better example of the state that the Department of Transport and the Government have got into.

With their large majority, the Government are in charge of the parliamentary timetable. The Bill was given a Second Reading on 19 February and refers to the Act receiving Royal Assent on 25 March. Why should the five weeks between those dates pose any problem for the Government? Nevertheless, the Government have panicked and included clause 1(2).

Legislation undertaken in panic is rarely good. Like many other things, the Bill shows that the Government are losing their grip and, I suspect, their reason. That is one reason why the House should reject the Bill.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 155.

Division No. 118] **[9.17 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Pescock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John

Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Trustee Savings Bank Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

9.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Second Reading, I questioned the legality of the Bill in a paraphrase of the Latin expression nemo dat qui non habet—you cannot give what you have not got. The Economic Secretary to the Treasury did not deal with that point, but he admitted that there was no detailed knowledge about the ownership of the trustee savings banks and that ownership could not be determined.

Therefore, I refused to serve on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill, but I have carefully considered what was said in Committee, because, although I concede immediately that Parliament is sovereign, I do not accept that the House can authorise the TSB to enter what is clearly an illegality — to sell something that it does not own. The Bill is nonsense and should be withdrawn. The Government ought either to include in the Bill an authorisation for the TSB to become possessed of all its assets and proceed from there towards the sale, or to create a mutual company.

Parliament is being asked to pass nonsense and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule that the matter should go back to the Government for reconsideration.

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) for having given me notice that he would raise the point of order. I have considered carefully the point that he has made and I have to rule that it is not a matter for the Chair. If the Bill is defective, as the hon. Member claims, it is for the House to decide whether to pass it. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been approached by a number of people who have asked whether Parliament is able to legislate in this way. I appreciate that it does not fall within your purview to take these decisions, but surely the Leader of the House should make a statement dealing with the accusations that have been levelled against the Government and with the suggestion that the Government do not have the right to legislate. Before the Bill comes before the House, the Leader of the House should clear the way. The Bill is consuming parliamentary time and that is a matter not for the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, but for the Leader of the House who protects the interests of all hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. The hon. Gentleman can table an amendment on the matter—indeed, the Government could table an amendment—or vote against the Bill. It is certainly not a matter for the Chair.

New Clause 1

SHARE FLOTATION

'On the vesting day employees of the TSB Group and holders of deposits in the TSB Group shall be offered 55 per cent. of the shares of the Group.'—*[Dr. McDonald.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Monig'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
Mackenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. Roger Thomas and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

SHORT TITLE

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It is important that we have a debate on this clause, given that about 10 minutes ago the Secretary of State did not know that it was in the Bill. In my two years in the House I have never known a Bill to have clauses that were not known to its drafters. I remind the Committee that the right hon. Gentleman told the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that it did not say much for her confidence if she did not realise that it was a one-clause Bill.

I know that we have descended to personalities, but it is important that the world should know that the Secretary of State for Transport introduced a Bill and did not spot one of the clauses. If we did not have the clause, the Bill would have no name. If the Bill had no name, it might have no consequences. If the Bill had no consequences, many of us might be a great deal happier, because clause 2 says something important. It states:

"This Act may be cited as the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Act 1985."

Most Bills have something like that at the end because they like to have a name when they become law. The significance of the name of this Bill is that it is important that the history books should record that the Secretary of State needed to introduce not just one London Regional Transport Bill but two, the second being the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill. That is the title of the Bill, but not the name of the clause. It shows that the first time around the Secretary of State got it wrong.

Out of respect for the Committee, I shall reserve my remarks about the other things that the Secretary of State said in reply to the hon. Lady on the earlier clause until Third Reading. That means, as I understand it, that I shall not have to reserve my remarks for long.

It is a pretty odd state of affairs when 50 per cent. of a Bill is unknown to its master. Perhaps the arguments have been put so badly because, as some hon. Members believe, 50 per cent. of them are also unknown.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

8.30 pm

Mrs. Dunwoody: Today's *The Standard* carries an interesting editorial. It says:

"Mrs. Thatcher's terrible twins were at it again yesterday: Mr. Patrick Jenkin and Mr. Nicholas Ridley reminding us that, for some Ministers, banana skins don't have to be special, just part of life's routine. Mr. Ridley was involved in what one MP happily described as a piece of legislative Tippex, to correct a court ruling that had unfortunately gone against him. . . . Mr. Ridley, in other words, broke the law. So yesterday he used the full weight of the law-and-order Party to change it. . . . The problem with both Ministers is that these are not isolated blunders. Mr. Ridley's recent record features own goals on Stansted, heavy lorries in London, and private buses. What each man has in common (apart from a certain baffled charm) is an unerring ability to turn a perfectly logical case into an unholy mess. Mrs. Thatcher's Cabinet would be stronger without them."

That well-known Socialist newspaper, the *The Standard*, is expressing in fairly calm terms the sentiments of every hon. Member who has sat through the passage of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill.

The Bill was created out of chaos, it has been prosecuted with prejudice and it passes on to the statute book with a distinct odour of disgrace.

It is not often that the House is asked to deal with badly drafted legislation that has been taken to court almost as soon as it has passed on to the statute book, that has a specific and damaging effect on the ratepayers of London yet is presented to them by the Secretary of State for Transport as amending legislation that is saving them from the rapacious and all-embracing Greater London council.

The reality behind the Bill is a simple one, but it bears repetition simply because the House has a responsibility to make sure that when Ministers make radical and serious mistakes they do not rewrite the legislation but come to the House and admit, first, that they have got it wrong. The Secretary of State asked for more money than he had a right to ask for. He persisted, when a court of law found that he was acting illegally, in demanding that the House should not discuss the matter, because, he said, it was sub judice. He said that not once but four times. When I suggested that he had no intention of appealing, he said that I was misreporting him. The Secretary of State claimed that he had said that the matter was sub judice because it was sub judice to him.

From the beginning of the debate the truth is that the GLC has been asked to hand over money that it has raised from the ratepayers, which belongs to the ratepayers and which should go back to the ratepayers if it is not required for the operating costs of London Regional Transport. But the Secretary of State has been prepared to accept neither that he made a mistake nor that he should now no longer demand that the mistake be put right by legislation, in whatever form it is written, the intention of which is to have retrospective effect. He is seeking to put right something which a court of law found was based on an illegal demand. I can think of no other way of expressing it.

The Secretary of State says that we claim that the legislation is retrospective, but we never expand on the point. The crux of the matter is that the Secretary of State asked for something to which he was not entitled. When he was found out and taken to a court of law he said that it did not matter and that he intended to create a new Bill to cover what he had not done in the first instance.

That is a shameful way to proceed. Hon. Members representing London constituencies have consistently asked him not to rush the Bill through Parliament. They have asked him to give us time in which to table amendments that would at least explore some of the extraordinary reasoning behind the Bill.

The Secretary of State has made a number of speeches, everyone of which has given a different set of figures, sometimes amended because he says there has been a printing error. Sometimes he has claimed that we have not understood the full implications and sometimes he has done this simply because he is shifting the grounds of the argument as we proceed.

I believe that this incident has been one of the most shabby in which I have been involved since I was elected to Parliament. It has demonstrated the will of a Government who are no longer prepared to concern themselves with the interests of the ratepayers or the taxpayers. The Secretary of State has encapsulated that view in his attitude to the Bill.

Tonight we have not had sufficient time to debate the few inadequate amendments that have been tabled.

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

Tonight the House has moved from Committee to Report to Third Reading without the chance to amend or even fully to explore some of the figures that the Secretary of State has given. Tonight we have seen as fine an example of completely arrogant disregard for the interests of the people of Britain as we are ever likely to see even from a Conservative Government.

This has been a shameful episode. I am deeply depressed that the Secretary of State will use his majority to push this nasty little measure on to the statute book.

8.37 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: On 12 February the Minister of Transport at 11.55 pm introduced to the House a debate on the draft London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985. That order sought approval for the budget for London Regional Transport for the coming financial year. In remarks relating to the year that is about to begin the Minister of Transport explained to the House, in answer to a question, that the matter was difficult, complicated and complex. After a debate which lasted one and a half hours, the Minister of State, in reply to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), said:

"I agree wholeheartedly . . . that the order is complicated." —[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 306.]

The House was of course asked to decide on that matter before we had sorted out the budget for this year, so it was an illogical order.

It was even more illogical when one considers what the Secretary of State said on 7 February:

"LRT has to budget and plan ahead for 1985-86 and beyond, as well as to settle its 1984-85 accounts. The GLC is at the crucial final stages in its annual budgetary and rate-precepting processes. Legislation is the only way to resolve the uncertainties and give Parliament the opportunity to determine the outcome in a way that is reasonable as between the parties concerned."

The right hon. Gentleman then said:

"This matter must be urgently resolved, if possible, before the end of the financial year."

We should have done things in the right order. We should, first — to use the Secretary of State's words — have settled the 1984-85 accounts. We should have been given the opportunity to determine the matter, as the right hon. Gentleman said, in a reasonable way as between the parties concerned. To have had to go through this process in two days has been unreasonable and not in keeping with what the Secretary of State said, for he claimed:

"This matter must be urgently resolved, if possible, before the end of the financial year."

He did not say that it had to be resolved within a week or by the end of February, or that the LRT could not go ahead unless the issue was resolved by a date in March, or that it had to be finalised by the end of the financial year. He simply said:

"This matter must be urgently resolved, if possible, before the end of the financial year." — [*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1198.]

A steamroller has brought in an alteration of the Secretary of State's own making, getting all stages of the Bill through in two days. No wonder there have been protests. No wonder hon. Members complain when the figures do not add up—I am not talking about a printing error—when statistics given in the last 24 hours are not explained and when the right hon. Gentleman does not give the statistical detail to justify the Bill.

The Secretary of State told me not to interfere in matters that I did not understand. The job of hon. Members is to examine legislation, and the Government have a duty to provide us with an opportunity to examine legislation in a responsible way so that the people whom we represent get a decent service, by the legislature tempering the activities of the Executive.

I do not pretend to be an expert in transport subsidy matters. Does the Secretary of State believe that he improves the chances of hon. Members understanding such issues when he pushes legislation through in 24 hours? Does he think that Parliament passes better legislation by that means?

Are members of the Government now forbidden to apologise to Parliament? Cannot a Minister say, "I am sorry, I got it wrong. I will see if we can agree a procedure that we should have sorted out in the first place." Do the Government presume that, because they are in office, they always get it right and need never be criticised? Governments all over the world make mistakes, sometimes fatal ones, occasionally involving millions of people being killed.

Compared with some of the world's catastrophes, this Bill can be described as a minor mistake. Nevertheless, it is expensive and it is important. Hon. Members might have been more sympathetic to the Secretary of State had he apologised and said, "Mr. Justice McNeill said that I was unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper. He was right and I apologise to the House. I made a mistake. I shall try to do what I failed to do at the beginning. I shall now try to consult; I shall try to do what I said on 7 February, and resolve the issue in a way that is reasonable."

What the right hon. Gentleman has done has been wholly unreasonable. Not only is the procedure unreasonable, but it is unconstitutional and unacceptable. Only because the Government, by our electoral system, have a majority in Parliament — though they have a gross minority of votes in the country—can they get a measure such as this on to the statute book. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should accept that their party is in power on the basis of a minority of votes.

I do not know whether the occupants of the official Opposition Front Bench were consulted through the usual channels about the business statement that was made last night. If they were—and I guess that they were—they must be considered to have been a party to today's exercise. I know that my colleagues were not consulted. *[Interruption.]* My colleagues are in the building and will come in later to register their disapproval; they trust me to make these points. There is probably a greater percentage of my party present now, personified by me, than of the Conservative party as personified by the occupants of the Government Benches.

If there was an agreement with the Labour party that all stages of the Bill should be taken so quickly, it should never have been made, for it goes against constitutional precedent and the right of hon. Members to have time to reflect and discuss so that they can do their job properly. That is why I say that the official Opposition must take their share of the blame.

The real blame, however, must be laid at the door of the Government and the Secretary of State. Once they decided to take over transport in London, they were asking for trouble. When they decided to nationalise London Transport, against all their declared policies, they were interfering. Having done it, they had a duty to try to do a better job than those who had been running London

Transport previously. If this Bill is the first evidence of the Government running transport in Britain, and it is, it is a pathetic, sorry and bad example.

I hope that we learn the lesson never again to commit local authority functions to Government, because the Government are not worthy of the trust that they usurped when they took over those functions. Their interference has been shown by the courts to have been a disgrace, and by the high court of Parliament saying that the Bill is disgraceful and should not be passed. Only because the Government, for the time being—I hope for not much longer—have sufficient troops to get it through are they likely to succeed in doing so. We do not wish the Bill any success. I hope that the Secretary of State and his Department learn never to treat the House of Commons with such cavalier disrespect and lack of apology.

8.48 pm

Mr. Spearing: The Bill seeks to give authority to the Secretary of State to receive £258 million from the ratepayers of London to pass to LRT. During our debates there has been some argument whether that is £50 million or £30 million more than it should be.

We have had little time to probe the technical complexities of the matter. Anybody who doubts that needs only to read the speech made yesterday afternoon by the Secretary of State. In the debate yesterday, at column 903, I asked the right hon. Gentleman a question, but he did not, when he replied, answer me specifically. I shall put it to him again. I referred to the proceedings in Parliament on the money resolution which we passed on 7 February, and said:

"I assume that all the additional revenue over and above the requirements for this year will be used for improving the service or reducing fares. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman can give me that assurance."

The right hon. Gentleman said:

"I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance categorically."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1214.]

The right hon. Gentleman has used that adjective several times today. I gave grateful responses, but said that people would always be suspicious of the right hon. Gentleman whenever there was a bus around.

I am afraid that I had to ask further questions about that yesterday. I asked what the money was being spent on, and the Secretary of State said that the surplus was not £50 million, but £30 million, and that the liabilities would be £37 million, so there would be a deficit of £7 million. He said:

"The expected current cash surplus at the end of this financial year is not £50 million, as he said, but £30 million. As I said, it is necessary to provide for the needs of LRT, and they are, including the accrued unfunded liabilities, the following sums: £21 million for voluntary severance payments already agreed and accepted"—

I take it that that is before 31 March—

"£6 million for insurance claims against LRT, which it will in due course have to pay; £4 million for claims outstanding on the Jubilee line"—

the Jubilee line opened some years ago, so I cannot understand why it is still being paid for—

"£5 million in relation to development land tax which it owes and will have to pay; and £1 million for land compensation claims. That makes a total of £27 million".

That does not tally with what the right hon. Gentleman told me on 7 February, when he said that the funds would be used for improving services and reducing fares. Is there compatibility between those two statements? I ask the Minister of State, who sometimes has to field the awkward balls for the Secretary of State, to reply to that point. There may be an explanation for it. I may have missed the vital clue, and the Minister knows what I mean by that. Whether or not the answer is satisfactory, this is an unhappy Bill.

Mr. Ridley: The understanding that I gave in the money resolution debate remains. Not one penny of this money goes to the Exchequer. It will all go to LRT. There has not been a change, and there will not be one. The hon. Gentleman asks whether the items that he has read out are compatible with improving the service and reducing fares. I listed those items in the context of the accrued liabilities and needs of LRT for the financial year ending 31 March 1985. It was an accountant's balancing that I gave. They are needed because the efficiency of London transport is going up and the costs are coming down. That means things such as redundancy and other costs that LRT will have to meet. I do not see the inconsistency that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Secretary of State, and I hope the House will be indulgent, because this is the problem of rapid legislation. The extract from which I have just quoted continues to say that "auditors will certify" the £37 million

"as being due and having to be covered in this year's accounts."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 945.]

That may include redundancy, but one can have two views of this. Whether or not these sums are paid, the quality of services and the level of fares will not be affected one whit. I leave it to the House, the readers of *Hansard*, and perhaps the other place to judge between us on this matter.

The whole Bill has a whiff of impropriety about it. I shall go further and, in great seriousness, say that it has a whiff, slight though it be, of the Reichstag. We have only to think of the Secretary of State's behaviour at Question Time on this matter a little time ago and his statement yesterday excusing his sub judice gaff by saying that it was sub judice to him. When he was subjected to a genuine sub judice constraint, the result was a phrase which I hope will go into parliamentary language—it deserves to be written to some catchy tune—

"unlawful, irrational and procedurally improper".

Had the Secretary of State taken the trouble to consult before making the direction, he might not be in this mess. Consideration before legislation is the historic watchword of this place and of parliamentary democracy. The right hon. Gentleman is not in tune with that, otherwise he would not have broken that law.

As there was no proper consultation, the whole affair was conceived without consultation. It was born out of illegality, brought before the House irrationally and is being passed by improper procedure. It will be remembered for the injury that it has almost certainly done to parliamentary democracy and if, as I very much hope, it has not done that, it has certainly done an injury to the Secretary of State and to the Government who have put him where he is.

We have not had proper time, but we are not the only people who have not had proper time. Because we did not have much time last night, and perhaps because he did not consult as widely as he might have done, the hapless Leader of the House had to accept the Prime Minister's

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

The purpose of the new clause is to take account of the history and traditions of the TSB, which has been closer to a mutual organisation than to a public limited company, and of what was once the expressed hope of the TSB. The banks gave evidence to the committee that reviewed the functioning of financial institutions in 1979. The summary of evidence stated:

"The Trustee Savings Banks have demonstrated a will and ability to adapt to modern commercial requirements and the changing needs of their customers, whilst retaining a fundamental purpose which is not dictated by purely commercial interests."

The TSB not only acknowledged its traditions, but outlined what it hoped that its future would be: it hoped that it would not be devoted entirely to commercial interests. That theme has been continued in the comments on the TSB's change of status and in the TSB's own hopes that depositors and employees will wish to take up shareholdings. *The Sunday Times* on 11 November 1984 referred to the need to resolve the TSB's legal structure. The article stated:

"The first preference (and one to which some"—

others would say many—

"members of the TSB adhere) was to retain mutuality. But this received an official thumbs down, because of accountability problems."

I do not believe that the term "official" is intended to refer to the Government's attitude. The Government's role in the Bill is to facilitate the changes that the TSB's management wishes to bring about. The management has stressed the problems faced in setting up a mutual organisation. The TSB's existence as a mutual organisation is not clearly defined in the way in which building societies are.

The Sunday Times article went on:

"For a start, by abandoning its mutual status, the TSB jettisons its basic difference from the high street clearing banks. Other attractive babies, too, could disappear down the plughole with the mutual bathwater.

The TSB's great strength has always been the traditional loyalty of its 6 million customers. Personal customers account for over 95 per cent. of its customer base."

More interestingly, and certainly more surprisingly to Conservative Members, the *Financial Times* leader of 17 January echoed and developed that theme. It accused the Government and the management of the TSB of being too unimaginative in their consideration of the TSB's future status and organisation. When the *Financial Times* puts the matter as a choice between a mutual organisation and a public limited company, it is being unimaginative.

The new clause says that, even if the future organisation has to be a public limited company—first, because of accountability and, secondly, because of the need to raise capital—it does not have to conform exactly to the form taken by other high street banks and other companies. We believe that consideration should have been given to forming a plc in which the majority of shares are held by the employees and holders of deposits. To some extent, that would have taken account of the TSB's traditions, the hopes that it would not be a purely commercial enterprise and the fact that, until now, the TSB has been different from the high street banks in its relationship with its customers. Personal customers account for much of its business. If the majority of the shares were offered to employees and depositors, they, too, would have an opportunity to continue those traditions.

The Banking Insurance and Finance Union, 98 per cent. of the membership of which are employees in the TSB organisation, would like to see a preferential share issue of this kind. They would regard it as being similar in some ways to the British Telecom and Jaguar flotations. However, when we discussed a similar issue on Second Reading the Economic Secretary to the Treasury said:

"I do not think that it would be appropriate for the legislation itself to include specific provisions about the flotation or about the subsequent conduct of the TSB as a private sector company . . .

I believe that the overall purpose of the Bill is helpful to the TSB and its depositors."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1985; Vol. 73, c. 71.]

Opposition Members must part company with the Minister on that. There is no reason why shares should not be offered in the way suggested in new clause 1. It could be done within the scope of the normal mechanisms of share flotation and transfer. There would be no particular problems if all of the 55 per cent. laid down in new clause 1 were not taken up, because the unsold shares could be the vested property of the board.

It may be suggested that there may be pricing difficulties about insisting that the share flotation should take place in that way. That is true if one accepts the view that institutions are prepared to pay more for shares than individuals are. The TSB may lose out on the sale of shares, if it has to sell a significant percentage of them to individuals. However, that is not an unavoidable outcome. If individuals and, in this case, the employees and depositors, to whom the issues involved could be spelt out, as the TSB can easily inform them, realise that institutions have been rationed on the flotation, they can expect the value of their shares to increase in future.

To suggest that the TSB should be treated and should operate like every other high street bank is to ignore the history, traditions and importance of its personal customers. It is not like another bank, and many people would argue, as the Opposition argue, that every effort should be made to ensure that the TSB continues to offer a different sort of service. That was in part meant in the Page report in 1973, which referred to a third force in banking.

By tabling the new clause in this way we are saying, "If the TSB must become a public limited company, it does not need to be wholly commercial in its purpose, and shares need not be distributed as they are distributed for other banks and public limited companies".

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech and many important points, as expected. Is she aware that not only is the TSB being regarded as yet another clearing bank, making a total of five instead of four clearing banks, but that the clearing banks see it as a main competitor? I have had discussions with a number of banks, and it is clear that eventually there will be a merger either between the TSBs and the other banks, or between the clearing banks because the United Kingdom cannot accommodate five large clearing banks.

9.45 pm

Dr. McDonald: I thank my right hon. Friend for his intervention. Some of his points will be relevant to new clause 2 which is designed to limit individual shareholdings to prevent such a take over. We can see why other high street banks regard the TSB as a competitor. The Midland's position is a little shaky. Following the

flotation of its shares, the TSB will have roughly the same value or even a little more than the Midland bank, and no doubt the Midland bank will be watching the TSB's operations somewhat nervously.

I want to focus on the difference in the shareholding and the fact that it could make a difference to the way in which the TSB operates in the future. It is essential to preserve what should be preserved from the TSB's past. The matter has been discussed with representatives of the TSB management. Those discussions do not leave one unworried, for two reasons. I received the impression that the TSB management regarded a wide shareholding, spread among the large number of individuals, as extremely expensive to operate. The bank would be required to inform each shareholder about its accounts. They would have to be informed of the date of the annual general meeting, the agenda and such matters.

That reaction makes one fear that the TSB is moving somewhat away from its 1979 statement when it said that its future would not be dictated by purely commercial interests. I was sorry to have that response and a lack of commitment to as large and wide a spread of shareholders as possible among depositors and employees. I understand the reasons for that, but nevertheless I was worried at that response.

Although the TSB has offered its depositors priority pink forms, it does not expect there to be a large share takeup from them. It does not see that the majority of its depositors can take up the shares. That is a pity. The TSB should be going all out to encourage shareholdings by its employees and depositors. The new clause will ensure that that happens and that the bank can have a public limited company structure which is rather different from that of other commercial organisations and the banks with which it will compete.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I support the new clause which was so ably moved by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). My party has had a long and honourable record of supporting and seeking to promote measures to encourage workers and participants in industry to own their own jobs.

It will come as no surprise to anyone in the House that the new clause is one which my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Social Democratic party support. In Committee we were represented by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). We find the clause advantageous and we support it.

Judging by the Government's rhetoric, it is odd that they cannot support the new clause rather more readily than appeared to be the case from reading the report of the Committee stage.

On Second Reading, the Minister said:

"I welcome the opportunity that this Bill will provide for spreading share ownership more widely and, in particular, for enabling those who have been involved in the business of the TSB as customers and employees to invest more directly in their future."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 31.]

That is a sentiment with which we would agree.

It seems that the Minister on that occasion was only paraphasing, perhaps restating, the commitment given in the White Paper, of which it may be worth reminding ourselves. It said:

"Customers and staff will have priority in subscribing for shares."

The clause calls for no more than that to be put into effect.

When the Bill was considered in Committee, the Minister said:

"it would be a good idea if depositors and staff were to have a really substantial holding in the TSBs."

Again, the clause asks for no more than that the Minister put into effect the rhetoric of his speech on Second Reading, his speeches in Committee and the statements in the White Paper.

The Minister also said in Committee that fixing a figure to how the Government would put their commitment to wider share ownership into practice would be rather difficult. He then said:

"it is impossible now to mention figures. I have talked figures with the TSB".—[*Official Report*, Standing Committee D, 31 January 1985; c. 91.]

What the Minister did not state was the conclusions that he had reached. Since the Minister said that it was impossible to talk figures when he was discussing these matters with the TSB, it may be possible for him to give us an indication now of the percentage of shares he envisages being offered to the employees and to the contributors of the TSB. If he were able to mention some figure—no doubt less than 55 per cent., but at least an indication of how far the Government wish to make a commitment to honour their own rhetoric — many Opposition Members would doubtless feel satisfied without pressing the clause.

I ask the Minister to clarify his statement that he did not see it as appropriate to offer figures then, although he implied that at some time in the future he would be able to say how far he was able to commit himself. However, if the Minister cannot do that, I think that we are entitled to believe that what the Government are expressing in terms of wider share ownership and all the great ideas that we now hear them articulate are hollow rhetoric. Rhetoric comes cheap. It is by the actions of the Government in the matter that we will determine their true intentions.

As the hon. Member for Thurrock said, there can be no clearer case for a commitment to the concept of wider share ownership than the TSB. No cause was ever more suitable for the Government to show their sincerity than in respect to the TSB, an organisation founded on the concept of mutuality, which is at the heart of the organisation, and one which has involved itself in group and community activity in a unique way—to use the Minister's words:

"a unique organisation in today's world."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1985; Vol. 73, c. 36.]

Under the proposed clause, the Minister has the opportunity to preserve and build on that uniqueness and to give the work force, the contributors and those involved with the TSB a chance to begin to own the estate in the future of the TSB.

The Government claim that they want to see wider share ownership. If they reject the clause, hon. Members will suspect that they are giving not wider share ownership to employees and those involved with the TSB, but a wider opportunity for the established banks to own a chunk of the TSB and to do with that chunk what they will.

What has the Minister to lose by accepting the clause? It is drafted in a reserved fashion. It does not require that members of the work force of the TSB or, indeed, contributors of the TSB should own 55 per cent.; it asks only that they be offered 55 per cent.

If the Minister means what he has said consistently throughout the debates on the Bill, he should accept the new clause. If not, will he allay some of our suspicions by

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

at least indicating what proportion he means to allow to be offered to the work force and contributors of the TSB? In the absence of such an assurance, many of us will believe that the Government's rhetoric on the matter is hollow and that they have no intention of putting their assurances into practice in a realistic fashion.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I, too, support the new clause, which is a modest proposal. It merely suggests that on vesting day employees and holders of deposits in the TSB should be offered 55 per cent. In view of what the Government have said about the notion of wider share ownership—about the so-called property and share-owning democracy that they want to see—it would make sense for them to accept the new clause.

The TSB has been an unusual banking institution. Historically, it provided merely a mechanism by which people could save. They deposited money on which interest accrued, but the organisation did not make a profit and did not have shareholders. It existed solely for the activities of those who held accounts with the TSB.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) pointed out, many of the 6 million account holders are in the lower income groups. Those are the people the bank has aimed to serve. I fear, therefore, that something important could be lost in the shift away from the traditional mutual type of organisation to the new plc arrangement.

The TSB has changed considerably, away from its previous personal form of banking and into the new range of services about which we have heard so much since the mid-1970s. The banks have moved into cheque accounts and Trustcards, thus putting themselves into high interest lending and connections with UDT, an organisation for financing consumer spending. The whole range of banking is broadening.

I do not know what will happen when flotation takes place and the bank receives the money from that flotation, perhaps £500 million to £600 million. What it does with it will be within the prerogative of the new management. For those who have been account holders, and the employees who have served the TSB ably in the past, it seems not unreasonable to give them the opportunity to buy shares in the bank.

I should like to see the organisation, because of its mutual roots, providing the basis for a democratic form of management. In particular, I should like to see the employees having a say in the types of service that the new plc group will provide, especially in relation to the way in which it will fit in with the current joint stock banks.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made an interesting point about the possibility of mergers. I cannot see where this will go. Will the TSB become part of the joint stock banks, or will it be absorbed? We know that in the 1960s——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Trustee Savings Banks Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Randall: A matter of great concern is how the new TSB will fit into the banking system. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne expressed his concern about a merger, and the Midland bank was keen on developing what it called the cloth cap accounts. It pushed this hard in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and is still interested in that. Similarly, it encourages student accounts, although these are not the cloth caps accounts. These are people whom they hope and expect will have substantial deposits in the future. We do not know what will happen. We do not know whether this ready-made organisation of cloth cap accounts could be sensibly absorbed into the joint stock bank arrangement, particularly bearing in mind the investment that the joint stock banks have made in their technology, networks, terminal systems, data bases and all the other stuff that is needed to provide a payments and other financial systems.

There is a big question mark, and because of the traditional background of the TSB, to which other hon. Members have referred, the people who are employed in the banks should have a say in how the organisation should develop. The only mechanism for this is through the holding of deposits. I am still a little suspicious about the possibility of a merger. I am concerned that the big institutions will come in and buy up substantial shares. There is a tremendous risk, and I know that hon. Members share my concern. Many hon. Members, particularly Labour Members, would be concerned if the Minister were to waste this opportunity to provide a broader share of ownership and decision-making in the TSB group.

The Labour party believes that the original idea that we had at the time when the Page report was produced, of a banking system that exists merely to serve people, is a laudable concept. We know that the clearing banks found it difficult to compete with the TSB group because it did not have to make a profit and did not have any shareholders. The TSB arrangement has valuable attributes and it would be sad to see them go.

I hope that the Minister and the Government will support this new clause, because the opportunity of retaining this important structure, serving the people that it does, could be lost for ever unless we provide a mechanism for sharing the management and the ownership of this group between the employees and the account holders.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I am in favour of new clause 1 because half a loaf is better than nothing. On Second Reading I took strong objection to the whole Bill. I do not believe in making long speeches at funerals and effectively we are burying the TSB and interring the prospects of transforming it into a mutuality.

Reference has been made to the significance of the 55 per cent. initial controlling interest for depositors and staff of the TSBs. It is important to have that provision, to prevent a merger or a takeover by a domestic or a foreign bank of the trustee savings movement. It will be difficult to prevent the TSB from becoming A N other bank. Although new clause 1 aims to preserve distinctiveness in the operation of the bank, its objective is by its nature limited.

It would be useful to know the probable apportionment of the 55 per cent. shareholding among the top management and the remaining staff of the bank and depositors generally. As my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) pointed out, the view of the top

brass in the TSB was that it would be too much bother to deal with 7 million or 8 million depositors. This makes me wonder how other organisations and, indeed, the country are run when we consider how large the population is.

It is the view of the Government that, so far as possible, this should be a property-owning democracy and now, apparently, a bank-owning democracy too. I hope the Minister will accept the new clause; otherwise there is a danger that the shareholding possibility that is opening up as an Aladdin's cave will end up as an exclusive club for a few shareholders. I hope the Minister will tell us that he was correct all along in his interpretation that the Government were taking essentially a neutral stance. Those may not be quite his words, but I think they were the sentiments of the Treasury. The Government were distancing themselves from, dare I say, the mechinations of the powers that be in the TSBs. It was the TSB that wanted the Bill. The Government were merely the willing handmaiden in the whole process.

I hope the Minister will tell us that he is accepting the new clause because, as I said, half a loaf will at least guarantee an element—hopefully a controlling element —of depositor and employee shareholding interest in the new PLC. That is very important. I hope the Minister will put his commitment where his brief at Second Reading lay.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The new clause is fulfilling for the Government the intention that they said that they had in this legislation of trying to turn the Trustee Savings Bank if not into a mutual bank, which the Oppostion would like, at least into something as near a mutual bank as possible within the scope of the legislation. We are taking that intention and attempting to embody it in the legislation.

It was the intention of the Page report that the TSB should be a third force in British banking. It was the assumption that prevailed throughout the 1970s, the assumption that was dominant in the TSB itself and the assumption embodied in Labour's own legislation in 1976 that the TSB should be a mutual bank. The Government have decided that we cannot fulfil that intention with the totality that we would like, but that we can come somewhere near it, and this new clause reserving 55 per cent. of the shares for the customers and employees of the TSB, comes as near as we think we can get.

It is important to come that near, because the TSB was different, is different and should be different from the other high street banks. It is a bank run in mutual fashion, the profits of whose operation go to those who provide them—the customers. This is as near as we can get to that. It is a novel principle. It is an important principle to maintain, because the TSB has been much more like a people's bank than any other bank. It is part of the community, and that is how our amendment tries to keep it.

I also speak not only out of concern for that principle but on the basis of another very basic human emotion. I am motivated by the purest altruism and concern for my fellow man. That motive is pure, simple and unadulterated hatred of the commercial banks. They provide us at our expense with their marble halls and their sanctimonious lectures from bank managers to customers burdened by a crippling rate of interest that the banks choose to impose. They spend enormous sums to put self-congratulatory advertisements on television telling us what a marvellous job they are doing, whether the advertisements come from inside the cupboard or from the soaring spaces that the NatWest chooses to embody in its commercials. They go in for endless public relations to tell us what a marvellous job they are doing. They support Tory Members of Parliament as consultants. They provide endless sermons for customers. All these are paid for by the crippling interest rates that customers are having to carry.

The banks have been the only beneficiaries of this Government's policy of high interest rates. They have encouraged those rates to go ever higher for their own benefit and enrichment and not that of their customers. Every time there has been a threat or even a minor stirring on the exchanges against the pound sterling, there has been a Gadarene rush of banks, usually led by Barclays, to hike up interest rates and impose even more crippling burdens on their customers.

Since 1979, there have been four occasions when the banks have brought about high interest rates subsequently endorsed by the authorities, so one assumes that the banks are acting with some nod or wink from the authorities in response to exchange rate pressures. The first was in autumn 1981, the second in autumn 1982, the third in July of last year and the fourth this January. On each occasion, the use of interest rates by the banks prompted the dominant impression that they were being used not simply to convey concern about the state of the money supply or of the interest market but to shore up the pound sterling, and to do so for their own benefit.

The only beneficiaries of high interest rates are the banks themselves. They determine the high interest rates from which they are the only substantial beneficiaries. That is the approach, in a market economy, of the high street banks. There was a classic example on 7 January, when the December money supply figures were announced. The authorities were clearly relieved that sterling M3 had fallen by 0·5 per cent., bringing the annual growth rate down to the top end of the target. There was no reason for interest rates to rise. However, the clearing banks took the initiative once again and there was a Gadarene rush to raise interest rates.

That is the approach of the high street banks to our economy and the people who pay for it are their customers. The banks act directly against the interests of the nation, of anyone with an overdraft and of anyone who borrows. That is what their concern for the community amounts to. It is important that the TSB should not become just another of that crew of condottieri who are doing well out of high interest rates at the expense of their own customers.

10.15 pm

Furthermore, without the safeguards embodied in new clause 1, the TSB, as a high street bank, would be a prey to inevitable takeover bids. There are now four high street banks. The TSB would be a fifth. The competition is so intense that the TSB would be bound to be sat on or taken over. There would be bound to be some onslaught on its integrity and independence.

The TSB is in acute danger or becoming just another high street bank, pushing up interest rates and ruining British industry. The banks are notorious for their lack of concern for the basic productive capacity of this country. They lend umbrellas to people when the sun is shining —driving up the inflationary pressures by enormously increasing borrowing capacity—and then screw up the economy by taking the umbrellas back as soon as it begins

8 pm

Mr. Hughes: Is is more than £30. That means that I and other London ratepayers and residents are paying more than £30.

Mr. Cohen: It is £37.

Mr. Hughes: The computations are being ever bettered around me. The further east we go the more accurate the accounting becomes. The amount has gone up to £37 per Londoner.

I should have liked to have time, without doing six other things simultaneously, to read all of last night's debate. I am not the transport spokesman for my party, but this is a London matter, and I should have liked to be able to consider amendments. Normally I would table amendments to Bills that relate to London. We know that it has been impossible to table amendments because we were sitting in Committee upstairs until midnight and then had to participate in a debate on fluoride, which continued until about 2.30 am.

The hon. Members for Wigan (Mr. Stott) and for Crewe and Nantwich said that it would be useful to talk about what will happen. It would be useful to check with officials whether or not the sums are correct. All political parties have their own advisers and are given the good offices of independent officials in the GLC, local councils and transport authorities to check figures. Accountants are also available to give plenty of advice if we ask for it. We have not been given a moment to ask for advice.

I shall not go on at great length, although I recall that last year when I was on a Committee I was able to speak, without any trouble, for 80 minutes. I am well minded to continue, because I am sufficiently angry about this matter. I have rarely been as angry in my time in the House, and I shall have been here two years this week. I am angry because I have seen what the Government are doing to justify this clause and this money.

The Government Front Bench have given muddled arguments with different figures. The Government want to rush through all the stages in the same day with no opportunity for proper consideration. This is all to do with the nationalisation of a public service by a Government who do not believe in nationalisation. It is all to do with handing over powers from local authorities to the present incumbent in the Department of Transport, who should never have had the powers in the first place.

As a member of the legislature my primary job is to control the Executive. My second role is as a member of a political party. The arguments I have been given do not begin to persuade me that this is the right sum. What do I do? I have one option—to vote against the clause. That option will be exercised when other hon. Members vote against the clause. I must register my grave dissatisfaction in being asked to vote for this financial measure, which is what Governments are all about, without the assistance or safeguards which we would normally have when financial measures come before the House. Taxation measures go through a special procedure with special examination in Committee upstairs. We normally have an ample opportunity to consider any measure of financial relevance, but for this measure we have been given no opportunities at all.

An amount of £250 million-odd is asked for as the last stage of the saga. As we have often been reminded, the Secretary of State got it completely wrong the first time around. I have no reason to believe that this figure is any more accurate than the first figure. Unless and until the Government's procedures improve to show that they believe that their duty is to prove the case, there is no option but for Committee members to do all that is left in their power—I wish that they could do more—and make it thoroughly difficult for the Government to get such business through the Committee, and later through the House.

There are only a limited number of options available to delay the Bill. If it were in the Committee's power, I would not be at all reluctant to delay well beyond 25 March, because that is the reward that the Secretary of State deserves for the appalling way in which he and his colleagues have treated the House of Commons in this small, but significant, piece of legislation, which has already, for no reasoned argument, broken two principles.

Mr. Ridley: I believe that the Committee would like me to reply briefly to the points that have been made. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has seen a misprint in *Hansard*. The figure of £285 million should be £258 million.

Mr. Dobson: Ha, ha.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman laughs, but I may have something to say about him later. I do not think that the Committee would hold me responsible for a printer's error.

This may be a rushed job, but the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey and for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) have misunderstood the position. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey got himself into a lather of bogus information and used the rest of his speech to mouth adjectives which he thought might hurt. I must include in that charge the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

I must make clear the errors of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. In the passage to which the hon. Gentleman referred I was talking about the balance at the end of the existing financial year, 1984-85. I was answering points put by hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Newham——

Mr. Spearing: Which one?

Mr. Ridley: Both, the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). I was referring to the surplus of cash and whether that sum was roughly equivalent to the accrued liabilities. I was doing so to justify my pledge that LRT's needs would be met—no more, no less. I cited figures showing that, roughly speaking, within the margins of error, that had been achieved. The hon. Gentleman mixed that up with LRT's total cash needs for the year and the amount in the Bill that should be taken from the GLC to fulfil the objective of financing LRT for the year.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey failed to understand that because of all the other things that he says he is doing. Why does he not do the other things and stop getting mixed up in matters that he does not understand? Having made his mistake, the hon. Gentleman started to abuse me. It is easy to do that, but he would have been right if he had leased his argument on the correct figures.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar made a similar mistake. He said that the legislation was retroactive and

proceeded to castigate the Government for bringing in retroactive legislation. The hon. Gentleman failed to prove his point. The legislation is not retroactive. The GLC knew, when the London Regional Transport Bill was published in December 1983, that its exposure under section 49 was £360 million in toto for the year. That figure, less the amount that the GLC had already paid, was put into the direction made in June. Until that moment, the GLC had no doubt that that was the amount it would have to pay.

The judgment went against the Government and in favour of the GLC. That same morning I said that I intended to appeal. At no time did the GLC have any doubt that it could be liable for the full £360 million. In the event, it is asked to pay £23 million less than it was always on notice it would have to pay. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar must withdraw the charge of retroactivity, because there is nothing about that series of events that is retroactive. If he does so, as he must, he must withdraw the adjectives.

Mr. Mikardo: I thought that I had made myself clear. The element of retroactivity arises from the fact that the Minister got it wrong the first time and is introducing this nasty little Bill to correct his error.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has not heard the precedents that I cited either. It is better to read previous debates. He will know the two precedents that I cited. They are cases where local authorities, one of which was the GLC, were busily paying concessionary fares, were taken to court and were found not to have the powers to pay them. Immediately the House legislated and overturned the illegality. There is no difference between those precedents and what I have done.

There are two reasons for urgency. First, London Regional Transport will be running out of money soon, will go into deficit and will have to pay interest on borrowings. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich picked up that reason. The second reason is an important one, which she conveniently ignored. The GLC needs to know what will be in the Bill in order to make its rate. It is typical of the hon. Lady to pick up one argument and ignore the other. Obviously, the two arguments go together, and are strong reasons why the Government wish to make progress with the Bill. Although we have had the debate about the day on which this matter is being taken, I wanted to put her right on that.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Has the right hon. Gentleman at any point said to the GLC in reply to its queries that it does not matter what happens with the Bill and that it can proceed on the figures because it should assume that the Bill will become law? Or has he given the GLC to understand, during the many months of argument, that it will have to make its calculations without any clear indication of the sums of money involved? I believe that there is considerable doubt whether he has made the position as clear as he suggests.

Mr. Ridley: The position is now totally clear——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Now.

8.15 pm

Mr. Ridley: Now. The sum of money is on the face of the Bill. I made it clear earlier that the £177 million deposited will be taken into account. If the House gives the Bill its Third Reading tonight, there will be no way in which the Bill can be amended, especially in relation to the sum or, indeed, to anything else. At the close of play tonight there will be certainty for the GLC. It will know what sum to work on for its budgetary purposes.

The hon. Lady had made a meal of these debates and heaped adjectives upon me, which I have taken in good part. I must tell her that she even made a slip tonight when she referred to the measure as a two-clause Bill. It is a one-clause Bill. If she cannot get even that right, it does not say much for her competence.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It is a two-clause Bill.

Mr. Ridley: It is a one-clause Bill.

Mr. Stott: On the Bill it says clause 1 and clause 2.

Mrs. Dunwoody: There are two clauses.

Mr. Ridley: It is a one-clause Bill in so far as what matters and the hon. Lady knows it. The hon. Lady has conducted her opposition with all the venom that she can muster, but she knows in her heart of hearts that this is the only possible way to redress the interests of the ratepayers versus the GLC. However much she may have enjoyed opposing the Bill, the ratepayers and travellers of London will not thank her for all the efforts that she has made.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 221, Noes 157.

Division No. 117] **[8.15 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

to rain. We do not want the TSB to become another such bank. We want it to continue to be run in the interests of its own customers.

The banks take the people's credit and use it for the profit of the plutocrats who own them. That profit should be used, for the people who helped create it by using the bank's credit and providing it with the opportunity to extend that credit. Only if the profit returns to the customers of the bank is the principle legitimately fulfilled. We cannot keep the TSB mutual—that pass was sold by the Government, though it should have been defended—but we want to keep it as mutual as it can be within the framework of the legislation.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Accepting new clause 1 is the only way of safeguarding the future of the TSB. I reluctantly accept that the Bill is likely to be given its Third Reading later tonight. I shall certainly vote against it, but one must face facts. Because of the majority on the Government's side, the Bill is likely to be passed.

That being so, we can only protect the future of the TSB and respect its history and traditions by ensuring that, at least in the initial stages, the staff and account holders have a majority shareholding.

The Government tell us that it is really the TSB—not the Government—that wants the Bill. Whom, at the TSB, have the Government consulted? Have the staff, down to the cashier at the local branch, been given an opportunity to express their views? Have customers been consulted? I am fairly certain that the answer to both of those questions is no, as I have seen nothing to that effect in branches in my constituency.

I worked in a bank for the first 10 years of my working life and I know something about joint stock banks. There were the big five in the 1950s and the mergers of the 1960s. I have no doubt that, if the Bill goes through and there are no safeguards to protect the TSB, it will soon be taken over. If the staff have been consulted and said that they support the Bill, my comment must be that they have not looked to their future job security. If there is a merger or a takeover, whatever the assurances, there will be branch closures and changes. In many parts of the country there are too many building societies fighting for customers in the high street, and the same is true for banks. With increasing mechanisation and changes, there will be closures.

When the Burnley building society was taken over by the Provincial building society to become the National and Provincial, assurances were given about job security for at least two years. The merger is not two years old and yet there are rumours this week that 300 jobs are to go in the Burnley area because dual head offices are no longer to be kept. I have no doubt that the same will happen with the TSB. The only way in which to protect its identity, to respect that identity and to respect local traditions is to allow staff and customers to have a majority shareholding. That will ensure that the TSB remains the TSB and does not become just another clearing bank.

10.22 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I welcome the opportunity for this debate. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) referred to what I said on Second Reading. He noted, and others have accepted, that I expressed myself then, as I did in Committee, as being favourable to the idea that customers and staff of the TSBs should have the greatest practical possibility of becoming shareholders in the new public limited company. I still hold that view.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) spoke of the history and traditions of the TSBs, which she respects, and which the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has just endorsed. All of us who have been involved with the Bill feel strongly about that. She drew attention to the long tradition of TSBs attending to the needs of personal customers. I am not sure that the joint stock banks should be regarded as such financial ogres as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) painted them to be.

I am sure that the manner of business of TSBs is appreciated by those who have used them. They are valued and respected in the financial community as having a special place because they have a wide spread of depositors among many groups who might otherwise not have bank accounts.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby said that the trustee savings banks were and should be different from other high street banks. I hope that they will retain a great deal of their individuality. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) said that the trustee savings banks serve the people. I am sure that that is one of the reasons why they have been so successful. The changes that the Bill will bring about will increase, not hinder that development. A few years ago the trustee savings banks found it difficult to maintain their customer base. They were unable to offer the kind of facilities that were provided by other high street banks, but they have been successful in providing for their customers the facilities that they need. The proposals contained in the Bill should enable the trustee savings banks to improve the facilities that they offer to their customers. I accept that employees and depositors should be encouraged to hold a substantial part of the share capital when the new TSB group becomes a public limited company.

I draw the attention of hon. Members to paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 13 of Sir John Read's letter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer which is included as an annexe to the White Paper. In his letter of 6 December Sir John Read emphasises that the issue of shares to the public would be made

"in a manner which will achieve wide ownership of the new TSB group among our customers and staff."

He goes on to say:

"We are firmly set on the principle of wide ownership of our shares, with priority for our customers and staff."

The question is whether it would be right to put into statutory form the specific figure of 55 per cent. Although I am in sympathy with the spirit of the new clause, I do not believe that it would be in the interests of the trustee savings banks or of a successful flotation for that figure to be spelled out.

Mr. Craigen: If the Minister is turning down the inclusion of the 55 per cent. provision in the Bill, why was Sir John Read's letter so convincing? It would be far better if Sir John Read's proposal were enshrined in the Bill rather than that one should have to interpret a letter from the chairman of the Central Board of the Trustee Savings Bank.

Mr. Stewart: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. It is one that not only he but other hon. Members have raised

and I shall try to answer it. The hon. Member for Yeovil said that if I did not think that 55 per cent. was right I ought to suggest another figure. The hon. Member suggested that a figure ought to be included in the Bill as evidence of the Government's commitment to that principle.

I have considered the matter most carefully. The question falls into two parts. First, is it right that the Government should specify details relating to the issue of shares? I have come to the conclusion that it would not be right for the Government to do so. One of the reasons for that conclusion is the nature of the provisions that would have to be made. I accept what Sir John Read said in the letter. I take those assurances at face value. It is a subject which I have discussed with him at considerable length. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Thurrock received a worrying impression. It certainly is not the impression that I have received from discussions with the TSBs. It is for that reason that I said that I particularly welcome this debate.

10.30 pm

We had a lively debate in Committee on the same point. I said at the time that I thought that it was helpful that it should be on the record that there was a strong wish by those who were dealing with the Bill in Parliament that Sir John Read's expressed intentions should be carried into effect by means of the share issue. I endorse that today in the wider forum of the Floor of the House of Commons.

When we consider the provision that 55 per cent. of the shares of the group should be offered to employees and depositors in TSBs we come up against exactly the sort of problem which has convinced me that it would not be right for the Government to try to set out the precise details of the proposed issue.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I shall give way, but would it not be better if I were to continue the argument?

Mr. Ashdown: I want to intervene on that particular point. The hon. Gentleman has said that he does not think it right for the Government to give figures. In Committee he said:

"Although it is impossible now to mention figures". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 31 January 1985; c. 91.]

Is there not an implication there that it would be possible some day to mention figures? If he cannot honour that commitment at this point, will he tell us when he will mention figures?

Mr. Stewart: No, the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood what I said in Committee. He assumes that when I said that it was not possible a few weeks ago to state a precise figure that I might be able to do so today. The point that I made in that debate in Committee, which I readily repeat now, is that it is not possible in advance of the circumstances of the issue to establish the exact arithmetic.

Perhaps I was unwise to give way because I was about to come to the reasons why it is difficult and would not be helpful to insert a precise figure. Before I come to those points let me make a further general remark which may help the hon. Gentleman. I think that I quoted half and half in Committee as being the sort of figure that I would like to see. I shall not quibble whether it is 45, 50 or 55—something of that kind. I should like to see a substantial proportion of the shares of the issue being so allocated. I have given the range of the sort of figures that would be acceptable. But it is not right to pick on a single figure here and now regardless of the circumstances of the market, the demand for this type of share and the amount that depositors and staff will be able to provide at the time in the light of those conditions to apply for shares. If one tried to introduce a provision of the kind set out in new clause 1 the terms of the issue would be made so rigid that they could hardly be carried out.

I shall not fall back on the well-tried method of Treasury Ministers in turning down an amendment or new clause on the grounds of drafting. That would not be in the spirit of the Bill and the way in which we have discussed it. But sometimes drafting questions contain the essence of the difficulty. In this case the essence of the difficulty is contained in the fact that the way in which shares will be offered will not be that a precise number of shares will be available, neither more nor less, for depositors and staff, but that priority in application will be given to employees and staff for a certain proportion of the shareholding. The amount allocated to them will depend on the amount for which they apply and on the amount for which other potential shareholders apply.

It is possible—indeed, I should like to see this—that if a certain percentage were allocated for depositors and staff, they might also get some of the remainder. It is because we cannot determine the circumstances of the issue that I concluded that it would be wrong for the Government to set out precise conditions for the issue.

Some Opposition Members may not be convinced that that is an obstacle to accepting the new clause. The issue was raised in Committee and I have thought about it carefully. It would undoubtedly limit the freedom of action of the TSBs if a specific formula were included in the Bill. I am keen that a substantial percentage of the shareholding should go to depositors and staff, and I hope that the TSBs will encourage that. They have undertaken to grant priority and we expect that undertaking to be fulfilled.

However, to say that a certain percentage of shares—neither more nor less—shall be allocated to depositors and staff, regardless of how many they wish to apply for and regardless of how many other potential shareholders wish to apply for would make it more difficult, rather than easier, to achieve the objectives that I believe are shared on both sides of the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 82, Noes 183.

Division No. 119] **[10.37 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Ashdown, Paddy	Cohen, Harry
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Barnett, Guy	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Barron, Kevin	Cowans, Harry
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Craigen, J. M.
Beith, A. J.	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Blair, Anthony	Deakins, Eric
Boyes, Roland	Dewar, Donald
Bruce, Malcolm	Dormand, Jack
Buchan, Norman	Dubs, Alfred
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Duffy, A. E. P.
Canavan, Dennis	Eastham, Ken
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Clarke, Thomas	Fatchett, Derek
Clay, Robert	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*

Fisher, Mark
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Austin Mitchell.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cranborne, Viscount
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 2

SHARE OWNERSHIP

'During the first five years following the vesting day no one individual may own more than five per cent. of the Group's ordinary shares nor after a five year period has elapsed may any one individual own more than 15 per cent. of these shares.'. —*[Dr. McDonald.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. McDonald: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Hon. Members who have studied the Bill and the White Paper will be aware that new clause 2 is part of the letter which the chairman of the Trustee Savings bank wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In it he made it clear that when the TSB had been set up in its new form the draft memorandum of association would contain these provisions. We have transferred them to the new clause in an effort to include them in the Bill.

There are two reasons for that. One of them, the future of the TSB, has been discussed at great length in the press. Views were expressed as far back as last July. In a typical example, the *Glasgow Herald* stated:

"Quite how the TSB empire with total assets above £9·5 billion and owners of United Dominion Trust, TSB Trustcard and TSB Trust Company (insurance services and unit trusts) can be guaranteed against a future takeover bid, is unclear. If first-time buyers should prove amenable to a buy-out, then what kind of ring-fence would the Government erect to stop them?"

That quotation illustrates that the Government should erect some kind of ring fence against a possible takeover. No ring fence against a takeover is contained in the Bill.

The Government have accepted the assurances about the nature of the draft memorandum which were contained in the letter from the TSB chairman. The Opposition's disquiet about that arises from the fact that, although we accept that it may be difficult to change the draft articles of association, it is not impossible to do so. Although that seems to be a long-term guarantee against a takeover, it is not as secure as at first appears. My first point therefore is that we need to include the ring fence in the Bill rather than depend upon the assurances in the chairman's letter.

My second point relates to the speculation about a takeover. In the earlier part of last year it seemed that the TSB would be ripe for a takeover. Its attractions were spelt out, for example, in the *Glasgow Herald* article. The TSB has wide outlets and a large number of personal customers, which could prove attractive to an American bank trying to find a secure foothold in British personal banking. Many people felt that the TSB was in danger of being taken over.

I find it interesting to note that towards the end of the year, when it was fully appreciated how much the share flotation was likely to raise—between £700 million and £1 billion is most consistently quoted—it was felt, as the *Daily Telegraph* put it:

"that the TSB will suddenly have a lot of money to spend, and may go on a City shopping spree to pick up, say, a fund management company and a stockbroker to go with existing banking, trustee and insurance business."

The speculation changed towards the end of last year when it became apparent that the TSB would have spare cash and might consider taking over another company. That would not be excluded by new clause 2.

To sum up, the reasons for introducing the new clause are to provide a secure ring fence against a takeover and to ensure that the history and traditions of the bank, which have been firmly rooted in this country, continue. It has been a domestic bank. That is especially true of the bank as it exists in Scotland, where 45 per cent. of bank outlets are controlled by the TSB. The bank has involved itself with the local community and we would not wish to see it taken over by one of this country's major financial institutions or by an American bank, which would use it solely to gain a foothold in this country's banking sector. Whereas the Minister is prepared to accept assurances, for which we respect him, of course, we prefer to include them in the Bill because we feel that this will ensure a more secure future for and be better way of preserving the history and traditions of, the TSB.

Mr. Craigen: I wish briefly to support my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). It is always pleasant to hear one's own words of wisdom quoted, and the article in the *Glasgow Herald* happens to have been written by me.

The flotation of the TSB is one of the give-aways of the decade. It is essential for the Committee to approve the proposed clause in order to avoid the TSB being parcelled out to the various institutional interests that want to buy the shares.

I have heard reference to cloth caps in connection with the TSB. I personally have never worn a cloth cap or, indeed, a bowler hat. I am simply a bare-headed Scot.

It is important for the Committee to recognise the community of interest that has developed in the TSB and to ensure by acceptance of the clause that there is a safeguard for the development of greater customer satisfaction, at the same time avoiding the potential dangers of a takeover.

I want to see this provision enshrined in the Bill. I am not taken in by letters from chairmen and the optimism of the management about what is likely to happen with regard to the flotation. I had the impression earlier in the debate that the Treasury had moved from its position of neutrality into one in which it was utterly neutered by the TSB management. I therefore hope that the Minister in reply will accept the principle behind the proposed clause.

Mr. Ashdown: I support the proposed clause and commend hon. Members for their restraint and skill in drafting it. The wording is substantially that contained in the White Paper, as reflected in the letter from Sir John Read. Indeed, it takes its words almost directly from the Minister's mouth. I seem to have the habit of quoting the Minister in Committee, but it is important that he should be invited to honour what he said by the action that he takes in the Bill. On Second Reading, the Minister said: "for the first five years . . . there should be a limit on a shareholding by any one shareholder of 5 per cent. of the capital, and thereafter a limit of 15 per cent."—*[Official Report,* 14 February 1985; Vol. 71, c. 33.]

Thus the Minister agrees in detail with the wording of the proposed clause. In that sense, the clause enacts the Minister's own rhetoric.

Unhappily, the Minister said in Committee and on Second Reading that he considers the matter to be one for the TSB and not for the Government. Indeed, in Committee he said that it did not require legislation. His arguments for supporting that conclusion, judged by my reading of the Committee proceedings, are deeply unconvincing. If the safeguard is so important as to be expressed as a cardinal principle in the White Paper and referred to by the Minister as a matter to which he gives

[Mr. Ashdown]

weight, why not enshrine it in the Bill? What has the Minister to lose by inserting it in the Bill? I hope that he will explain why it can be included in his statements but cannot be enshrined as a safeguard in the Bill.

The Minister has claimed that as a result of the general belief that he has expressed, it would be many years before the TSB might be taken over. I am not sure that I share that view. At 15 per cent., it would require only 11 investors at a modest £50 million or so to reach the point at which they could control the TSB. Indeed, some of them might be the very banks with which the TSB will be in competition. The Minister has said that he wants safeguards against takeovers. Let him prove it by accepting the new clause.

11 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell: We have a paradox in the way in which the world economy is moving. It is that the banks grow fat when the world goes wrong. Because under the Conservatives the world has gone more wrong than ever before, the banks—thanks to the Government's policies of high interest rates and an emphasis on money—have grown fatter than ever before.

The world is full of predatory banks, and that is the phenomenon that the new clause attempts to control by erecting a ring fence round the TSB. Just as our banks are taking over banks in other parts of the world—most notably the Crocker bank in California, which must have been the purchase of the century; how anybody could ever again believe the advice of the Midland on investment policy, given its astuteness in respect of the Crocker bank, is a question we might ask in this context—so foreign banks want to get into Britain.

They want access to a banking world which is at present closely controlled and dominated by the big four. In that situation, the TSB must present an object as desirable as the Prime Minister at Holyrood House on a wet Friday. The TSB is a desirable bank for a takeover because it has a large number of high street outlets, the trust of a large body of customers who are accustomed to a close and satisfactory working relationship, and because the Government are treating it as if it were a piece of lost property being sold at police auction to make a bob or two.

They are sending it out into the world cash rich with all those desirable characteristics. In that situation, it is almost certain that foreign banking organisations which want to get not just a toehold but a major position in the banking world in this country will find it a most desirable object. It would be a disastrous outcome of our deliberations if the loved and trusted TSB, the people's bank, became the Manhattan TSB or the Jihad TSB.

Mr. Craigen: It occurred to me, when my hon. Friend was referring to the Prime Minister at Holyrood, that the right hon. Lady is at present in the United States. Does he foresee a situation in which the flotation of the TSB could be a dollar earner for the economy, given how well the dollar is doing?

Mr. Mitchell: I must not be tempted to go down that path, given how well our competitors, particularly West Germany and Japan, have done with the over-valued dollar and how badly we have done, and we could do with the dollar earnings. I acquit the Prime Minister of the charge that my hon. Friend levies against her, of the desire to flog off British assets, but I do not acquit foreign bankers of an insight into an opportunity such as the TSB group presents, unless protected by provisions such as those in the new clause. I would not want the TSB in Grimsby to be hoisting a sign saying, "The Gaddafi Bank of Grimsby", which is possible without the protection afforded by the new clause.

It is essential that this banking group is kept in a close relationship not only with the customers but with the country. It should be kept free of foreign control and takeover.

Mr. Randall: New clause 2 is an extension of new clause 1, in which we offered preference to employees and account holders to ensure that the small man has a say in the TSB group. New clause 2 proposes an arrangement whereby big institutions would not be able to control the TSB arrangement. It is important to enshrine this in the Bill. I hope that the Minister is able to accept it.

To prevent the big battalions of the City institutions from coming in and doing all that they are bound to do, because the TSB group is an attractive organisation, we must say not only that we shall not allow that at the beginning but must maintain the principle. This is why I support the laudable suggestion of the 50 per cent. figure after five years. The great advantage of ensuring that there are small investors is that it will add to the protection of the TSB plc after the legislation has gone through the House. It will protect it from being taken over by the other domestic banking institutions. Therefore, TSB plc will retain the traditions of the TSB group, which have been valuable to the country and its customers, and therefore should be retained.

Although the TSB group has extended its services, it has not invested in the technology and all the other things that are needed to run a fully comprehensive service. In that respect, as the TSB group has a comprehensive range of branches, it is attractive to all the other institutions. It would plug in nicely to the clearing banks which have invested so much into the payment systems and the large computer networks, into which the TSB group has not invested to the same extent because the extension of its services has taken place more recently. Logically, it would make sense to plug the two groups together, but if that happens, it would have serious effects.

In addition, the international aspect needs to be looked at. If there is a takeover, it will be because of the traditional background of the TSB, and it would be undesirable to allow the TSB plc to fall into foreign hands. It will be an attractive banking organisation for foreign banks to take over. The liquid assets of the bank will be considerable if the flotation is successful. Therefore, the bank would be able to embark on a new programme of extension of services and even acquisition. That would be attractive to the big institutions. I do not mean that in a negative sense. We all want to see our financial institutions being successful because they are a crucial part of our economic, business and commercial system. But let us retain the personal element.

I hope the Government will support the ring fence around the TSBs to which my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) referred. It is a valuable mechanism which would be appreciated by the 6 million customers who have traditionally banked with the TSBs.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The debate has focused on the provisions for maintaining the independence of the TSBs

for the longer term future. During the debate on the last new clause we were talking about the provisions in the Bill as they might affect the TSBs beyond vesting day and the reorganisation which was covered directly by the Bill. I said that I thought it was not right for the Government to lay down specific arrangements for the flotation itself.

New clause 2 would provide a set of rules for the TSBs for the indefinite future. There is perhaps a greater difference between the Government and the Opposition on this new clause. I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), who was supported by the hon. Members for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen), for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) and for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). They thought that absolute protection against any shareholder acquiring more than 15 per cent. of the shares should be set down in a statute for ever. They feel that the TSBs should be kept by statute in a special position, which could be changed only by another trustee savings bank measure.

The Government's purpose in the Bill is to ensure that TSBs can have an independent future and not be dependent, as they have been for so long, upon Parliament whenever changes need to be made in the structure under which they operate. I accept that the aim of the new clause to prevent a shareholding greater than 15 per cent. is more limited than the arrangement stipulated in statute up to now. Nevertheless, it would restrict the actions of the banks in areas apart from those about which Opposition Members have spoken.

Dr. McDonald: The Minister is really saying that he is prepared to accept the assurances given in the White Paper. What does he think——

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying hard to listen to the important points that are being made. I know that it is difficult at this time of the evening, but could hon. Members pay more attention to what is being said?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): If conversations are to take place, I hope they will take place outside the Chamber.

Dr. McDonald: How would the Minister view the takeover of the TSB by another bank or financial institution, particularly a foreign bank?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Lady has asked a question which was raised by herself and other hon. Members in their contributions to the debate on the clause. My view is that the 5 per cent. limitation for five years is desirable because there should be an absolute form of protection for a period after the TSBs acquire PLC status.

11.15 pm

I also think that there ought to be a substantial obstacle to takeovers beyond that time. I do not think that it ought to be an absolute obstacle, as the Opposition suggest. A takeover cannot arise for many years, so we are discussing conditions in the 1990s. After the issue, which perhaps may take place in the early part of next year, there will be the five-year period, taking us into the 1990s. There will then be a requirement for a special resolution with a 75 per cent. majority to change the articles to enable any one shareholder to own more than 15 per cent. of the shares. That is very difficult to surmount.

The fact that it is not impossible is important, otherwise the TSBs will be permanently set apart with a form of protection which will dilute the degree of accountability, and it could limit other activities in which they might want to engage. They might want to link with another body. They might want to have a new holding company holding the TSB roup and some other undertaking. They might wish to have a link with a major shareholder. I shall not speculate on the kind of shareholder that that might be, but I remind the House that a large insurance company recently took a significant minority holding in a British bank. That would be impossible if a 15 per cent. limitation were placed on any shareholding. It might be that, say, a 26 per cent. share holding was thought desirable. That would block any special resolutions and provide an effective means against any unwelcome bidder.

There is a difference of substance between the views of the two sides of the House. The Government do not believe that the TSBs should be held permanently in a special status which does not apply to any of their competitors or to other public limited companies. That is why I ask the House to reject the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 68, Noes 168.

Division No. 120] **[11.17 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	John, Brynmor
Ashdown, Paddy	Kennedy, Charles
Barnett, Guy	Kirkwood, Archy
Barron, Kevin	Leadbitter, Ted
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Beith, A. J.	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Blair, Anthony	Loyden, Edward
Bruce, Malcolm	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Campbell-Savours, Dale	McWilliam, John
Canavan, Dennis	Marek, Dr John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Maxton, John
Clay, Robert	Maynard, Miss Joan
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Meadowcroft, Michael
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	Nellist, David
Cohen, Harry	Park, George
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	Parry, Robert
Cowans, Harry	Pike, Peter
Craigen, J. M.	Prescott, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Randall, Stuart
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Redmond, M.
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Deakins, Eric	Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Dormand, Jack	Skinner, Dennis
Duffy, A. E. P.	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Eastham, Ken	Snape, Peter
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Fatchett, Derek	Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Fisher, Mark	Wareing, Robert
Godman, Dr Norman	Welsh, Michael
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*	Wilson, Gordon
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy	
Haynes, Frank	Tellers for the Ayes:
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Mr. Allen McKay and
Home Robertson, John	Mr. Austin Mitchell.

NOES

Alexander, Richard	Burt, Alistair
Baldry, Tony	Butcher, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Chope, Christopher
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Cockeram, Eric
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Conway, Derek
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Cranborne, Viscount
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Dorrell, Stephen
Bruinvels, Peter	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Budgen, Nick	Dunn, Robert

Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Major and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

PRELIMINARY

11.30 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 9 after 'banks', insert '(other than Trustee Savings Bank Scotland Limited which is hereby excluded from this Act)'.

The effect of the amendment is to exclude Trustee Savings Bank Scotland Limited from the Bill. It will retain Trustee Savings Bank Scotland as a trustee savings bank, but the prime effect of the change will be to secure the independence of Trustee Savings Bank Scotland. The amendment seeks to do what a Scottish Government would have done: to veto any attempt whatsoever to take this very important banking enterprise out of Scotland and subject it to alien control.

Although the Treasury Bench cannot, for once, be criticised quite so strongly as I would normally criticise it, it should accept that there is a valid reason why in this instance it should not seek to follow the advice given to it by the Trustee Savings Bank group. Trustee Savings Bank Scotland — so far an independent banking enterprise that operates within the confederation of the TSB group—will be incorporated in the TSB Group plc. The shareholding of the TSB Group plc will be a United Kingdom shareholding and the Scottish element of control over Trustee Savings Bank Scotland will be eradicated.

The Government ought to consider the importance of Trustee Savings Bank Scotland within the Scottish financial structure. It is unnecessary for Trustee Savings Bank Scotland to be made into a limited liability company. Within Scotland's financial network there are mutual companies like Scottish Widows and Standard Life which operate very effectively as mutual combines and which are respected not just in Scotland but elsewhere. If the Government decide that the banking structure would be improved by making trustee savings banks individually as well as a whole into public limited liability companies, Trustee Savings Bank Scotland ought, by this amendment, to be allowed to retain its independence.

If doubt is cast upon the ability of the bank to stand on its own feet, let me spell out some of the information about it. Trustee Savings Bank Scotland operates about 2 million separate accounts; it has 1·25 million customers; it has 25 per cent. penetration of the personal savings market in the banking fraternity; and, unlike the other trustee savings banks in the British Isles, it has a larger proportion of AB social classifications than most. Therefore, it cannot be classified, as the TSB group might be in the English context, as a poor man's bank. It is a very big bank. As the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) said, it holds a substantial proportion of the banking premises in Scotland.

Moreover, nobody can doubt that, since the amalgamations, Trustee Savings Bank Scotland has been under very good and effective management. It has a good reputation. It has responded to new technology in banking. It has expanded its customer clientele and it has also been very productive. For example, on the overall working profit divided among the employees of the group, the Clydesdale bank, which is a fully owned subsidiary of the Midland bank and has no independence whatsoever within the Scottish banking context, produces a profit of only

£2,600 per employee, whereas the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland alternate between £6,500 and £7,500 profit per employee.

I am told that the most recent figures show that TSB Scotland has a profit of £10,600 per employee, so it is clearly a substantial, efficient and effective bank in the Scottish financial scene. However, it seems to have made no attempt to regain some measure of independence or even quasi-autonomy. The Trustee Savings bank on the Channel Islands, perhaps because of the different taxation regime there, and certainly because of the society in which it will function, will allow 49 per cent of the shares to be taken over by local Channel Islands people. That is a formula that TSB Scotland could have adopted. However, I submit that that would not be adequate, as it would have left overall control with the TSB centre in London.

The TSB could have said that TSB Scotland Ltd., as the representative of the progenitor of the Trustee Savings bank movement in the United Kingdom—it originated in Dumfriesshire when the first bank was opened—and bearing in mind its size and success, could have remained a trustee savings bank to continue the work which it has undertaken over the years. Secondly, it could have operated as an independent unit like the Royal Bank of Scotland or the Bank of Scotland. The Bank of Scotland has been an efficient bank. It was owned partly by Barclays Bank plc until recently. The Standard Life Assurance Co. bought out the 30 per cent. share that Barclays Bank had in the Bank of Scotland, so returning the Bank of Scotland to full Scottish ownership.

The Royal Bank of Scotland is an interesting example. Three or four years ago, a tremendous fuss was kicked up when two foreign banks—the Standard Chartered Bank plc and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation —came in like predators with the aim of acquiring control of the Royal Bank of Scotland. It could be said that at that time the Royal Bank badly needed a kick in the behind, because it had slipped behind in its development. It was not showing the same degree of enterprise as the Bank of Scotland.

One of the effects of the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which prevented the takeover of the Royal Bank of Scotland, was to transform the Royal Bank. It is now showing activity, energy and initiative that it failed to show hitherto. It is my contention that TSB Scotland could have filled a similar slot.

The third option is much more interesting. We have discussed the money that will be made available in the TSB Group as a result of the flotation of the shares. Apparently the flotation will realise something between £500 million and £700 million. If the Scottish bank had been floated separately, it would have had less free capital becoming available because of its size. However, it would have a considerable amount of capital arising from its deposits.

Now that Barclays bank has moved out of the Scottish banking scene, there is nothing to stop the TSB from entering into a merger or other arrangement with the Clydesdale bank, which has a low profit per employee. It should have been reintegrated into a new banking institution in the Scottish market. That is a great opportunity missed, and it will remain missed if the Government do not accept the amendment. I have no doubt that the Midland bank, which controls the Clydesdale bank, is somewhat stretched for cash because of the Crocker bank fiasco. It would do no harm if the Midland bank were to dispose of the Clydesdale bank, especially when we consider its overall activities in the rest of the United Kingdom. Those three options could still be available to TSB Scotland if the Minister were to accept my amendment.

I notice that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), is present and I am sure that he will appreciate another reason why my amendment is desirable. Hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that it is important to build up the financial sector in Scotland. Unlike the north of England, which used to have an independent financial sector which has been eroded and taken over by the City of London, Scotland still has a large area of financial activity which can be useful from time to time in providing investment locally.

I fear that if TSB Scotland, which already has substantial penetration in Scotland, is taken over under the Bill, which will happen if my amendment is not carried, the funds which are raised in the flotation will not be spent in Scotland through the medium of TSB Scotland, but will be used for the expansion of the TSB group in those areas where it is not strong.

Obviously, one of those areas will be the south-east of England, where the group may want to set up in competition with the other joint stock banks. Another will be taking over finance houses or becoming involved in stockbroking and other such areas. The profits that come from those areas will be available not to TSB Scotland but to the group as a whole. It will be operated from London and the employees of TSB Scotland will not see much benefit from it.

In a strange way, by taking this rather cowardly decision, in copping out and selling out, the trustees of the TSB Scotland have, in a sense, stunted the growth of the company that they themselves have built up. I should not like the House to countenance that at all.

Another factor that must be mentioned is that we are faced with encroaching centralisation in the financial markets. It does the Scottish banking sector no good whatever if a major enterprise such as TSB Scotland is to be taken out of the control of interest within Scotland. It is a weakening of the overall fabric. For the financial strategy of the Scottish Development Agency and the Scottish Industry Department, it would be desirable if TSB Scotland were able to retain its independence and full autonomy.

Another reason why the amendment is vital is that there is no guarantee whatever of the jobs of the headquarters and other staff of TSB Scotland. Pledges have been given before — for instance, in connection with insurance companies which were taken over. After a number of years, insurance companies that had operated in Scotland for many years lost their independence then lost their identity and the jobs that went with the head offices of those companies were obliterated. With the passing generations, the promises and pledges which had been made at the time of takeover were seen to be completely and utterly empty.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): The hon. Gentleman talks of centralisation and the obliteration of jobs. One new independent bank has been formed in this country in the past 100 years and that is Adam and Company in Edinburgh. Several merchant banks have been formed, such as Noble Grossart and it is in

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

Edinburgh. Far from centralisation and anglicisation, those are independent bodies. Why cannot the hon. Gentleman ever give any credit to the country that he pretends to represent?

11.45 pm

Mr. Wilson: I am glad that I have prompted the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) to participate in the debate; he has been absent for most of the evening.

Some small — in United Kingdom terms — banking institutions have been established, and I congratulate those who showed initiative there, but if the hon. and learned Gentleman studies the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the attempted takeover of the Royal Bank of Scotland he will appreciate the pressures facing the financial sector in Scotland. Many of his friends in the Conservative party in Scotland will tell him about their worries. *[Interruption.]* The noise from the Government Back Benches reminds me that some English yobbos are present. I do not expect them to be interested in the banking scene in Scotland. They will not get directorships from it, so they are not interested in it.

We are talking about a major bank which has operated in Scotland, through independent branches, for a considerable time. It has been amalgamated into a successful unit. I have given the figures and spelt out a strategy, which is not mine alone, but is the strategy favoured by the Scottish community, which is worried about the future and sees the opportunity for jobs in the financial sector.

I am worried that, if the Economic Secretary to the Treasury does not accept the amendment, TSB Scotland will disappear from sight. If it loses its identity, jobs at the head office will be lost. We are taking out one of the props of the Scottish economy. The Bill has been reasonably uncontroversial, but it will have a serious impact in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): That was the most parochial and short sighted speech that I have ever heard. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) does not seem to realise, though he touched on it, that the savings movement began in Dumfries. Dr. Henry Duncan, who began it all, set up the savings movement throughout the United Kingdom. His lead in banking and commerce shows today in the great success of the TSB.

It is beyond the comprehension of most people who know anything about banking why the hon. Member for Dundee, East should wish to split up something which has been peculiarly successful. He ought to know that Scotland has led the banking and commerce world over the past few hundred years in innovation and strengthening banking through amalgamations. The amendment is contrary to movements in banking over the past 50 years.

The strength of the banks, achieved through amalgamations, has enabled them to develop banking services, aid for industrial development and commerce and banking practice. The amendment would deny those advantages to the TSBs. That shows how out of touch the hon. Member for Dundee, East is with the direction of banking today.

Mr. Craigen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will strongly oppose the amendment.

Mr. Kirkwood: I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). The savings movement was started in Scotland in the hon. Gentleman's constituency by the Rev. Henry Duncan. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the savings movement in Scotland is light years removed from the sort of commerce and industry that pervades today's banking world. The savings movement in Scotland was unique. It was a working-class institution. People put their bawbees and shillings into bank deposits that were locked away in caskets and were not lent out at high rates of interest in the capital centres of the world. That was the unique flavour of the Trustee Savings bank, and the Bill is destroying that flavour.

The concept of mutuality is destroying the uniqueness, character, acceptability and approachability of these banks in the high streets of Scotland, and the hon. Member for Dumfries knows it. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is a sponsor of the Royal Bank of Scotland Bill. If that does not give his game away, I do not know what does.

Mr. Craigen: I think that the hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension when he says that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) knows it. The hon. Member for Dumfries would not give way when I was about to ask him whether he had read the Bill. The Bill proposes to do away with the existing TSB Scotland. It is proposed to subsume TSB Scotland within this new TSB plc. I can only assume that the man who represents Ruthwell did not read the Bill.

Mr. Kirkwood: Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Dumfries, I believe that that is not an unreasonable inference.

I have had experience of the Trustee Savings bank. I remember going as a schoolboy to my first secondary school in Glasgow—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"]—more than five years ago! Every Friday I used to buy post office stamps with my half crown. When I had saved enough half crown stamps, I took my post office book to the savings bank around the corner. In that way I built up a credit balance. It was only when I went to university and the joint stock banks got hold of my money that I started to run up an overdraft, and I am still doing it.

The Trustee Savings bank is unique, because it is a savings institution. A savings institution is not like a bank; it is supposed to promote savings actively. It is important in rural areas such as that of the hon. Member for Dumfries and mine that savings are promoted, because people are remote from the centres of commerce and the captains of industry who are the hon. Gentleman's friends. They have special needs in the savings market which have not been fulfilled in any other way. It is true, therefore, to say that in the past the Trustee Savings bank has fulfilled a need. I fear for its future. The difference between a savings institution promoting savings and the type of animal that we shall end up with when the Bill is passed is not appreciated by the Government. We shall suffer because of that.

I do not like the Bill. It is one of the worst pieces of legislation that the Government have brought forward. There is a lot of logic in the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). He said that there was no doubt about the quantitative basis

on which the bank is founded. It could stand on its own with any other banking institution. It could also prosper, as it has done.

Cogent arguments can be put about Scotland's peculiar legal system and financial environment. My biggest fear —I know that this point does not apply only to this amendment—is that the concept of mutuality—the basis of the Page report—will go out the window in Scotland, as in other parts of the country.

Many of the present membership and management of the bank in Scotland are deeply worried that the concept of mutuality has been sold short. The Page committee talked about the need for the bank to be run for the benefit of its staff and customers, as opposed to the benefit of outside shareholders, for depositors to elect a board and for the bank to retain its assets. That is the essence of the matter, and the Government have got it severely wrong.

The former right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, now Lord Grimond, suggested, for the first time in my experience, that there was great scope for having local banks that invest in their local communities. In the Borders area and my own constituency, banks such as the TSB would be cheek by jowl with the people in whom they invested. The Government should be moving in that direction, but, instead, they are moving 180 degrees in the opposite direction. That is to be deeply regretted.

My experience in my constituency suggests that the TSB has been providing a unique service in such communities. The need for a bank such as the TSB as it is presently constituted in the Scottish financial services set-up is greater than ever. The Bill is bad. I hope that the hon. Member for Dundee, East will, if necessary, press the amendment to a Division, because if he does I shall be the first to follow him through the Lobby.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I should state my credentials by saying that when the Trustee Savings Bank movement was founded in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir. H. Monro), my family lived in Fife. I took the opportunity recently to return to Scotland with my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) and to visit TSB Scotland. We found, not a declining organisation, in which jobs were being threatened, but an expanding bank, which embodied both some of the best traditions of the TSBs and the particular independent strain in the financial field which Scotland has contributed.

The complaint made by Opposition Members, as the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) in part admitted, should be addressed, not to me, but to those who are responsible in the TSBs for the arrangement made possible by the Bill. The arrangement was not forced on the TSBs by the Government. The TSBs in Scotland amalgamated in 1983 to form TSB Scotland, and it was their wish then to join the other TSB bodies in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. The Bill makes their plans possible.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister accept that just as the Bank of England has the duty of supervising the banks overall in the United Kingdom, so the Treasury, in promoting this legislation, is doing so because it does not run foul of public policy? In other words, if the Government had disagreed with the intention of privatising or changing the status to plc, they would not have produced the legislation, even if the TSB group had requested them to do so? If that is the case, and given the fact that in Scotland there are good public policy reasons why TSB Scotland should be excluded, would the Minister agree to accept the amendment?

Mr. Stewart: It is not a matter of public policy whether TSB Scotland is excluded or separated from the rest of the group. If the amendment were to be accepted, TSB Scotland would be left in an entirely separate form from any other bank. It would be maintained under the old constitutional arrangements.

Having brought TSB Scotland into the group with the other trustee savings banks, there is nothing to stop it continuing its own independence to whatever degree it cares to negotiate and arrange with the central board and management to which it has contributed. Nothing in the Bill will stop TSB Scotland from seeking such a form of separate activity or independence.

12 midnight

Mr. Wilson: If the Minister studies the White Paper he will find that after the date upon which the Bill becomes an Act the TSB Scotland is subsumed into the TSB group. Its board of trustees is extinguished from then on. The local board of TSB Scotland will be appointed by the TSB group centrally. Any vestige of independence there might be virtually disappears from then.

Mr. Stewart: The arrangements were known a long time before the amalgamation took place in 1983. Those plans were put forward in 1982. All the arrangements that have taken place in the past couple of years and the future plans for TSB Scotland have been known and agreed by those involved. If it were otherwise, I am not saying that I would have tried to force a monolithic structure on the TSB. It is not for me to do that.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I understand my hon. Friend's point. The Scottish TSB will continue its tradition within the context of the group, but if he believes in that why did he not seize the opportunity presented by the Bill to allow it to have its own note issue in Scotland? That would have underlined its status within the context of the group.

Mr. Stewart: The Government are not doing that, because they are not extending the right of note issue to any further banks. Those who possess it do so by virtue of a historical right which has not been removed. It has not been the policy of successive Governments for many years to extend the right of note issue.

Mr. Craigen: I am puzzled by the Minister's line of argument. The implication is that we, as Members of Parliament, are wasting our time tonight. We might as well have accepted the TSB's proposals in their entirety, but the purpose of the debate is to scrutinise and amend proposals if need be. That is why we suggest that there should be an autonomous TSB Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: I understand the hon. Gentleman's view, but, as I explained on Second Reading, the Bill is most unusual in that it contains some matters of public policy such as the vesting of assets which cannot be done in a group without ownership and the supervision and tax implications. That can only be done by a Minister on behalf of the Government through Parliament. The Bill also has, in many respects, the characteristics of a private Bill when Parliament is approached for legislation by a banking group which wishes to rearrange its structure.

[Mr. Stewart]

It would not be proper for Ministers to come forward with legislation forcing bodies to reorganise themselves in a way which the Government or Parliament might think right but which those bodies do not wish. We do not have an autocratic system of that kind for bodies in the private sector. It would not be right to apply that to a TSB any more than it would be——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to finish my sentence? It would not be right for us to single out the TSB for that type of treatment.

Mr. Bruce: If the argument is as the Minister states it, why is it that in the last year we have had the Royal Bank of Scotland Bill, the Barclays Bank Bill and the Lloyds Bank (Merger) Bill? Is it not because the Treasury recognises its responsibility in regard to banks and, indeed, if it wished to do so, it would support the amendment?

Mr. Stewart: Those are private bank Bills. I tried to explain, but I think that the hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening, that this is a Government Bill because there are matters of public interest separate from private interests. The public interest matters are not those parts which are the internal interests of the TSBs, and it has never been suggested that they should be. Some Opposition Members wish that that was the case, but I do not think it would be proper for Government to decide what sort of internal reorganisation the TSBs or any other banking group ought to have forced upon them. Therefore, the Bill deals with those matters which are of direct concern of Government such as supervision, tax and the question of vesting and ownership, which can be resolved only by Parliament.

On that basis, I recommend the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. Wilson: I am disappointed that the Minister has not accepted the amendment. He admitted that the Bill affected the public interest. He may well argue that point, although I think not very successfully, in relation to the Royal Bank of Scotland Bill and the other Bills to which the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred.

In this case, however, we have to put it clearly on record that we are dealing with a request from people who do not own the bank. There is no ownership of the bank; it is mutually owned by the depositors. The people who have come to this decision are the trustees and managers who are culpable in selling out what is the heritage of the Scottish people. They were given a trust in this matter, and they have not observed it.

We have a role to scrutinise and criticise legislation and to try to amend and improve it. If we think that there is a fundamental flaw in any legislation, it is not for the Minister, for me or, indeed, for any other hon. Member to accept that what we are told we have got to do.

I was elected to Parliament to use my own judgment in these matters, as are all hon. Members. The judgment I make is that the Bill is wrong, particularly in relation to the Scottish element within it.

I ask the Minister, even at this late stage, to change his mind.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 29, Noes 137.

Division No. 121] **[12.07 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Cohen, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Nellist, David
Parry, Robert
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Rogers, Allan
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Welsh, Michael

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon Wilson and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Chope, Christopher
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cranborne, Viscount
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*

Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

THE CENTRAL BOARD AND THE REORGANISATION

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 3, line 11 leave out

'is to be paid or left unpaid'

and insert

'for the transfer or for shares or rights to shares disposed of under subsection (1) above in connection with the reorganisation is to be paid or left unpaid for any period or, in the case of shares or rights to shares, is to be full consideration or discounted'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6.

Mr. Stewart: This and the related group of amendments are purely technical. Their object is to ensure that the Government do not receive part of the proceeds of the issue. Because of the curious structure of the TSB group and its legal position, the central board could acquire the shares and, when selling them on to the public, become liable to capital gains tax because of the method that was followed. It is not the intention of the Government to obtain tax revenue in that way; the proceeds of the issue should go to the TSB. This amendment to schedule 2, with accompanying amendments to clause 2, will ensure that that does not happen.

Question put and agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 3, line 13 after 'above', insert

'relating to the transfer of assets by virtue of section 3(1)*(b)* or *(c)* below'.

No. 4, in page 3, line 17 after 'of', insert 'or in connection with'.

No. 5, in page 3, line 19 leave out from 'Treasury' to first 'the' in line 21 and insert

'(if they have not already done so under subsection (1) above), dispose of any shares or rights to shares in the new holding company which are held by or, as the case may be, vested in'. —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 2

TAXATION

Amendment made: No. 6, in page 15, line 33 at end insert

'4A. For the purposes of the Act of 1979, gains arising on the disposal by the Central Board of any shares, or rights to shares, in the new holding company shall not be chargeable gains.'. —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

12.19 am

Dr. McDonald: I do not intend to detain the House on the Third Reading; I want to make only one or two remarks. As has been clear from the debate on the new clauses, the Opposition have sought to alter the Bill in such a way as to lead to the reorganisation of the TSB so that it might the better represent its traditions. We regret that the alterations were not made.

We know that the chairman of the TSB has given assurances that he intends to maintain the tradition of the TSB as personal banks which will continue to serve the local communities in which they were established. The Opposition will be watching the progress of the TSBs after flotation to see whether they fulfil the commitments which the chairman gave in his letter which accompanied the White Paper. We wish them well.

12.20 am

Mr. Ashdown: I must express a degree of amazement —the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is doing his usual business of sitting in his seat and making some kind of intervention—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] No doubt he has once again dined too well—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I make the assumption——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I want to hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Ashdown: I make the assumption, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that since you do not take interventions from a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Crawley wants to intervene. To satisfy my curiosity as to whether he is as good when speaking on his feet as he is when sitting on his backside, I shall give way to him. It seems that he does not wish to intervene.

As I was saying, I must express a degree of amazement after listening to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), who has indicated that the official Opposition will not vote against the Bill. The safeguards for which they asked in Committee and on Second Reading have not been provided by the Government. We are surprised that they have decided not to oppose the Third Reading, because the Government are seeking to change fundamentally an institution which has its roots in the working-class areas of Britain and which has been famous in the past for serving those areas in a way which, as the Minister said, was unique. Now that the Government intend to change the nature of that institution, the Labour party does not intend to vote against them.

The Government have claimed during the passage of the Bill that this is a great advance towards wider share ownership and towards property owning. In reality it is revealed as a move in the opposite direction. The TSB sat uncomfortably in the banking sector and provided competition which the clearing banks could not meet. The London clearing banks obligingly said just that in their evidence to Page. The committee of the London clearing banks put forward to Page the argument that trustee savings banks represented unfair competition. The Page committee rejected that outright.

What the London clearing banks meant when they said that was that the TSBs were reaching parts of the nation which they could not reach, that the TSBs were providing a service which they could not provide and that they were getting at a market which the clearing banks could not get into because of the low operating costs. In the Bill a new

Milk Supplementary Levy

12.47 am

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): *I beg to move,*

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4421/85; and supports the Government's intention of securing administrative modifications which in the light of experience would enable the milk supplementary levy to operate more efficiently and fairly throughout the European Community.

As the Ministry's explanatory memorandum makes clear, tonight's debate concerns proposals for three Council regulations brought forward by the Commission. The proposed regulations are an attempt to satisfy requests from various member states for amendments to the present Community rules on milk quotas to cater for problems that have emerged in implementation. The regulations are—like the quota system itself—rather technical. However, the Scrutiny Committee has rightly identified them as being of importance in some of the changes that they make to the impact of quotas. The proposals were first outlined at the January Council of Agriculture Ministers and I referred to them in my subsequent report to the House.

Discussions have been taking place since then at official level between representatives of the member states and the Commission in Brussels. This is to enable texts to be prepared for consideration and I hope that we shall be able to agree them at the February Council on Monday 25 and Tuesday 26 February. But I have to tell the House that several member states still have important reservations and it may be that the proposals will be difficult to agree in advance of this year's price-fixing negotiations. I shall certainly be pressing for the earliest possible adoption of the measures.

The first of the draft regulations contains four proposals to amend Council regulation 857/84, which is the main regulation on milk quotas. The first of these proposals would allow 1980 to be used as an alternative base year for the purpose of allocating milk quotas to producers affected by exceptional events.

At present the regulations provide that a producer whose production has been adversely affected during 1983 — the base year for determining milk quotas in the United Kingdom — by one of the exceptional events listed in article 3(3), can apply to have his quota determined on 1981 or 1982 production instead. The new provisions would allow 1980 to be chosen as well. I am bound to say that we would not welcome this proposal, as all producers would, quite naturally, want to be able to reconsider their positions. It would mean reopening tribunal and local panel cases which were already decided and going back to scratch in calculating individual quotas.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I fully support what my right hon. Friend has said, but will he tell the House roughly how many cases have been considered by the tribunals and what has been the total cost of running them and paying the enormous costs of those who have taken part in them? Will he give us an assurance that he will resist the proposal which could reopen the matter?

Mr. Jopling: I shall be coming to that point. I shall be resisting the proposals. Speaking from memory, I think the tribunal has been considering between 9,000 and 10,000 cases. Of course, I cannot say how much the affair will cost, because the tribunal has not finished its work.

As I have just said, we have made it clear that we would not want to apply the provision at this stage. Most other member states are in a similar position. Indeed, the Germans, who originally asked for this change last summer, have now, like us, progressed too far in implementing the rules for the change to be of any help to them. Against that background, I understand that the Commission has now said that it is its intention to withdraw this part of the proposal.

The next proposal in the first of the Council Regulations is in two parts. The first part deals with the problem of producers who have both direct and wholesale quota. Under the Commission proposals, a producer who, for example, had not enough direct sales quota but too much wholesale quota for his needs could simply transform some of his wholesale quota into direct sales quota. Thus, so long as he did not sell more than his total quota, of both types, he would not be liable for levy.

Unlike the existing swap shop arrangements, a producer is not limited in the amount of his spare quota that can be transformed in this way. Since the Community legislation lays down the national totals of direct and wholesale quota on a continuing basis, the switch to which I have referred would take place for no more than one year at a time. Formally, one would revert to the previously allocated quotas for the next year, although the switch could be made again if necessary.

That proposal was brought forward as a result of the strenuous efforts that I have been making to get changes to help mixed businesses in this country. If adopted, it would prove extremely useful to our producers in removing unnecessary restrictions on direct sales. I am pleased to report that some other member states see that problem in much the same way as we do. But there are other member states that are not so clearly in favour of the proposal.

Although we can administer the proposal effectively here, there is real concern that it could result in a weakening of controls in some member states. I shall be doing all I can to meet those criticisms and to persuade all the other member states to accept it. In order to forestall the many questions which I am sure hon. Members will have about how the mechanism will work in practice, let me say only that the technical arrangements and the wording of the proposals are still very much under discussion. The proposal is likely to undergo yet further changes before it is adopted. For the moment, we have made clear to the Commission and the other member states the nature of the problem and will be insisting that any regulation adopted will tackle the problem effectively.

A second feature of the change to article 6 of the regulation is a proposal to permit member states to use the calendar years 1982 and 1983 adjusted by a percentage to keep within the overall quota instead of calendar year 1981 plus 1 per cent. for the purpose of establishing direct sales quotas. That proposal would allow the same choice of base year for direct sales as presently applies to wholesale deliveries.

Although the arrangements would have been desirable had they been introduced at the start of the scheme, it is difficult to envisage adopting them in the United Kingdom now, when the work on allocating direct sales quotas is virtually completed. As with the first of the proposals

which I have already described, it would entail starting the system again from scratch with new parliamentary regulations, completely new applications from producers and a repeat of the appeals procedure. Therefore, we have obtained an assurance from the Commission that the proposal will be optional and if it is adopted we would not make use of it here.

The next proposal is an amendment to article 7 of regulation 857/84 to meet a problem in Germany where 40 per cent. of the land is let on short-term leases. They feel that when the tenancies come to an end, tenants could be in an unfair position in negotiating new leases, as the landlord could demand much higher rents if the tenant had no other way of acquiring quota.

The provisions could provide some protection for tenants in those circumstances, but would be optional for the member state to apply. Again, this text is being examined carefully because it may not meet the difficulties in Germany adequately.

Of course, in the United Kingdom, short-term lettings are very much the exception as a result of the lifetime security of tenure provisions in the agricultural holdings legislation. As the proposal is both limited and optional, we have said that we would not wish to stand in the way. We do not see it as prejudicing our own position for the future, which we are currently considering in discussions with the industry.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the Conacre system in Northern Ireland? Has that been taken into account during his consideration of the German position and short-term lettings?

Mr. Jopling: As far as I am aware, the position in Northern Ireland is not relevant to this point, but I shall have another look at the matter and if there is something in it, I shall let the hon. Gentleman know.

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon): What does my right hon. Friend have in mind as regards short-term tenancies in Germany? Would that have any applications to the British market? Might the amendment to article 7 enable us to install in the United Kingdom a more realistic form of transferability of quota and a recognition of the rights of ownership of quota which ought to belong to the tenant who has invested in the infrastructure of the farm?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend raises a difficult and important matter. The NFU is coming to see me in the morning to discuss the subject. I do not think that the Commission's proposed amendment is likely to affect the vast number of tenancies in this country and we do not see it as prejudicing our position for the future, which we are considering in discussions with the industry.

The last of the proposals in the first regulation would amend article 12 of regulation 857/84 to enable groups of small dairies to be treated as a single purchaser. The proposal has been brought forward to deal with problems in mountain areas in France. They say that the pattern of sales in those areas varies as a consequence of the weather conditions and whether the cows can be fed in the mountain pastures or need to be brought down into the valleys and this affects the uptake of these dairies. By banding together and pooling their quotas, they would be better organised to operate within quota.

An alternative for France, at least in principle, would be to set up regional milk marketing boards which offer producers and consumers a range of advantages. But in the context of a satisfactory package of amendments to the quota regulations, we would not be opposed to that element.

The second draft regulation would allow Belgium to switch 25,000 tonnes from its national direct sales quota to wholesales. As a similar regulation was adopted last May to deal with a statistical problem in the United Kingdom, I feel that it would be right to accept this modest proposal for Belgium.

The last of the draft regulations has been undergoing drafting changes since it was put before the Scrutiny Committee, although the intention behind it has not changed. It is to allow member states, for the first year of the quota arrangements, to switch unutilised quotas between producers and purchasers in the same region and between different regions. We have made it clear that the proposal must apply to direct sales as well as wholesale deliveries.

The effect of the proposal would be similar to treating the milk industry of each member state as if there were a single purchaser applying formula B. In the United Kingdom it would permit a temporary movement of quota between the milk marketing boards. If adopted, it would reduce levy liability both where formula A applied and where formula B applied.

So far as wholesale producers in the United Kingdom are concerned, this proposal would probably remove all liability for levy this year, since spare quota from Great Britain will become available to offset the present liability in Northern Ireland. I am sure that the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) is pleased to hear that.

I can see advantage to the United Kingdom in this proposal, although I am bound to say that the Germans and Dutch have very strong reservations about it. The Dutch see it as undermining the fundamental purpose of quota arrangements, which is to curtail milk production by penalising those who over-produce. The Germans say they would find it embarrassing, given the lengths to which they have gone to implement the regulations to be in a position of having to refund levies they have already collected. Some other member states might, without such a measure, find it difficult to apply the quota system in its first year.

I consider it most important that the quota system is applied effectively. Milk production must be contained, and I would not wish to undermine this. We want the levy to be applied effectively throughout the Community as soon as possible. This measure could help in that and provide some alleviation in Northern Ireland, and I am sure it is right to support it for application this year.

These proposals are a package with some elements of important value to the United Kingdom. They are as yet subject to further negotiations and some member states have significant difficulties with some elements. I regard it as the highest priority to ensure that the United Kingdom's interests are secured in the way I have described and shall press for adoption of the measures at an early stage. On this basis, I can commend the proposals to the House.

1.2 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): We are asked to take note of yet another European Community document and to support the Government's intention to make the superlevy system work more efficiently and

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

fairly. I am reluctant to take note of anything at this time of night after the events of the past couple of days, but we are always willing to support good intentions to make European Community schemes operate more fairly and efficiently. I speak as an increasingly disillusioned pro-European.

As the Minister knows, we have been critical of the Government for the way in which they were stampeded into accepting a quota system on terms which are manifestly unfair to British milk producers. I do not like to embarrass the right hon. Gentleman, but I remind the Minister of State that on 1 March 1984 in a written reply he said:

"The Government consider that the preferable route to achieve a better market balance in the milk sector is through price policy. But the necessary price cuts to achieve a balance in the market have not so far proved negotiable in the Community." —[*Official Report*, 1 March 1984; Vol. 55, c. *327*.]

Evidently not, because the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food came back two weeks later, on 14 March, not with a package of price cuts, but to announce the immediate introducion and imposition of milk quotas on the dairy industry.

For some time the Labour party has been advocating a quota mechanism to control dairy production. We have consistently stated the case for a fair distribution of quota between member states and a reasonable period to allow the industry to adjust.

Mr. Jopling: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for interrupting him in full flight. He referred to statements by myself and my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I ask the hon. Gentleman to look at a speech that I made in the House on 1 December 1983, when I made it perfectly clear that we might have to accept quotas instead of our preferred option of price control.

Mr. Home Robertson: I understand why the right hon. Gentleman is a little sensitive about this issue. We know that he did not want this system, but he was saddled with it, and the industry is now saddled with it. We have consistently said that there is merit in the principle of a quota system, but we would like to ensure that the distribution of quota among member states is seen to be fair and that our industry is given time to adjust.

What happened was different from what we would have liked. It was agreed that the scheme would reduce EC milk production by 4·1 per cent., but for reasons best known to the right hon. Gentleman, he surrendered 6·2 per cent. of British production, despite the fact that the United Kingdom was not contributing significantly to European overproduction. Our producers were pitched headlong into panic measures to cut their production during the current year. The consequence has been a disgraceful and damaging shambles, without the original objectives being achieved.

British production is likely to fall significantly short of the quota. That demonstrates the turmoil into which our industry has been pitched. Incidentally, that is in marked contrast to what is happening in other member states. The EC is still producing far too much milk—20 million tonnes more than is required. That excess costs the Community taxpayer £2 billion. Our dairy industry has been put through all that agony, yet we are nowhere near achieving the original objective of bringing production near to the level of demand.

The latest proposals appear to accept the continuing burden of overproduction in Europe, most of which is coming from other Community countries. The Minister has excelled himself. He has accepted a deal which does the maximum damage both to British producers and to British and European taxpayers. He has even managed to fall out with the National Farmers Union. He is bound to have noticed, as other hon. Members have, what the president, Sir Richard Butler, said at the annual general meeting last week. He is not renowned for attacking the Conservative party, but he said:

"The British government has added to our misfortune. It has been ineffective in negotiation in Europe. It has been inept in administration at home. And it has not thought enough about the future."

Amen to that. The Opposition want a quota system that will work and be fair. The present signs are that the system is neither working nor fair.

The first proposal will apparently be withdrawn by the Commission. It would have made it possible for 1980 to be treated as an alternative base year for calculation of primary quota, in addition to 1981, 1982 and 1983. That might have been eminently sensible if it had been suggested in the first place, but to introduce it into the calculation now would be plain daft. It would encourage producers to return to the tribunals to appeal again, it would prolong the agony, and it would achieve little. In passing, it should be said that the whole tribunal procedure has been discredited, because producers are being allocated less than two thirds of the extra quota that has been recommended by the tribunals. I agree that we should probably do more about special cases, but the proposal would not have made sense. Therefore, I am glad that it is unlikely to see the light of day.

The second proposal provides for interchangeability of quota between direct sales and wholesale categories. We support that form of flexibility and cannot understand why it was not permitted in the first place. I hope that it will come into effect as soon as possible. I shall be grateful if the Minister will tell us in his reply whether the proposal will be made effective for levy collection purposes for the current year.

The Minister made it clear that the third proposal was entirely for the benefit of short-term lets in Germany. It could create potential for new rights for tenant farmers in respect of their quotas. If so, we would wholeheartedly support that objective, not least because of evidence that landlords in parts of England have been abusing their powers over tenants with regard to quotas in the outgoers scheme.

The proposal also raises the issue of transferability of quota. I shall take this opportunity to comment on the responses that the Minister has received to his consultation paper on that subject. There seems to be a general consensus that quota should be transferable. We agree with that. However, obviously there is no merit in keeping quota on farms that are not using it, when other farms desperately need additional quota.

The question seems to be whether quota should be transferred by sale or lease in a free market or in a regulated market, or whether it should be done through a purely administrative scheme. We recognise that a purely administrative scheme would not work, because there would be no incentive for producers to relinquish quota, but we are equally unhappy about the idea of a free market in the new commodity of quota.

If we are to have unregulated buying, selling and leasing of quota, it will inevitably follow that bigger dairying concerns will be able to pay the price to acquire whatever quota might come on the market, while small farmers and people coming into the industry will find it increasingly difficult to obtain additional quota. By the same token, there is a risk that quota which might come on to the market in the less prosperous areas will be bought by producers in the richer areas. The Welsh quota might tend to be purchased by English dairy farmers.

I notice that in its submission to the Government the English Milk Marketing Board said:

"The Minister should have powers to limit the rate of movement of quota between areas and to limit the acquisition of quota by an individual business but these powers should only be invoked if monitoring of quota transfers showed it was necessary to do so."

That sounds a little like shutting the buyer door after the cows have gone. Powers should be established at the outset to control the price of quota and to prevent excessive accumulation of quota in some areas or businesses.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the excessive accumulation of quota. In modern farming practice, what would he consider to be an excessive number of cows and an excessive quota?

Mr. Home Robertson: I am not foolish enough to be drawn into defining what is and what is not excessive. I am not qualified to do so. Someone in authority who can consult the various parts of the industry should have the power to make such an assessment and to regulate that kind of thing.

In its submission to the Minister on that point the National Farmers Union said:

"All transfers would take place through a central industry authority with powers to safeguard the structure of the industry and to provide assistance to young new entrants."

That is the objective, and I think that there will be consensus that that is what the Minister should seek to achieve. The proposals from the Farmers Union of Wales on that point seem to be helpful and relevant. I am attracted by its proposal, which is aimed at creating a pool of quota for distribution to people coming into the industry.

While we accept the principle of flexibility and transferability within the quota scheme, we believe it essential to ensure that those movements are subject to reasonable control in the interests of the whole industry and the people who work in it.

We also agree with all involved that a system for transferring quota should be established as soon as possible. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to say something about that.

The final proposal to which I wish to refer and about which the Minister spoke would make it possible, at least for 1984-85, for under-used quota, for example in England and Wales, to be transferred to areas of overproduction within the same member state; for instance, Northern Ireland. The Minister, as we know, has created such a degree of alarm and despondency in British dairy farming that production has fallen much further than even he intended, and we are now likely to fall 200 million litres below quota in the current year. That is the equivalent of a year's production by 40,000 cows. In those circumstances, it would be perverse to require farmers in Northern Ireland to pay superlevy while the United Kingdom as a whole is well below its quota restriction.

Some commentators are unhappy about that proposal. The *Financial Times* on 16 January described it as

"a move dangerously close to the institution of national quotas".

So what? It seems to us perfectly logical to fix quotas for individual nations and to penalise those nations which over-produce. Some hon. Members have been advocating that kind of strategy all along. The Commission should make sure that the quotas are enforced and the levy collected as soon as possible in those nations which are over-producing.

The Minister must realise that he has got the dairy industry into a fine old mess. He has given away too much, he has created mayhem in the British dairy industry, yet, despite all that, there is still massive over-production in the European Community.

We are not impressed; nor, indeed, is the industry impressed. Nevertheless, we recognise that the measures represent some gestures in the right direction, so we accept them for what they are worth. The Minister will have to try much harder in the coming months if he is to impress us, and harder still if he is to impress the NFU.

1.15 am

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): I welcome the regulations and the opportunity to debate them. It is important that we do so. The saga of milk quotas continues with all its problems and difficulties, although I do not think it is as bad as the exaggerated views of hon. Opposition Members suggest. These small proposals will help and will bring about some advancement. I am sorry that the Minister thinks that there should be some delay in putting the regulations into operation. I hope that he will urge them forward. They are an advancement, so let us go forward and help the industry as quickly as possible.

I also regret, although it is not unexpected, that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) took the line that he did. I thought that his arguments were particularly weak. I am sorry that he brought in the president of the NFU. I thought that the president of the NFU used rather unfortunate rhetoric, and we know why.

From my knowledge of the industry, I know that there has been the closest co-operation between the Minister and the NFU and, indeed, consultations are always taking place. The NFU has said that it wishes those consultations to take place in future before any hurried decisions are made. I put the hon. Gentleman's attitude down to his ignorance of what goes on behind the scenes between the NFU and the Minister.

The hon. Gentleman, in his remarks about the failure of the Minister with respect to the drop in milk production, omitted to mention the weather, which I would have thought was obvious to everybody. Has not the weather played a part in this? Of course it has. Indeed, the drop in production was mainly due to the weather.

The amendments to articles 5 and 6 are to be welcomed, and are essential. But much more needs to be done. I hope that we can move forward so that there will not be any penalties applicable to producer-retailers for the past year.

Here we come to the nub of what ought to be done. At a time of large surpluses, the objective must be to get rid of them, for people to consume them, and not to store them away in intervention. The consumer should have the benefit of the surpluses. If a producer-retailer has the

[Sir Peter Mills]

opportunity to get rid of these surpluses, I believe that he should be encouraged in every way and there should be a switch from wholesale to retail outlets.

In the south-west, we want to take advantage of this with our famous Devonshire cream which can be sold at the farm gate. We want to see some of the surplus Devonshire and Cornish cream sold at the farm gate.

Sales are increasing. It is important for our holiday industry that we provide the facility of cream, farmhouse cheese, yoghurt and the various products that farmers can produce and sell over farm gates and on retail rounds. That is the right way forward, rather than products being put into storage and intervention, finally to be sold to the Russians or others at knockdown prices.

We must move forward in that area, and the whole House should support the Minister in these proposals. Indeed, because of his efforts in Brussels, many of the movements that I have described have been started. *[Interruption.]* Do any Opposition Members wish to intervene? Would the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) like me to give way? Of course not. He has nothing to say. He cannot even sit upright in his seat.

I assure Opposition Members that I do not belong to a fan club for the Minister, though he has been one of my best friends for a long time. We appreciate what it means to be loyal to each other, which is more than can be said of hon. Members on the Opposition Benches.

As for the proposal affecting Northern Ireland, speaking as a former Minister with responsibility for that part of the nation, I welcome what is proposed, which will be of great benefit to Northern Ireland.

The amendment to article 7 is intriguing because it refers to the quota attached to the holding being retained by the outgoing tenant. We might be able to build on that. The Minister should see whether it is possible to use that to assist with the whole problem of landlord and tenant in relation to quotas.

I welcome this small move forward and hope that the Minister, using his strength and power, will endeavour in Brussels to build on what has been achieved so that we can avoid the stupid business of putting dairy products into storage and intervention. If those products can be sold and consumed, that must be the best way forward.

1.22 am

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): As the Minister spoke of the difficulties that were being faced by every European country, I reflected that at least some of us foresaw that they were bound to arise as Europe moved from food deficit to food surplus. Once we entered the Common Market, the United Kingdom found itself in that position, and many of the problems that have arisen can be attributed to that occurrence.

Milk, from the cow's udder to the teapot, is tightly controlled in every way. It was not possible for the milk industry to go into reverse in the way in which it was asked to do in the last year without severe difficulties being caused for every producer. The Minister said that he was afraid that we would have to go in for quotas. I have never been able to understand why, if the Government were aware—as they must have been—of that possibility, they did not signal those fears more clearly to farmers by starting to withdraw the grants that were being paid to enable production to go on at an ever-increasing pace. Had the Government taken that action a year or so earlier, fewer people would have gone into production and many of the difficulties that we now face would have been avoided. Many of those who have been hurt, and those who have yet to be hurt, would have come out of it in a much better position.

As the Minister pointed out, we started with two different systems, one for Great Britain and one for Northern Ireland. I understand that some farmers in Great Britain wish that they had adopted the Northern Ireland system. That is the case only because Britain ended up with 200 million litres less. I believe, as a practical farmer, that that will cause considerable difficulties for farmers in Britain when we come to work out the quotas and incomes for individual farmers.

We are all glad about the progress that has been made and hope that the Minister will continue with the good work. When the matter is brought to a satisfactory conclusion, we will have a common system of quotas throughout the United Kingdom. I do not think we can reach a reasonable end result without a common system.

It is all very well for folk to say that there is some leeway but, as the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) pointed out, much of that was because of the weather and the rest was the fault of the farmers who took panic measures and cut production too much. I am pleased that the Minister will use that leeway to sort out Northern Ireland's problems, if only for this year.

I ask the Minister and the farming community to look further ahead. The quota system has severe shortcomings. I fear that it will last only for a short period. So many points of friction are built into it that I cannot see it lasting for more than a few years. At the end of the way we will have a system of price governing production. If that is tied to national standard quantities, so much the better. I will be much happier; I am glad to see that the Minister agrees with me.

1.26 am

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It is unfortunate that we are spending time at this late hour discussing possible amendments, which will probably not be agreed in Brussels, to a scheme which is not working and which is not achieving its objective. Even if the scheme were to work, we all know that we would still have a horrendous surplus which it will be impossible to dispose of, even with the aid of the remarkable and costly subsidies through which we are trying to dump the surplus abroad. It is sad that we are discussing, in effect, a sick joke which was put forward as the first move towards restraint of production at a time when the Government were promoting plans to put an extra 40 per cent. of public expenditure into the Common Market.

In view of the reference which has been made to the National Farmers Union and to Sir Richard Butler, and the attempts by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Miles) to draw a distinction between the bad Sir Richard and the good NFU, it is only fair to point out that at its annual conference the NFU passed unanimously a motion which blamed the structural imbalance on the Minister, but it did not put forward one specific, constructive proposal as to how the horrendous problem of over-production and the vast amount of public funds being put into surplus disposal could be tackled.

We cannot regard this as a small matter at a time when, in all our constituencies, health authorities and councils

are having to cut expenditure. It is outrageous that the NFU should not have put forward one specific proposal about how to deal with the problem. It is costing us £100 million every single week simply to store and dump abroad surpluses, with the Russians and the east Europeans being the main beneficiaries.

I have three questions for the Minister. First, does he welcome the extension of the transferability of quotas by means of a market mechanism, whether through a central agency or not? Is there not something squalid and very un-Conservative in the buying and selling of quotas which are simply giving people the right to produce at substantial cost produce which nobody wants and which cannot be disposed of? Has the Minister inquired about how the income from the selling of quotas will be regarded? Can we regard it, for example, as earned income for taxation purposes, because the quotas are being given and can be sold? Will it be unearned income, or will it be subject to capital gains tax? I ask the Minister that simple question on the transferability of quotas.

Secondly, will the Minister back up the regulations in the discussions on Monday by resisting at all costs, in accordance with the Conservative manifesto, any increase in the price of milk which could disrupt the arrangements in the regulations? The Minister knows what was in the manifesto. Can he give us this clear assurance on price?

Thirdly, will the Minister say whether, on balance, the proposed amendments will have the overall effect of increasing or reducing milk production? It has been clear that we expected an underspend or under-production. Will not these amendments have the effect, while not increasing quotas, of increasing production?

Finally, as regards the possible changes to the tribunal organisation which would stem from the adoption of the amendment to article 3, can my right hon. Friend say what has been the cost to date of the operation of the tribunals and who is to pay for it? Does it come from the British taxpayer or from Community funds?

The regulations, like the arrangements on the quotas, which are not working because we know what is happening in other countries, will have exactly the same result as happened with steel production, when we carried out our obligations in more than halving the numbers employed on steel production while other countries increased their capacity. We know what is happening, and it is absurd to give the impression that if these amendments are adopted, somehow the scheme will work and be effective. We all know in our hearts that it will not.

The regulations and the milk quotas themselves demonstrate to British agriculture, which up till now has done pretty well out of the common agricultural policy, that it will not be possible to solve the problems of European over-production without doing immense damage to British agriculture. It is becoming more and more clear — those engaged in agriculture are just beginning to realise it—that it will be possible to solve the problems of agriculture within a United Kingdom framework but that if we are to solve the problems of over-production in the EEC it will only be done by having a violent and pretty vigorously deflationary effect on agriculture in Britain, which will do us immense damage.

1.33 am

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I join other right hon. and hon. Members in welcoming the general objective of the amendments, though perhaps with not too much enthusiasm.

The amendment to article 3 gives us the opportunity to use 1980 as an alternative base year for producers affected by an exceptional event. I welcome the Minister's statement that he regards the possibility of reopening the topic of special cases as one which would not be welcomed by him. However, in the brief from the Minister of State, we read that this one may be withdrawn or it may be optional. The Minister said that he regarded it as most likely that it would be withdrawn, but that it could be optional.

I think that we may take it, from what the Minister said, that if it was optional it would be the Government's policy not to apply it.

Mr. Jopling *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ashdown: That is the most sensible way forward, and it would help the House if the right hon. Gentleman would make it quite clear that if it was optional he could not see the Government applying it.

As for the amendments to articles 5 and 6, I think that we can take some pleasure from obtaining interchangeability between direct and wholesale quota. I was almost tempted to join the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) in congratulating the Minister on his achievement, because he has striven very hard to get something along these lines. All that stops me congratulating him as fulsomely as the hon. Gentleman is that those of us who read the Select Committee report will recall that the Committee was of the view that the right hon. Gentleman did not get it in the first place because he had not asked for it, and that he might have obtained interchangeability earlier if he had asked for it.

Can the Minister clarify one matter? At one point he said that it was possible for some of the quota to be exchanged as between direct and wholesale, but I believe that later he said later that it was possible for all of it to be exchanged. There is a slight contradiction there. May I assume that there is no limitation on the amount of quota that can be exchanged? It seems unlikely that someone would want to interchange 100 per cent., but I would be grateful if the Minister could clarify what he meant.

We have always made it clear—as, I believe, has the NFU — that we would have preferred a single quota covering milk production, whether wholesale or direct sale. However, though second best, a system that allows the farmer to choose at the end of every marketing year is welcome, and I believe that that is what is proposed. Again, I would be grateful if the Minister could confirm that, under the Commission's proposals, each individual could choose at the end of every marketing year about the interchangeability.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) called for an assurance that such proposals would be made effective for levy collection purposes in the United Kingdom during the present marketing year. It is important that that should be put on the record.

I very much agree with those hon. Members who have expressed the hope that the Minister will view the amendments to article 7 as amendments which, if not totally applicable to Britain at present — one wonders

[Mr. Ashdown]

whether that is the case—might enable a much more effective structure to be built up in future. However, I believe that the amendments reveal what the Minister has strenuously denied for some time, namely, that quota is not viewed by the Commission as being immutably attached to land. Many of us believed that that was so, and we are now proved to be right, whereas the Minister's judgment has not been entirely correct.

The amendments provide some basic recognition of tenants' rights to quota, and they are welcome for that, but I still believe that the wider question of the ownership and transfer of quota has been tackled in a somewhat superficial way. The NFU has produced a comprehensive package on ownership and quota which would provide a proper framework for the consideration of the interests of landlords and tenants, and could provide the framework for the future development of the industry. It would be useful if the Minister could make clear his general attitude to the NFU proposals.

It would be preferable for quotas to be owned by producers and to be transferable separately from the land by sale or lease, perhaps, as I believe the NFU proposes, through a central industry authority. I believe that in the end we will need a mechanism to arbitrate between tenant and landlord in order to ensure the proper recognition of the genuine interests of both parties.

We can support this measure as a first step towards solving the immediate crisis. We hope that the Minister will be able to build on it. It is the first step towards putting together a more permanent structure capable of accommodating changes in ownership and transfer arrangements that will be necessary if the industry is not to become trapped within unchangeable regulations, in a way that would permanently damage it.

Mr. Jopling *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ashdown: I am delighted to see the Minister nodding. I hope that there will be some development on those lines.

Quota not used by Great Britain at the end of the first year will be able to be transferred to other areas—in this case, Northern Ireland. We can all rejoice with the Northern Ireland industry in the hope that that arrangement will help it over some of its own immediate problems.

I believe the Minister said that the arrangement would be operated on a year-by-year basis an that the long-term structure of the quotas of the two areas would not be influenced. It would be useful if he could confirm that that is so.

With those provisos, and hoping to receive those clarifications, I welcome the amendments.

1.39 am

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I welcome the amendments to articles 5 and 6 and should like to illustrate the practical problems facing farmers who operate a mixed business of retail and wholesale production.

On 10 January, when he moved that the Milk (Cessation of Production) Bill be read a Second time, my right hon. Friend the Minister reminded the House that the outgoers scheme was only one element in the Community supplementary levy arrangements. He made it clear, as he has done several times in the past year, that there are several steps to be taken if the urgently needed restrictions on the Community's milk output, which were necessarily introduced in some haste, are to be implemented effectively and continue to run sensibly.

On Second Reading, several right hon. and hon. Members raised, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State responded to, aspects of the supplementary levy other than the terms and conditions for outgoers. High on the list of priorities were the problems facing dairy farmers with a mixed selling base—part retail, part wholesale. For that reason, I welcome the Commission's proposals to amend articles 5 and 6 and wish my right hon. Friend every success in persuading other members of the Council of Ministers that the changes are required urgently, at least in Britain.

We have an entirely unreal and impractical distinction between the two types of quota, because we have a milk distribution system which is entirely different from that of the rest of Europe and the origins of which are to be found in the Agricultural Marketing Act 1931. After the Hop Marketing Board, the Milk Marketing Board was the second distribution mechanism to be set up—in 1933. Since then, it has provided a much more sophisticated milk marketing structure than is to be found anywhere else in Europe. It has enabled our unique doorstep delivery service of milk to continue.

Not many farmers have set up as retailers as well as wholesale producers and there are perhaps a dozen in the south east, but those who have done so have found it difficult to take the supplementary levy regulations seriously. When they received their direct sales quota—that took a little time in some cases—they realised that any business initiative that they took to capture a larger share of their local doorstep markets would incur a penalty immediately which would be applied much more directly than any penalty which might accrue to their wholesale production.

Whereas wholesale producers have to wait upon national output statistics before the levy is assessed, the enterprising retailer knows from the outset that retail success above his existing quota brings a penalty for his own account. In practice, as a constituent has shown me, to avoid the extra levy, the enterprising retail operator has either to get on to the Milk Marketing Board and buy extra volume or to forgo the opportunity, although he has milk to spare from his herd, which is separately designated as wholesale production.

To complicate matters further for the small retailer, the Milk Marketing Board is often reluctant to deliver less than a full tanker load at a time. The small retailer with additional daily doorstep sales of less than a full tanker load has to forgo his market opportunity or to buy in more milk than he needs, which clearly does not make a great deal of business sense. That is supposed to apply even when he has extra milk on his wholesale side.

The present regulations are nonsense for the smaller British farmer retailer if he wants to expand or get rid of surplus milk production. By merging, or at least making interchangeable in some way, a farmer's direct sale and wholesale quotas, we shall remove a bizarre obstacle from the present complicated supplementary levy arrangements and provide a ray of hope to all dairy farmers who feel that they have been tied in knots by the Community's red tape that sanity will prevail.

1.45 am

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I wish to mention one or two points that are not unrelated to the one that has just been made. The case I have in mind is rather worse than the one that has been drawn to the attention of the House by the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), because his constituent realised the trap into which he was walking. However, in the south-west farmers did not realise the trap into which they were walking. Perhaps they should have done so, but they did not. There are farms where the holding is below the total allowable milk production quota. Because too large a proportion of their milk production, which is below the total global quota, has gone into direct sales, it is possible that these farmers will incur a very severe financial penalty this year.

To be fair to the Minister, he was most encouraging when I last had the opportunity to raise this problem. He said that he hoped it would be possible to alleviate it. However, I believe that these regulations will not solve the problem for farmers this year. They relate to next year. That is to be welcomed. There will be great relief on a number of farms in the west country. However, will the alteration have any effect on milk quotas for this financial year?

May I also mention the problem created by late applications. The original regulations stated clearly that farmers had to apply by a certain date, but many farmers are not too keen on reading bits of paper, especially if they think they will be told things they would rather not know. One or two farmers would, I know have been given a quota if they had appealed, but because they applied too late they were told that their quota was zero. I should like to know whether that problem could be examined in a humanitarian way. Undoubtedly there are one or two very difficult cases.

Although one is inclinded to agree with the regional movement of quota, it must be made absolutely clear that it should apply only for one year. If it rains next year in the west country we want our full quota. We do not want to be told that we have lost some of it because the weather did not favour large-scale milk production. I hope the Minister will be able to reassure me on that point.

The problem for this year relates to direct milk sales and late applications. I hope that the Minister will consider these points very carefully.

1.48 am

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am very pleased to be able to speak after my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). They have posed very succinctly a number of questions to which I hope the Minister will reply. I want to make it perfectly clear that there will be no praise from me for the Government, who have got the dairy industry in this country into the right mess it is in today. I do not believe that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has anything to be proud of, given the disgraceful way he has treated the dairy industry. I shall not follow the line of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) and say that the Minister has been a friend of the industry for many years. I do not admire somebody who has decimated an industry which has been urged by him, by the Government and also by the European Community to produce milk and then, within 24 hours, has been told to put the clock back.

Will my right hon. Friend give us reassurance—it can certainly be said that none was forthcoming in his speech—that these modest amendments will be accepted within the Community? Every word that my right hon. Friend uttered was hedged around with reservation and he highlighted the opposition that the proposals would receive from several countries within the European Community. Will he fight for the benefits and interests of the British dairy producer? I have my doubts about that. I doubt also whether the dairy industry will benefit from the proposals that he has announced because I do not think that the Community will accept them. My right hon. Friend will have, perhaps, to make a statement in future, or give a written answer to a parliamentary question, to explain that, sadly, some of the proposals have not been accepted.

What reassurance will my right hon. Friend give to some extremely efficient dairy farmers in my constituency who invested heavily shortly before his announcement, which was basically retrospective, and who find that their quotas, even where they have appealed to the tribunal as special cases, mean that their return will not cover their overheads? I believe that my right hon. Friend has a heavy burden upon his shoulders. He owes the dairy producer——

Sir Peter Mills *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: No, I shall not give way. If my hon. Friend wants to intervene, he should realise that he had every chance earlier of doing so.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): It is government that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) wants to interrupt.

Mr. Winterton: I wanted to listen to everything that was said. My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) happens to be a Parliamentary Private Secretary and I believe that on these matters he should keep quiet. At least there are some in the House who are prepared to speak out for those who have done what successive Governments have urged them to do. Of course, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) does not have one dairy farmer in his constituency and——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My constituents are consumers.

Mr. Winterton: And so are mine, but included among them are dairy farmers. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is prepared to be critical of the National Farmers Union and its president. It is a pity that the president did not speak out sooner in the forceful terms that he used only recently. If he had done, and if the NFU had been united, I do not believe that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would have returned with such a disgraceful package in March 1984, which I think that he announced with some reluctance, and with my great distaste, to the House.

The NFU has done a great job for farmers. Indeed, it has done a great job for the consumer in guaranteeing him a secure supply of food at reasonable prices. I accept from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East that it was our joining the European Economic Community that brought about the high food prices in Britain. Prior to our joining, I am sure that my hon. Friend had little criticism of the NFU and the stand which it took.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State must give rather more reassurance than was forthcoming from my right

[Mr. Winterton]

hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I do not think that the way in which he hedged his speech with reservations when dealing with the European documents can give very much hope to dairy producers. I welcome the limited progress that has been made but I believe that my right hon. Friend has misled the House in the past in saying that we are contributors to the surpluses within the European Community.

Other than in the byproducts of the production of butter Britain is not a contributor to the surplus. As has been said by at least one hon. Member tonight, we have had to take a bigger cutback than many other countries in the EC which are huge contributors to the surpluses of dairy products. If, by that, my right hon. Friend thinks that he has achieved a great breakthrough for the British dairy producers, he is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. He knows my strong opposition to the package. It is as strong now as it was when he announced it in March 1984.

I hope that the Minister of State will give the House a little more reassurance tonight, and, through the House, the dairy producers. Many in my constituency are living in complete uncertainty, not knowing whether they will be able to continue to farm or whether, having served the communities in which they live and the people of the area which I have had the honour to represent for many years, generation after generation, they will have to leave farming. The repercussions of that upon our countryside would be devastating for the Conservative party.

1.55 am

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) that the hour is late. Like him I was here until the end last night. Therefore, except on one point, I shall confine myself to the questions that I have been asked which are relevant to the regulations.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) once again argued, as he has done so often in the past, that we have had a more savage cut in quotas than other member states and that the deal was unfair. I am sorry to have to remind him yet again that three member states, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark, have had larger cutbacks in their national quotas than we have. We are the fourth because we have been the fourth largest expander in dairy production since 1981. There was no way of getting the Commission off 1981 as the base year from which the national quotas were calculated.

The plain fact is that other member states have had a much bigger cut. Perhaps inadvertently, the hon. Gentleman referred to the fact that even now there is a 20 million tonnes surplus. I am sure that he will realise that the surplus is 12 million tonnes, not 20 million tonnes — the difference between consumption and the production levels in the coming year.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about mixed businesses and whether the proposal relating to them would apply in the current year. That is important, because if it does apply in the current year it will deal with the levy collection position. I assure him that if the proposal goes through as it is intended it will cover the current year, and it is our intention to achieve that. My right hon. Friend the Minister and I have throughout pressed for that change because we have realised the importance of it in the current year.

The hon. Gentleman made many comments about transferability. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) also referred to that, and mentioned the NFU proposals. The initiative for the proposals on transferability comes from us. My right hon. Friend put out a paper on the mobility of quota for discussion with all the possibilities laid out because we are anxious to see greater transferability and flexibility in the system. The discussion that has been taking place in recent weeks has followed our initiative.

It is too early to give our firm position on precisely what we shall be advocating because, as my right hon. Friend said, we are now having discussions with various bodies, including the NFU, on their reactions to our paper. Whatever changes we wish to advocate will have to be negotiated in Brussels with the Commission and Council. It is not yet possible to say when that can be done.

I can tonight reaffirm our determination to try to achieve as soon as possible appropriate greater flexibility over and above the proposals that we are discussing in the regulations. Transferability is a key part of that in terms of flexibility. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) asked about this year. For this year, before the end of March, we are endeavouring to achieve the proposals that are in front of us now. It may be possible to discuss the proposals for greater transferability this year, but I do not think that they would apply retrospectively to this year. I stress that there will be resistance from various quarters in the Community, but we shall do everything that we can to achieve greater flexibility.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) said that my right hon. Friend the Minister had mentioned that there might be some delay. It is not our wish that there should be a delay. We are anxious to see the proposals in the regulations implemented as soon as possible and we shall be pressing for their approval as soon as possible, preferably next week. Indeed, we have been pressing the mixed businesses proposal for many months. Now that we have got this far, we want to press it to a conclusion.

My hon. Friend said that, unless the mixed businesses proposal goes through, there could be super-levy penalties for producer-retailers. I agree with him about the position of the producer-retailer who is producing solely for the market, including exports, and not for intervention.

The swap shop proposals that we have introduced have helped the producer-retailer this year. We allowed producers to exchange direct sale quota for wholesale quota and vice versa through the swap shop by enabling them to make offers in an exchange that closed on 31 January. We always suspected that a heavy balance of wholesale quota would be offered, with much less direct sale quota. Offers of wholesale quota outweighed direct sale quota by only about five to two. That was helpful. It meant that those who wanted to exchange wholesale quota for direct sale quota got about 42 per cent. of their requirements. Those who offered direct sale quota for wholesale quota got all the wholesale quota that they wanted.

Of course we want to go further; that is the point of the proposed regulation on mixed businesses. It is clear that

if we can get it through this year, it will help all the producer-retailers who, because they are likely to be over the top on their direct sales, would pay supplementary levy this year. Excess direct sales total about 10·5 million litres, with a levy liability currently estimated to be about £1·8 million if the proposal is not adopted. That shows why we are pressing so hard for the proposal to be adopted. It would be exceptionally helpful for us to get it through as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West also asked about article 7, short-term leases and the implications for the United Kingdom. The article 7 proposal is designed to meet a specific German problem, just as the mixed business proposal was designed to meet a specific United Kingdom problem. It is optional, and member states would be free to apply it or not, as they judged fit.

We are discussing with the industry what arrangements we should be seeking to make movements of quota much easier in the United Kingdom, for greater flexibility. We are giving particular attention to the interest of landlords and tenants in milk quotas. When we have completed our discussions, we shall be able to judge whether we could or should make any use of the proposal in article 7 and whether to build on it.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) welcomed the proposal that is particularly important for Northern Ireland. Let me make the position clear. We estimate that, if the proposal goes through, it will require, allowing for transfers between producers, about 8 million to 10 million litres of quota to be transferred from Great Britain to prevent liability for levy in 1984-85. The current milk marketing boards' projections suggest that production in the rest of the United Kingdom will be sufficiently below quota for that requirement to be met. I know the importance that the hon. Gentleman attaches to our achieving that. The proposal is for this year only and does not affect future years. That is the position as the Commission has put it forward.

I turn to the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). I have noted that he welcomes the move towards transferability that we are endeavouring to achieve, but his particular points in that context are not covered by these regulations. They are much more relevant to any proposals that we may wish to put forward following consultation on the mobility of quota paper. I cannot, therefore, tell my hon. Friend what the position would be on the tax front, because we have not reached that point.

I assume that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, when asking about the price of milk, was referring to the Commission's price review proposals. We do not approve of the Commission's proposal for this year, and we shall argue against it.

My hon. Friend asked also whether the amendments would increase production. The amendments will not in themselves increase production. The crucial point about all the regulations is that they do not undermine the fundamental basis of the system. My hon. Friend asked about the cost of tribunals. We are nearly at the end of the tribunal cases. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will wish to table a question at an appropriate time so that we can give him the final answer.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Who will pay it?

Mr. MacGregor: No doubt my hon. Friend will table a question about that, too.

The hon. Member for Yeovil asked whether we intend to implement the article 3 proposal. My right hon. Friend the Minister made the position absolutely clear, but I shall repeat it. It would not be our intention to take up the option if that proposal went ahead, although it now seems unlikely that it will.

The hon. Member raised two points about mixed businesses. The details of the proposal are being discussed this week, and we do not have the final proposal. That proposal will come before us at the Council meeting on Monday next week. On the hon. Gentleman's first point we hope that the producer with a mixed business will be able to switch within the year from direct sales to whole sales, or vice versa, without limit so long as—this is the vital condition—the overall production stays within his overall quota. The hon. Gentleman's second point was about whether this would apply at the end of the marketing year. The intention is that the proposal should be able to be applied at the end of the marketing year—not just one year, but each year thereafter — to provide flexibility. Some of the details still have to be thrashed out, but it is intended to give the producer that opportunity.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) asked about late applications. As he will know, late applications are not affected by these regulations. They are a different aspect, going back to the regulations we passed in July 1984. In the vast majority of cases—there are only one or two occasions when there is an opportunity for late applications to be considered—we are bound by the regulations, and late applications cannot be considered. I a sure that the hon. Gentleman realises that we are all anxious to complete the process of the panels and tribunals on secondary quota applications. If one allowed late applications, there would be no end to the process.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) back, but I wholly reject the tenor of his remarks. In saying that my right hon. Friend put the clock into reverse in 24 hours, my hon. Friend is totally ignoring the fact that, time after time for some months, my right hon. Friend and I warned that we were having to look at the quota proposals because the price restraint option, which we would have preferred, seemed to be unnegotiable within the Community. Time and again we warned that the proposal in COM 500 was likely to come through in some form. My right hon. Friend did a tremendous job in getting the original COM 500 proposal into a shape that was acceptable to the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend should hear what is said about Ministers in other member states. There is no doubt that, compared with original COM 500 proposals, the eventual proposals on milk quotas were much more acceptable to the United Kingdom. I totally reject his allegations that my right hon. Friend is not fighting for British interests in the Community. He undoubtedly is, and with great success.

My hon. Friend said that my right hon. Friend had some reservations in his speech. This is an important point, and perhaps the best one to finish on. My right hon. Friend's reservations were not about what we in the United Kingdom intended to achieve through these proposals, but about the position of other member states that had reservations. We are in a community and other member states also have views. My right hon. Friend has made our position absolutely clear. We intend to get the proposals through, especially those of importance to the United

[Mr. MacGregor]

Kingdom, before the end of this marketing year. That is what we are setting out to achieve. I am extremely pleased that no hon. Member has suggested that we should not be doing so. We can go to Brussels next Monday with the support of the full House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4421/85 and supports the Government's intention of securing administrative modifications which in the light of experience would enable the milk supplementary levy to operate more efficiently and fairly throughout the European Community.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

AIR POLLUTION

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9219/83 and 11039/84, draft Directive and amendment on air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide, and 11159/83, Communication from the Commission concerning environmental policy in the field of combating air pollution; and supports the need for further monitoring of air pollution in the atmosphere.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

St. Oswald's School, Accrington

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.11 am

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): While I am most grateful for the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the problems currently faced by St. Oswald's Roman Catholic primary school in Accrington, I am sorry that the opportunity has come on a night when my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science could have registered his bisque and been happily tucked up in bed at this late hour. As a good Christian man the Minister will know that the debate was scheduled to start on Ash Wednesday — the beginning of Lent and the time for penance and sacrifice. I am happy to have helped him to get his Lent off to such a good start.

The history of the school can be traced back to 1952 when the chapel, which was also used as a school, was built on land given for the benefit of the people of Accrington. In 1869 when a new church was built, the original chapel became a school, which eventually moved to a building in Brown street in the Willows lane area of the town. In 1967 the building was declared unfit and a new school was built at the top of Willows lane in the area of Accrington called Fern Gore. The school has, therefore, been catering for the educational and spiritual needs of Roman Catholic children in Accrington for more than 130 years. It is still functioning as a school, even after the fire on 6 July 1983, which virtually destroyed it and left a mass of tangled metal with only two classrooms remaining standing.

Since the fire, the children have been housed in several temporary premises. Their current home is the ROSLA building at Mount Carmel high school. While everyone concerned with St. Oswald's fully appreciates the generosity of the governors of Mount Carmel in providing temporary accommodation, the position is unsatisfactory.

St. Oswald's children do not have sole use of the building but share it with 13 to 16-year-olds, as they share the school playground. Clearly four and five-year-olds should not be with 13 to 16-year-olds. It is wholly unsatisfactory and should be remedied with the utmost urgency.

The ROSLA building lacks many of the amenities of an average primary school. There is no school hall and the large classroom that is used for morning assembly is not large enough for physical education for the junior children. Cloakroom facilities are inadequate, and first and second-year infants keep their coats in their classroom. The toilet facilities are poor, and infants share two toilets with the junior boys in a dismal area with no windows, and in which the electric light must be left on all day. School dinners and packed lunches must be eaten in the classroom. In other words, the accommodation has all the hallmarks of temporary accommodation, and rather unsatisfactory temporary accommodation at that. Nevertheless it has allowed the school to stay together.

It is a tribute to the dedicated work of the acting headmistress, Mrs. Priestley, and her staff that despite the conditions 34 new entrants have registered at the school since the fire. That is 70 per cent. more than the original projected intake of 10 children per year.

That demonstrates the need for a Catholic primary school in the Fern Gore area of Accrington, because despite the difficulties faced at Mount Carmel the advantage is that it is situated only a quarter of a mile from the original site of St. Oswald's school.

If conditions are as unsatisfactory as I have outlined, one has to ask why parents continue to send their children there when there are at the moment spare places in other Catholic schools in the vicinity. I can appreciate those who do not know the area failing to understand the problem. One has to know the area to realise that the Fern Gore district of Accrington is at the top of a steep hill on the outskirts of the town. The steep hill, which must be climbed from all approaches, is a barrier to communication and travel. It is no simple journey on foot or by bus to get into the town centre from Fern Gore. The return journey is even more arduous. That journey would have to be undertaken each day to reach possible alternative schools at St. Anne's Accrington or the Sacred Heart, Church which are approximately two miles from St. Oswald's or St. Mary's Oswaldtwistle, which is a little nearer.

The journey is therefore too difficult to undertake on foot. It would consequently be necessary to take a bus. This is not an area in which daddy goes to work in the family car and mummy uses the second car to take the children to school, if daddy works at all. With the high unemployment rate, there is less than a 50 per cent. chance that he will travel to work by car. Even if he does, there will be no second car in the garage for mother to use.

It must be noted that St. Oswald's school has been designated as a social priority school. That status is based on the number of children having free school meals. At St. Oswald's, two thirds of the 65 children who stay qualify in that way. The qualification for free school meals is a low income—one child and a net income below £60 per week; two children and a net income below £75 per week; and three children and a net income below £90 per week.

The need to pay bus fares would therefore place an impossible burden on many families, especially those with more than one child, who already find difficulty coping on a low budget.

The sheer physical and financial difficulties to be surmounted, if they decide to send their children to an alternative school, are a major factor in the decision by parents to allow their children to remain at St. Oswalds even in the present unsatisfactory circumstances.

It is important to bear in mind that St. Oswald's was not just a school but was a commmunity centre for the people of Fern Gore. It boasted a thriving pack of brownies and guides, cookery, judo, badminton and dancing evening classes and a pre-school playgroup for 24 children. It is therefore a definite asset to an isolated community.

According to Lancashire county council's policy guidelines, community needs and the role of the school in the local community should be taken into account in urban as well as rural areas.

I have outlined the difficulties to be faced if the children have to attend alternative schools, but an even greater difficulty may have to be faced in the years ahead—that of finding a place in an alternative school.

We are all aware that the school population dropped dramatically because of the falling birthrate and St. Oswald's suffered as much as other schools in that respect. However, since 1978 there has been an increase in the birthrate, and that is confirmed by the difference between the projected figures for St. Oswald's and the numbers now registered.

According to Hyndburn borough council planning officer, the 1981 census shows that children under 10 form a higher proportion of the resident population in the area around St. Oswald's than in Hyndburn as a whole—17 per cent. under 10 as against 13 per cent., and that figure will be accentuated as property in the town centre and outside the catchment area for St. Oswald's is cleared.

In the past I have criticised Lancashire county council for taking too great a proportion of these surplus places from Church schools. In the case of St. Oswald's a letter of 6 December 1984 from the chief education officer, Mr. A. J. Collier, to the permanent secretary at the DES confirms that the education authority has accepted, as has the Salford diocesan schools commission, that there is a need for the 120 places which a rebuilt St. Oswald's school would provide. The borough council's report shows that that need will be greatest in the Fern Gore area.

Before the unfortunate fire, the Lancashire education authority and the local school governors were trying to find ways of reducing the number of places in Catholic schools in Accrington by the 40 per cent. of excess places requested by the DES. The loss of 345 places at St. Oswald's meant a reduction, not of 40 per cent. of excess places, but of 90 per cent. If St. Oswald's is rebuilt at 120 places, 60 per cent. of excess places will still have been removed. The Roman Catholic community in Accrington will therefore have done more than its share to provide the savings asked for by the Department. If St. Oswald's is not rebuilt, we will in the not-too-distant future be getting perilously close to denying parents the right to send their children to a denominational school of their choice.

I understand that there is some disagreement about whether the rebuilding of St. Oswald's should be a major project or a repair. The Catholic Education Council submits that it has always been DES practice to regard the reinstatement of a school destroyed by fire as a repair. If it is not a repair, what is it? Surely it cannot be a new school, certainly not in the legal sense, as a school still exists in the temporary accommodation, and there is no need for any section 13 proposals for its replacement in permanent accommodation.

The only people to benefit from a decision by the DES not to treat the rebuilding as a repair will be the insurance company, which will not have to meet the liabilities for which Lancashire county council had insured. The parents, the governors, the children and the teachers at St. Oswald's are not interested in departmental disagreements, but, like me, they find it unacceptable that an arsonist found guilty of causing £2 million worth of damage and sentenced to life imprisonment should leave one of his victims depending for its future on some definition of rebuilding status. Their concern, like mine, is that the school is rebuilt urgently. Their case is justified, but only on social and education grounds. However, I suggest that in the circumstances surrounding the destruction of the school, justice also demands that the school be rebuilt.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to give such rebuilding his urgent and sympathetic consideration so that St. Oswald's may serve the Roman Catholic community in Accrington for at least a further 130 years.

[Mr. Ashdown]

principle is being established. It is not the well-known principle, "If you can't beat them, join them," but rather, "If you can't beat them, get the Government to make them join you."

In the absence of the safeguards which we have sought from ther Government and which they have consistently refused to give, the Bill is revealed finally as no more than a mechanism for the Government to do the bidding of the clearing banks, and of the management of the trustee savings banks as well, to the cost of many of their depositors and some of their employees.

The Page committee said that there was a requirement in the banking sector for a third arm. It said that the TSBs could have become that third arm and fulfilled the need that it identified.

All right hon and hon. Members who have followed the issue closely recognise that some of that pass—perhaps all of it—was sold in the 1976 Act. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who had some dealings with the Act, generously admitted as much in his Second Reading speech. He said:

"The Bill would not have been before us . . . had we clarified ownership of the banks in the 1976 Act . . . it might have been better had we gone down the road of mutuality in 1976."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 50.]

That is true. That is how we see it.

The Bill could have reversed what happened after the 1976 Act. It could have gone a long way towards restoring that mutuality which Page thought so important and which it wished to see encouraged. It could have maintained what the Minister described as the unique character of the TSBs. It could have fulfilled the urgent need that Page identified for a third arm in the British banking sector. Instead, it has taken a noble and in some senses unique institution, founded in the community with the capacity to offer banking to some of our poorest and most deprived areas, and made it into yet another faceless financial conglomerate in the City of London.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South said on Second Reading that at that stage he would not vote against the Bill, but he called for a number of safeguards. He asked for stronger guarantees about ownership. Those have not been provided. He asked for details of the amount of shares to workers and depositors. We again asked for those in new clause 1. Those, too, have not been provided. He asked for further details on the flotation. Those, too, have not been provided.

The Page committee called for the TSBs to be made into mutual organisations. That has not been done. The committee called for the development of a third force in banking. The Bill will not do that, either. The committee believed that the customer first, profits later ethic that gave cheap banking facilities to the less well off should be preserved. The Bill will almost certainly destroy that unique quality of the TSBs.

The Government had a unique opportunity with the Bill to give a new dimension to an old and proud tradition. They have not taken it, and it is an opportunity that has, sadly, been missed.

There is a need for new types of institutions to stand between the great corporate financial structures so loved by the Tory party and the great corporate state structures beloved by the Labour party. We need community-based institutions serving individuals rather than either profit or the state. That is what the TSBs could have become. The Bill destroys that opportunity, and the alliance will vote against it.

12.28 am

Mr. Pike: I intend to vote against the Third Reading because I believe the Bill to be wrong. I have opposed all its stages, and the only way now to express opposition to it is by voting against the Third Reading.

If the amendments had been carried, they would have provided safeguards for the future of the Trustee Savings Bank, and I regret that they have been rejected. But, even if they had been carried, they would still have provided a bad solution, the Bill would not have been a good one, and I would still have voted against it.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) raised an important point of order at the start of Report stage. I respect the view of Mr. Speaker, and accept that his ruling was correct. He ruled that it was not for him to determine whether the Bill was legal. However, he did not say that the Bill was legal. He gave no interpretation of that point. I believe that my hon. Friend's point may well have been important. How can one privatise something that, at present, is owned by no one? The Bill is suspect and questionable. Those who vote for it tonight may be voting for a Bill that will be found to be illegal. What will their position be then?

I said, when speaking on one of the amendments, that the trustee savings banks have a long tradition of service, providing a personal banking service for the ordinary working people. I started work in the Midland bank in 1954. The Midland bank then owned the Clydesdale and North of Scotland bank, now the Clydesdale bank. At that time the TSB was playing its traditional role. Since then it has developed rapidly with the introduction of cheque book accounts and Trustcards, and many other developments. I am not opposed to the TSB developing to meet the 1990s and the years to come. No doubt certain changes need to be made to give the TSB the powers and freedom to develop and meet the demands both of present and future customers. But I do not believe that the Bill is the right way forward. It is regrettable that the Government have brought it in.

Once again, the Government express their belief that the employees in an industry should have the right to buy shares, but they are not prepared to make any concession to ensure that there will be worker directors within the organisation. We have not debated that point tonight, but it was debated in Committee. The same thing happened in the case of the royal ordnance factories and in other cases. The Government talk of giving greater participation to the employees of the organisations that they privatise, but they are not prepared to give them any special position on the board of directors. That is something that could have been done.

The Bill is a bad Bill and this is a sad day for the TSB. I hope that it will continue to prosper, but I feel that it will not be many years before it is taken over. Whatever assurances are given by the chairman now, he may soon be replaced. His assurances are not worth the paper on which they are written.

Some years ago there was a local brewery in Burnley, Massey's brewery, which had been there for more than 100 years. It brewed a very good pint of beer. It was taken over by Bass Charrington. An assurance was given that

there would be no closure of the brewery in Burnley. Surprise, surprise—the chairman of Massey's brewery suddenly became chairman of Bass North-West. He was also at that time the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lonsdale. As soon as he became chairman of Bass North-West, the Burnley brewery was closed down.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Is it not true that many of his right hon. and hon. Friends are not prepared to join the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) in the Lobby because one of the unions involved has done a deal? It is sad that, on so important an issue, hon. Members should be inhibited from supporting the hon. Gentleman by such a factor.

Mr. Pike: I am not aware of any such undertaking and am certainly not party to it. I am also sure that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench are not party to any such agreement or undertaking.

The brewery I was talking about closed, despite all the undertakings. The identity of and the service provided by the TSB will not survive for long as it will soon be merged and its employees will find themselves out of work. Technology and the existence of too many banks and building societies on the high street mean branch closures in the future. If the TSB is taken over, its employees will find themselves out of work. I hope that the House will think seriously about the Bill and vote against it receiving a Third Reading.

12.35 am

Mr. Ian Stewart: I do not want to rehearse the issues in the Bill, as they have already been dealt with. Before the Bill leaves the House, I should like to thank all those who have been responsible for arranging a complex and technical Bill that will provide an important basis for the future of the TSBs. I should also like to thank the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and her team for their generally constructive approach to the Bill.

On Second Reading, I spoke of the TSBs' long history and distinguished past. I also said that we were confident that they had an important future. The Bill releases the TSBs from the restrictions of direct parliamentary accountability and opens the way for their further development as they have chosen. On behalf of the Government and, I hope, most if not all hon. Members, I should like to wish them every success in the future.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 130, Noes 25.

Division No. 122] **[12.36 am**

AYES

Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Chope, Christopher
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cranborne, Viscount
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. John Major.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
Nellist, David
Parry, Robert
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Imports

2. **Mr. Cowans** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any estimate of the impact of *(a)* tax cuts and *(b)* public sector construction spending on imports.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Rees): It would be misleading to look at tax and expenditure decisions solely in terms of their relative import content. What matters is whether tax or expenditure decisions will contribute towards improved economic performance.

Mr. Cowans: Has the Minister read the input and output tables of the Department of Trade and Industry, which show conclusively that public sector construction is less import intensive than tax cuts? Will he now at last treat jobs as the main priority instead of putting forward his own pet theories?

Mr. Rees: Any addition to disposable income will go on imports, and that is true of higher wages as well as of additional income due to tax cuts. If the hon. Gentleman is consistent in his view, he is presumably also opposed to wage increases on the ground that they, too, suck in imports.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that it is not only tax cuts that have an effect on the economy, and that the Government are right not to set themselves a harsh target on the value of the pound, as many of the things that have happened have been very helpful to manufacturing industry, which in turn helps to strengthen the economy? Anyone who thinks that having a set target for the pound helps this country just does not understand the facts of economic life.

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is quite right. The export opportunities to, for example, the United States are enormous at present. Hon. Members will know that, even disregarding oil, the volume of exports rose by 9·5 per cent. in 1984 to reach an all-time high.

Infrastructure

3. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning the need for more public spending on the infrastructure.

Mr. Peter Rees: Several.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Minister has already accepted that tax cuts will not necessarily create jobs, but does he realise that there is evidence to show that money spent on the infrastructure would create two and a half times as many jobs as money spent in tax cuts? Will he accept that public spending is a necessary part of job creation?

Mr. Rees: I certainly accept that public spending can create jobs, but if the hon. Lady reflects for a moment she will realise that economies, such as the economy of Japan, which carry a low rate of public expenditure and a low tax burden are performing rather well, and are therefore creating more jobs.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: When considering public expenditure on the infrastructure, will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the return produced thereby? The last thing that we want is more fiascos like that of the Humber bridge, which act as a drain on the economy and destroy jobs in the long term?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Capital projects are bound to be looked at on an individual basis. There can be no absolutely correct level of capital expenditure on infrastructure projects. Each project must be looked at on a case-by-case basis to see whether it is likely to yield a proper return.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Minister aware that capital investment has fallen as a proportion of gross domestic product from an average of 19 per cent. under Labour to an average of 17 per cent. over the past four years? Is he further aware that Britain is now at the bottom of the investment league of major industrial countries? Is it not high time that he listened to the voices of industry, the unions and Members of Parliament of both parties and stepped up investment in our decaying infrastructure in order to provide real jobs and to make our economy more efficient?

Mr. Rees: If the hon. Lady was not mesmerised by the public sector — we all know her penchant for an East European economy — she would realise that capital investment is running at an all-time high.

Sir William Clark: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remind the House that if our public sector borrowing requirement were increased to provide more infrastructure investment it would put an added strain on the nation's finances, since the national debt costs taxpayers about £17 billion a year to service? Consequently, does he agree that anybody asking for increased public expenditure must realise that it would put further strain on taxpayers?

Mr. Rees: I accept my hon. Friend's analysis. He appreciates, just as I and other Government Members do, that by giving more scope for manoeuvre in the private sector we are creating scope for investment in that sector which can make for a more effective economy.

Mr. Donald Stewart: If, as is alleged, the main sewers are collapsing in all our main cities, does that not take care of all the dogmatic theories on both sides of the House?

Mr. Rees: I have to confess that I cannot talk with authority about the main sewers in Portree on the Isle of Skye, but I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that nearly £1 billion of public investment will be spent on water and sewerage services in 1985-86.

Capital Investment

5. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures available for the levels of capital investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lawson: Total fixed investment in the economy is reckoned to have reached about £55 billion in 1984, an all-time record in real terms. It is forecast to rise higher still this year.

Mr. Carlisle: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that one of the best indicators of the direction of the economy, of confidence in the future and of hope for jobs is the level of capital expenditure in manufacturing industry? What are the trends here?

Mr. Lawson: That certainly is one of a number of important indicators. My hon. Friend is right to refer to it. Provisional figures published today show that manufacturing investment increased by about 13 per cent. in real terms in 1984.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is not investment in manufacturing industries 30 per cent. less than it was when the last Labour Government left office?

Mr. Lawson: Investment in manufacturing is, indeed, less—although not by that amount—in real terms since 1979. Total business investment is at an all-time high. That is what the hon. Gentleman should take on board.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House that one of the great modern delusions is that all public capital expenditure is labour intensive? Is that not far from the truth?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend, who speaks with great experience from a distinguished career in municipal government, is absolutely right.

Job Creation

6. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any estimate of the effect of a £1·5 billion income tax cut on the level of unemployment.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): Income tax cuts will encourage enterprise and effort, facilitate lower wage settlements, and help to provide the conditions for improved economic performance and a sustainable increase in employment.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister please answer the question and give his estimate of the number of people who will be taken off the unemployment queues as a result of tax cuts? Does he agree that talk about incentives when 4 million people are unemployed is an insult to the unemployed, since they want work but it is not available? They are not shy of work. Would it not be better to put the money back into public capital expenditure instead of giving it away to the rich?

Mr. Moore: The weakness in our economy is not a lack of demand or a lack of public expenditure. Our weakness relates to our inability to compete effectively with foreigners in domestic and international markets. Tax cuts will help not only to stimulate enterprise and effort but to encourage lower wage settlements and to make our economy more competitive.

Mr. McCrindle: If a substantial part of the £1·5 billion were used to reduce the cost of employment by reducing further employers' national insurance payments, is it not arguable that that would have a better effect on unemployment than capital investment or reduction of personal taxation?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend has argued that point before, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will have heard his question. I am sure that my hon. Friend is pleased that, in the past five or six years, employer costs as a percentage of total taxation have decreased from 14 plus per cent. to 9 per cent. That shows the Government's recognition of the burden.

Dr. Bray: Although Treasury Ministers are quite mistaken in thinking that income tax cuts are the most effective means of stimulating employment, does the Financial Secretary, within his own terms of reference, agree with the Institute of Fiscal Studies that the worst way to improve incentives is to raise thresholds?

Mr. Moore: No, I do not agree with that suggestion. It has an attractive simplicity and I understand some of the points that the institute makes. Bearing in mind our exceptionally low thresholds, I thought that it was common ground that they always merit attention. I shall draw what the hon. Gentleman said to the attention of my right hon. Friend, who was listening carefully.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that but for the miners' strike we would be looking forward to much larger tax deductions in the Budget and therefore a much greater effect on employment? Will my hon. Friend remind taxpayers that if the Labour party had not given Arthur Scargill such solid support they would have more money in their pockets?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right to the extent that our gross domestic product grew by 2·5 per cent. last year —something more than 1 per cent. less than it might have grown. The strike has clearly had a significant impact on my right hon. Friend's ability to carry forward our policies. I hope that all hon. Members want there to be an end to this unnecessary dispute.

Mr. Terry Davis: How many jobs will arise from using £1·5 billion to cut taxes? Does the Minister not know, or is he refusing to tell us?

Mr. Moore: The simplicity that is evident in the hon. Gentleman's question sometimes makes me despair. To the extent to which the economy suffers from supply side difficulties, as opposed to demand difficulties, any attempt to reduce the taxation burden will increase job opportunities. Simple analysis of mathematical models fails to understand how supply side effects are improved by competition through tax cuts. Failure to understand that is at the base of the Opposition's inability to understand the Government's economic policies.

Public Expenditure

7. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any revisions to the estimates for the overshoot of public spending above targets contained in the recent public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Peter Rees: An updated estimate of the public expenditure planning total outturn for 1984-85 will be published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Mr. Duffy: At least the right hon. and learned Gentleman has not made his perennial boast about holding spending in real terms. Presumably he now knows that hardly anyone believes him. Moreover, he continues to threaten us with cuts in spending programmes which might have boosted wealth to fund a social security bill which is the direct result of the Government's failure to generate jobs. Contrary to what the Financial Secretary has just said, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that we want, not clamps on labour costs and price tags on public assets, but a sharp increase in spending power, which will increase wealth and jobs?

Mr. Rees: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the hon. Member for Tynebridge (Mr. Cowans) suggested that increased spending would suck in imports. Sustainable jobs will be created by the policy being pursued by the Government, not by a meretricious increase in spending on uncosted capital projects.

Mr. Stern: In the light of recent debates on water charges and local authority housing expenditure, does my

right hon. and learned Friend agree that those who call most stridently for increased public spending are often those who are most reluctant to find means to pay for it?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That was evident in some of our debates—for example, on the increase in water charges, which will open the way to increased capital investment by the water authorities of nearly £1 billion next year.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Will the Chief Secretary to the Treasury explain to us how he expects the external financing of the nationalised industries to be reduced by £3 billion over the next three years? When the Government last expressed optimism in 1980 they expected it to be reduced by £2 billion, but it never was. Why is the Chief Secretary more optimistic now than he was then?

Mr. Rees: It seems to have escaped the attention of the right hon. Gentleman that we have moved rather sharply out of the recession. It will also have escaped his attention that the nationalised industries are getting a rather firmer control over costs than they had before 1979.

Mr. Hickmet: May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend what he believes are the prospects for public expenditure overshoots on local authority expenditure and what effect he believes the present levels of local authority spending have upon job prospects and the economy as a whole?

Mr. Peter Rees: We believe that firm control of public expenditure is an important element in the Government's strategy and that that is the way to create sustainable long-term jobs. On my hon. Friend's precise question about local authority current spending, the Government have improved the control mechanisms. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend is a firm supporter of rate capping. Rate capping will operate on the 18 authorities which account for about 70 per cent. of the local authority overspend.

Economic Growth

8. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the growth rate of the economy in the last 12 months.

Mr. Moore: By the middle of this year our economy will have achieved four consecutive years of growth. The duration of the recovery will then be longer than any since 1945.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister explain to my constitutents why he is so pleased with those figures? If the pound has responded by going down, thus forcing inflation to start rising again, it masks a fall in industrial production. What figures does the Minister believe have to be achieved before unemployment starts to fall?

Mr. Moore: I should have thought that the whole House, whatever its legitimate concern about the long-term problem of tackling unemployment, would welcome the fact that we are in the middle of four years of recovery. As the hon. Gentleman is worried about our manufacturing capability, I hope that he will not only remember the words of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer a few moments ago about manufacturing investment being up by 13 per cent. in 1984, but that he will be interested in the fact that in 1984 manufacturing export volume was up by 11 per cent.—another piece of what I hope the hon. Gentleman thinks is good news.

Mr. Yeo: Has my hon. Friend noticed that the level of real interest rates is higher now than it has been, on average, for some time? Does he agree, therefore, that one of the most desirable forms of stimulus to the British economy would be a Budget which enabled real interest rates to be significantly reduced in the coming months?

Mr. Moore: The rate of real interest rates reflects one of the features of the last five years—the reduction of inflation. Obviously I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the budgetary recommendations of my hon. Friend, but what most industrialists and business men want, and what would add most to long-term employment, is a further reduction of inflation and the opportunity in wage settlements for our country to be competitive in terms of international wage unit costs.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: Does the Chancellor realise that the imposition of further taxation on the tobacco industry will seriously affect jobs in that long suffering sector and the economy of the country as a whole?

Mr. Moore: I commend the hon. Gentleman on the way in which he has been able to make a budgetary representation to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer by means of that question.

Sir William Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that one action that the Government could take to relieve unemployment would be the complete abolition of wages councils?

Mr. Moore: I am not quite sure how that fits as a budgetary representation, but I shall certainly draw the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends to that recommendation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How are discussions developing on the package of incentives for small businesses and the community programme that was commented upon a few weeks ago in the leader columns of the Sunday newspapers? Is it true that the Chancellor is under pressure from his own Back Benchers to introduce such a package, and will he make sure that if it is introduced it includes a substantial increase in the number of places made available under the community programme, because that would create real employment in areas such as mine?

Mr. Moore: I could not begin to comment on newspaper speculation, but I draw the hon. Member's attention to the major achievements in the small business sector over past years, especially the radical reduction in the corporation tax rate to 30 per cent.—a record low in the whole of the Western world.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cost of financing the miners' strike is a burden on the money markets, and that capital investment is not helped if there is a Scargill surcharge on mortgage payments?

Mr. Moore: There is no way in which industrial disputes of the kind that we are going through at the moment can in any way help our country's economic development. I am sure that all those who wish to see a reduction in unemployment, and a return to the kind of growth pattern that might have developed last year without the strike, would wish to see this unnecessary dispute ended.

Mr. Wainwright: To remove one of the obstacles to economic growth and to assist business confidence, will

the Government take advantage of the present favourable opportunity to open negotiations with a view to Britain joining the exchange rate mechanisms of the European monetary system?

Mr. Moore: I shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to that point. I think that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made the Government's position on that issue clear last Question Time, and that position has not changed since.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the factors restraining the economy is that the state is still far too much engaged in industry? Will he accordingly introduce plans to denationalise the gas, water and electricity industries, in order to release a large amount of money into the economy?

Mr. Moore: I have a distinct feeling that my hon. Friend's suggestion is somewhat wide of the question, but he is absolutely right in recognising the Government's privatisation programme as a key element in revitalising the economy.

Mr. Blair: Is not industry now paying about £1,000 million per year more for the cost of borrowing because of high interest rates? Are not real interest rates now the highest that they have ever been, under a Government who said that they should be judged by their achievement of low real interest rates? When will the Minister tell the House that those real interest rates will come down?

Mr. Moore: As I said earlier, in the last five years industry has seen a reduction in the burden of taxation relative to total taxation, from 14 per cent. of all taxes to 9 per cent. now. That is a significant achievement, which helps industry. I am sure that the hon. Member will help in further assisting industry by ensuring that pay settlements reflect productivity increases, instead of having the kind of pattern that has made our wage unit costs so unattractive in competitive terms.

Manufacturing Output

9. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest statistics for United Kingdom manufacturing output: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: Manufacturing output is estimated to have risen by some 3½ per cent. in 1984. This is the largest percentage increase in any year since 1973.

Mr. Hunter: I duly acknowledge and warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's answer, but, bearing in mind that opponents of the Government sometimes try to argue that such an increase from a relatively low baseline is fairly easily achieved, will he comment on any underlying trends or indications which suggest that that growth is sustainable?

Mr. Lawson: The growth is certainly sustainable; indeed, I am confident that it will be sustained, provided that the Government stick firmly, as they will, to the medium-term financial strategy.

Mr. Canavan: Why is our trade in manufactured goods now in deficit for the first time since the Industrial Revolution?

Mr. Lawson: I should have thought that the hon. Member, coming from a constituency in Scotland, would at least have heard of North sea oil and would realise that if there is to be a large surplus—as there is—on our oil account in the balance of payments, there is bound to be a corresponding deficit in regard to trade in manufactured goods.

Value Added Tax

10. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has recently received from disability organisations on the imposition of value added tax on building alterations.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): Over 100 from disabled individuals and their organisations.

Mr. Hannam: Is my hon. Friend aware that last year's extension of VAT to house adaptations has added a vast amount to the VAT bills faced by charities? Is he also aware that the system of relief for adaptations for the disabled is causing great confusion and anomalies? Will he remove them by extending relief to all household adaptations for the disabled?

Mr. Hayhoe: I have noted what my hon. Friend has said. He will recognise that last year special reliefs were given and at that time I said that the main objection to the proposal he has now made was revenue costs. The facts remain the same this year as last year.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware that after the last budget the Jewish Blind Society had an extra VAT bill of £100,000, the Spastics Society one of £120,000 and the Royal National Institute for the Blind one of £100,000? The result was that their work in the service of severely disabled people was adversely affected. Is this not an intolerable way to treat the voluntary sector?

Mr. Hayhoe: I met the representatives of the Charities VAT Reform Group and points along the lines of those mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman were made at that meeting. One has to see this in the broader context of the very significant concessions within the tax system made available to charities and the very substantial grants that are made by the Government to charities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my hon. Friend recognise that many charities undertake responsibilities which would otherwise be a direct and full charge upon the public purse? Will he therefore reconsider his policy with a view to putting in place a tax regime for charities that is coherent and systematically supportive of charities?

Mr. Hayhoe: The points made by my hon. Friend are those contained in the representations that the Chancellor has received from the Charities VAT Reform Group and, as has been indicated to that group, they will be given careful consideration.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Does the Minister agree that VAT on a vital alteration in a building for disabled people represents a tax on disability?

Mr. Hayhoe: No, I do not think that I would accept that proposition.

Mr. Yeo: Does my hon. Friend agree that the continued imposition of VAT on charities runs directly counter to the other helpful measures which the Government have tried to introduce in support of their wish for a partnership with the voluntary sector?

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not think that there is any question of trying to introduce—very substantial concessions and advantages have been introduced by this Government.

Mr. Ashley: Does the Minister recognise that the Treasury has been less than charitable to charitable organisations which are trying to carry out these adaptations for disable people? Why is he quibbling over a very tiny cost that could help many people in great hardship, especially when we know that the Chancellor is accumulating £1·5 million to give away in tax cuts?

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not think that "quibbling" is the right judgment to apply to the debates we had last year on that matter, and I was referring back to them. With regard to this year, it would, of course, be quite improper for me to seek to anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement. I again assert that the Government have done a great deal to help charities, particularly those dealing with the disabled.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Minister reflect on the answer that he gave to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones), who is surely right? Many disabled people need building alterations to cope with their disability. This is surely a tax on disability.

Mr. Hayhoe: When one takes account of the relief that was given in the last Budget in connection with building operations for facilitating access to buildings by the handicapped, and of the special zero rating of the first-time installation of a bathroom, washroom or lavatory for a handicapped person in his own home, one sees that very considerable relief was afforded to the disabled in the last Budget.

Job Creation

11. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any calculation of the impact of the recent public expenditure White Paper on unemployment.

Mr. Peter Rees: The Government's public expenditure plans are an integral part of their policies to encourage a vigorous and enterprising economy and, thus, the conditions for sustainable growth of jobs.

Mr. Lamond: Does the Minister realise that he is speaking against a background of growing unemployment, including another 1,000 men placed on the unemployment register in my constituency in Oldham, and that, despite the welter of statistics with which he tries to mislead the country, outside this building there are 4 million people, who are not statistics, who are unemployed, and to whom his boast of an expanding economy rings very hollow indeed?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the background against which I gave my answer. There was an increase in jobs of 389,000 between the third quarter of 1983 and the third quarter of 1984.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that unemployment in the construction industry could be reduced significantly if development land tax was amended significantly? Does he agree also that the cost of collecting this pernicious tax exceeds the net revenue that is enjoyed from it?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend's second proposition is not correct. As for prospects of abolishing or curtailing the tax, my hon. Friend will have to wait for 19 March.

Mr. Ron Brown: If things are on the up and up, as is alleged, why is it that Rowntree Mackintosh is closing its profitable factory in Edinburgh? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman answer that question?

Mr. Rees: No, because I am not answerable for Rowntree Mackintosh.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, irrespective of what the White Paper may say, if workers continue to ask for more money than the value of the goods they produce they will put more and more people out of work? Would it be an idea for the teaching profession to learn that as well?

Mr. Rees: I am sure that the House will accept my hon. Friend's analysis. I hope that the lesson is learnt by the trade union movement.

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the reduction of £1 billion in spending on construction next year compared with expenditure in the previous year result in more, or fewer, jobs?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman, like his hon. Friends, is focusing on the public sector. He should consider housing starts in the private sector.

North Sea Oil

12. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has revised his forecast of the total tax take from North sea oil in the light of exchange rate and oil price movements that have occurred since the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Moore: The latest forecasts of North sea tax revenues will be published on Budget day.

Mr. Fisher: Is it not a fact that, since the Autumn Statement, the pound has fallen 12 cents against the dollar? In the light of Treasury Ministers telling the Select Committee that each cent. is worth about £150 million more in oil revenues for Britain, that means that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has about £1·8 billion of manoeuvre for his Budget statement. Will he use that money to create jobs in industry and not waste it as he has wasted it before?

Mr. Moore: It is important to remind the House of what was said by Treasury Ministers and the chief economic adviser at the meeting to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. When asked about calculations, the chief economic adviser said:

"to achieve a systematic set of calculations right across the board you have to specify rather precisely quite a lot of assumptions about whether one is speaking of a particular bilateral rate, or whether one is speaking about the effective rate and in turn what effects you think that would have upon world commodity prices, and particularly upon oil prices, the impact upon the inflation rate etc."

The chief economic adviser was trying to point out the danger of the simplistic trap into which the hon. Gentleman has sought to lead us. He should recognise the other implications for oil price and exchange rate changes.

Mr. Malone: Does my hon. Friend agree that the tax take from the North sea will be vital in the long term for Britain's economy? Is it not absurd that the Leader of the

Opposition has announced that it is his policy to take and retain controls over North sea oil development? This will prejudice development in the North sea and eventually the tax take from it.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. The tax revenue system, as he will know from his Scottish experience, is extremely important. He will know also, from the Autumn Statement, that revenues expected in the current fiscal year amount to £12 billion. It is forecast in the Autumn Statement that revenues in 1985-86 will be a similar £12 billion. North sea oil is an important national asset, and my hon. Friend is right to draw our attention to the fact that it will, we trust, continue to produce good results for the nation for many significant years.

Value Added Tax

13. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received regarding the imposition of value added tax on newspapers.

Mr. Hayhoe: Over 2,000 representations about the imposition of VAT on books, newspapers and periodicals.

Mr. Caborn: Has the Minister considered the Price Waterhouse report, commissioned by the Newspaper Society, which suggests that the imposition of VAT in this area could result in the loss of 7,000 jobs and over 100 titles? Is this part of the budget for jobs?

Mr. Hayhoe: The Price Waterhouse report referred to by the hon. Gentleman is one of the many representations and pieces of information that have been received and are being considered.

Mr. Dykes: In view of the representations received, does my hon. Friend agree that to impose VAT on the cover price of local newspapers would be a crippling blow to many of them?

Mr. Hayhoe: I have met representatives from the Newspaper Society, who have made their case with considerable strength.

Mr. Barron: With regard to the likelihood of VAT being imposed on newspapers, has the Treasury considered what will happen to local free newspapers which rely solely on revenue from advertising and provide a good service for their communities? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that they will be unable to pass on costs to their customers because they are free sheets? Is he aware that this service may fold up?

Mr. Hayhoe: As I said, representations have been received across the board. I met representatives of the Association of Free Newspapers, who again have made the case for free newspapers with considerable vigour.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is paying an official visit to the United States.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to confirm, in regard to limited list prescribing, that it is and always has been the Government's intention that a full and comprehensive list of drugs should be available for all National Health Service patients, irrespective of their ability to pay? Will he, therefore, condemn the disreputable behaviour of a small minority of doctors who have grossly misrepresented the Government's proposals and in so doing have caused their patients, particularly their elderly patients, acute anguish and distress?

Mr. Biffen: I can confirm that it has always been the intention that the list should be comprehensive and well judged. I agree that there has been a good deal of public misapprehension about what is intended. I very much hope that that problem will be resolved when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services makes a statement later this afternoon.

Mr. James Hamilton: When the right hon. Lady comes back from America, will the Leader of the House ask her to visit Strathclyde region, where half of the male population who are unemployed and drawing benefit have been unemployed for over a year, where 40 per cent. of them have actually been unemployed for over two years and where 40 per cent. of the women between the ages of 30 and 59 have also been unemployed for over two years? Is it not time that the Prime Minister paid a visit to the region to see at first hand the effects of her economic policy?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend is undoubtedly sufficiently seized of the problems of unemployment not to need to visit any particular part of the United Kingdom to realise that it is a substantial and widespread difficulty. In that context, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will at least take some solace from the latest figures of the Department of Employment, which show that the number employed is rising, and rising quite well.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Cockeram.

Mr. Cockeram: Has my right hon. Friend had time to study the figures——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Question No. 2.

Q2. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cockeram: Has my right hon. Friend had time to study the figures to which he referred in his reply to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton)? Is it not remarkable that the number of people in work has risen by over one third of a million in the last 12 months? Is not this the other side of the coin to the number joining the unemployment register and seeking work, which of course includes married women?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is right in the point that he has made. Without doubt, a study of the register demonstrates the importance of the self-employed in our economy and, therefore, of economic policies designed to encourage their interests.

Ms. Harman: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm, or deny, that I am being subjected to political snooping by

MI5? If I am, will he arrange for me to see a copy of my file? Is it not the case that such snooping is outside the guidelines, since information gathered on me clearly has nothing to do with national security?

Mr. Biffen: If it is of any interest to the House, I am in absolutely no position to comment upon what may have been the situation of the hon. Lady. She will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary confirmed on 7 February what has been the practice of successive Governments, that it was never the practice in cases of individuals where telephone tapping was alleged either to confirm or deny that interception had taken place.

Q3. **Mr. Ward** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ward: Will my right hon. Friend urge our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to study carefully the representations made by Poole borough council on Sunday trading? May we have an early assurance that action will be taken to clear up the collection of anomalies that exist at the moment?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the representations of Poole council will be among the many that will be assessed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. Indeed, the House will wish to assess them when it, in turn, debates the Auld report. My hon. Friend will recollect that that matter was considered in private Members' time in the last Parliament, and on that occasion a sharp division of opinion was revealed.

Mr. Bell: I take on board the earlier responses of the Leader of the House, but can he remind the Prime Minister, on her return from Washington, of her written promise to me to visit Teesside in the lifetime of this Parliament? Will he further remind the Prime Minister that 1,000 jobs were lost in the first 10 days of the year and that there is nothing like personal experience of unemployment to chasten the mind and change the Government's policies?

Mr. Biffen: I say particularly in the context of the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton) that a visit to Teesside, no less than a visit to Scotland, is a pleasurable prospect. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Gentleman's point. On the wider issue of unemployment, I go back to the answer that I have given hitherto. I believe that it is the Government's policies that will ultimately provide the basis for a recovery in employment, and there is some harbinger of that in the figures for those who are actually in work.

Q4. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are press reports that the United Kingdom may make a bid to have the 1992 Olympic Games in this country? Is he further aware that there are other places in this country than London? Does he appreciate that somewhere north of Watford is an area known as the north-west, where we have some of the finest sporting facilities in the country? Does my right hon. Friend not think that Manchester would be a splendid venue for the 1992 Olympic Games?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend says, championing the claims of Manchester. The appropriate action would be for the city to make its cause favoured by the British Olympic Association. I suggest that as the course that my hon. Friend should follow. I should also like to make this observation. By the time we come towards the casting of the Olympic Games, I believe that some authorities in England will be happy to declare themselves Olympic-free zones.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Leader of the House confirm that it is the British Government's policy in no way to support American backing for the Contras against Nicaragua? Will he make sure that that point is made clear by the Prime Minister to President Reagan during her present visit?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the Prime Minister will make the most clear and explicit statements promoting the British national interest in the Caribbean, and that they will not be lost on the American regime.

Q5. **Mr. Temple-Morris** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the executive of the National Union of Mineworkers has utterly isolated itself, not only from the Coal Board, but from nearly half — probably more — of its own membership and the leadership of the British trade union movement? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that it is about time that the Labour party condemned the strike and appealed, together with us in the Conservative party, for a return to work as soon as possible?

Mr. Biffen: The House will be aware that the Secretary of State for Energy will answer a private notice question on that matter in a few moments. I should like to respond to my hon. Friend by saying that I believe that Mr. Scargill has no hope whatsoever of securing victory, but he has a very real prospect of dividing his union.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Leader of the House aware that another construction can be put on the toings and froings between the TUC, the Government and the Coal Board? Many members of the NUM and others believe that the TUC was hoodwinked by the Prime Minister and that the liaison committee, headed by Norman Willis, came back with a deal that was infinitely worse than the one the week before.

Mr. Biffen: I cannot join the hon. Gentleman in delivering so magisterial a rebuke to the TUC — one which alleged, above all, that it displayed the cardinal crime of innocence when in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I do not think that Ray Buckton is hoodwinking material. This instance demonstrates the intransigence of Arthur Scargill and the reason why, from

the very outset, it has never been possible to come to a reasonable and working arrangement to terminate the strike.

Q6. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Loyden: Will the Leader of the House urge the Prime Minister, when she returns, to clarify the position of members of the Transport and General Workers Union working at the Ministry of Defence who have been dismissed? The reason for dismissal given to Mrs. Balkinson and other women was that their security screening clearance had run out. The decision taken by the contractors might be a reason for the dismissal. The trade union movement has been unable to obtain a clear answer from the Government. May we take it that this is part of the post-Ponting hysteria that prevails at the Ministry of Defence? Will the right hon. Gentleman press for this matter to be cleared up as soon as possible?

Mr. Biffen: I should like to thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving me notice that he would raise this question. I understand that the matter is now before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I shall certainly ensure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is apprised of the question when she returns from the United States.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the greatest scar and scab on this nation is Arthur Scargill? Does my right hon. Friend remember that 10 months ago I advised the house that Scargill was a Marxist surrounded by Communists and supported by the Kremlin? Does my right hon. Friend accept that we know that Scargill is a Marxist surrounded by Communists and that Russian money is coming into his grubby little hands?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the whole House realises that Mr. Arthur Scargill is possessed of a wide range of formidable qualities, many of which were covered by my hon. Friend's question. What the House is entitled to know, and what doubtless will be revealed when we come to the private notice question, is how many hon. Members remain in the Arthur Scargill fan club.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Leader of the House aware that there is wide public concern about Government threats to employees' pension schemes in companies and to the state earnings-related pension scheme? Will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that the Government will not undermine the employees' occupational pension schemes either by changes in taxation or by DHSS proposals for portable pensions? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the specific statement made by the Prime Minister during the general election campaign—that there are no plans to change the earnings-related component of the state pension — still defines the Government's position?

Mr. Biffen: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the earnings-related scheme is covered by one of the reviews now being undertaken by my right hon. Friend. The right hon. Gentleman, together with the rest of us, will have to wait to learn the consequences of the review.

On the taxation of pensions, the right hon. Gentleman knows that he makes comments that invite a judgment upon the Budget. First, he addressed the wrong person; and, secondly, he asked his questions at the wrong time, as they are just ahead of the Budget. He should take a lesson in patience and, in the best Asquithian sense, wait and see.

Mr. Kinnock: On occupational pensions, I urge the right hon. Gentleman to convey to his right hon. Friend that it is a pension scheme, which in every respect has been worked for and paid for by people in this country, and they must not be let down for any reason, including the taxation convenience of the Government.

The right hon. Gentleman said that the inquiry would cover the earnings-related scheme, yet his right hon. Friend said that the aim of setting up the inquiry was not to call into question the fundamental pension structure established in the 1970s. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that, with or without the inquiry, there will be no disadvantageous changes in the state earnings-related pension scheme?

Mr. Biffen: No, I must say quite clearly——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why is the Secretary of State for Energy telling the right hon. Gentleman what to say?

Mr. Biffen: I shall provide National Health spectacles for the hon. Gentleman if he thinks that I am seeking to get a message from my left hand side.

I shall not stand at this Box and say anything that prejudices either the Budget considerations or the outcome of the pension reviews now being conducted by my right hon. Friend.

Coal Industry Dispute

3.31 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the mining dispute following the decision of the National Union of Mineworkers' executive yesterday.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): Mr. Norman Willis, on behalf of the TUC, held a series of discussions with the chairman of the National Coal Board. As a result of those discussions, proposals were prepared by the board which expressed the basis upon which an agreement could be reached on the main issues of the dispute. Those proposals took account of the views Mr. Willis had expressed to the board. Over the weekend, the TUC showed that paper to the NUM executive, which asked for amendments to be made.

The National Coal Board confirmed to the TUC that this was its final paper. The TUC then requested a meeting with the Prime Minister. The TUC confirmed to the Prime Minister that the proposals under discussion would, if agreed to, constitute the final agreement on all of the matters with which they dealt, and that they were not a document which would be an agenda or form the basis of any further negotiations on these issues.

The TUC explained to the Prime Minister that it had a number of difficulties with the document, and my right hon. Friend undertook that it would convey its views to the National Coal Board. That was done, and subsequently the seven TUC leaders asked to have further talks with me before they met the National Coal Board. During those talks I clarified the Government's desire to see that the new NACODS procedures were brought into operation as speedily as possible, and that it was the National Coal Board's intention that they would be in place by the time they were needed. I explained that neither the board nor the Government could accept a position where, if the NUM refused to agree to the detail of the independent body, no review procedures would exist because that might have the effect of the NUM being able to frustrate any reasonable plans for closure. The document was therefore amended to express the desire of all parties to see that the new procedures were in operation by 1 June, which would be well in time for any disputed closure to be referred to the independent body.

The document was further reordered to meet the NUM's anxiety that its sequence as originally drafted could have implied that disputed closures would take place prior to going through the proper procedures. A reordering of the document made it perfectly clear that a disputed closure would take place only at the end of the agreed procedures.

I share the TUC's disappointment that the NUM executive has rejected the proposals which had been made. The NUM executive has now rejected proposals in seven rounds of talks, the compromise proposal put forward by ACAS and the proposals prepared following discussions between the TUC and the National Coal Board.

I deplore the fact that the generous and reasonable offers now available to miners continue to be rejected by the NUM executive. Those coalfields which originally balloted voted overwhelmingly against strike action. I can only urge those miners still on strike, though deprived of a ballot, to return swiftly to normal working so that the damage being done to their industry, their families and their communities can come to an end.

Mr. Benn: Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement entirely fails to explain how the executive and delegate conference of the NUM unanimously rejected conditions which were much worse than the ones discussed over the weekend? Is he also aware that the leadership of Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey—the subject of unfavourable comment in the House—has throughout earned the unanimous support of the executive and the delegate conference?

Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that the NUM executive is, and remains, ready to meet for discussions without preconditions, but that after the enormous sacrifices made by the miners, two thirds of whom are still on strike—87 per cent. of those who have ever been on strike are still on strike—it is not prepared to accept the 13 per cent. cut in its industry which Mr. Michael Eaton announced on television? Is he also aware that the public is beginning to understand that the Government planned, financed and sustained the strike, and now want it to continue, and that that, among many other reasons, is why there is a substantial fall in the Government's popularity as well as in the value of the pound?

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Gentleman's opening remarks are a gross insult to seven leading trade union leaders. For the executive of the NUM to say that not just Mr. Norman Willis, but people like Moss Evans, David Basnett, Ray Buckton and Bill Keys went back with a document which was worse than the one they took last Sunday is a total criticism of those trade union leaders. No one could look at those documents and say that this was a much worse proposal.

As to the support for the three NUM leaders mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman, they are the only NUM leaders in history who have divided their union from top to bottom.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): It is a personal disappointment that the talks have broken down, and my right hon. Friend has told us why. However, those miners who have been working since the strike began are becoming highly agitated by the fact that their outstanding pay award has not been implemented. Has my right hon. Friend any contingency plans for talking to them?

Mr. Walker: This is obviously a matter for the National Coal Board. The figures which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) gave about the number of miners now at work are totally and completely inaccurate. In fact, within the next few days I expect more than half the NUM membership to be at work. The other two unions are at work. Yesterday, Mr. Vincent rushed out of the meeting and gleefully said, "We rejected all the proposals". When he said "We", he forgot that in his own area 83 per cent. of NUM members are at work.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Will the Secretary of State confirm that substantial concessions have been made by the NUM, including acceptance of the modified colliery review procedure agreed at ACAS between the NCB and NACODS last October? That was reaffirmed this morning. Therefore, the misunderstanding which has arisen over the NCB document — it is not a TUC document—could be resolved by immediate direct talks

between the full NUM executive and the NCB. Did not the TUC also attempt to facilitate those direct talks? Therefore, instead of insisting that there will be no further talks, will the Secretary of State facilitate such a meeting so that a negotiated settlement can be agreed and this damaging and painful dispute brought to an end?

Mr. Walker: I wish to make it perfectly clear that the Coal Board has said — with the Government's full support—that there will be no further talks on the main issues in the document. The reason why there will be no further talks is that the Trades Union Congress came to the National Coal Board, had a series of talks, returned suggesting further amendments, which were made, sat at No. 10, and all seven TUC leaders confirmed that this agreement would not be subject to further negotiation. The Government and the Coal Board stick to that position.

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that Mr. Willis was hoodwinked? Does he agree that many thousands of ordinary decent working miners have been hoodwinked by Mr. Scargill and his cronies into supporting what is now exposed as a political, not an industrial, strike? Does he agree that the solution is in their hands, and that they should return to work?

Mr. Walker: We know that the Left wing of Labour party politics is currently conducting a campaign against Mr. Willis. It was not just Mr. Willis but a wide range of trade union leaders, from left and right of the spectrum, who took the decisions. We must be clear that anyone who makes accusations about hoodwinking makes them against seven of the top trade union leaders in the United Kingdom.

On the question of who has been led astray, I remind the House that for the first time in living memory miners were deprived of a ballot. They were then subject to mob picketing, never previously witnessed in this country. The tragedy is that, although the best offer has been made since nationalisation, miners' families and mining communities have suffered more than at any time since the war.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Does the Secretary of State agree that the policy of continuous negotiation and of dribbling out concessions has probably extended the strike? Does he agree that there is a strong likelihood that the strike will come to an end more quickly if there is a clear pause in negotiations?

Mr. Walker: At the time of the ACAS compromise proposal it was perfectly reasonable for the Coal Board to say that there was no point in having further talks with Mr. Scargill. The board said that until Mr. Scargill confirmed that he was willing to accept the reality that uneconomic pits must face the prospect of closure there was no point in having further negotiations. Recently, at the request of the TUC, further negotiations have taken place. Mr. Scargill slapped the TUC in the face in the same way that he slapped ACAS in the face. As far as I am concerned, talks about the issues dealt with in the document have come to an end.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there has been a genuine and sustained effort by Mr. Willis and the TUC to help to solve the dispute, and that once again Mr. Scargill and his supporters are out of line with TUC thinking and the way in which industrial relations in the coal industry should be conducted?

Mr. Walker: The seven trade union leaders in the TUC group made a detailed examination. Anyone who objectively studies the documents now available will recognise that it is lunacy not to obtain a settlement based on them.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Will the Secretary of State explain to the House the role of Michael Eaton in the dispute, who last weekend made statements about negotiations that were taking place in London when he was in Yorkshire? Will the right hon. Gentleman further explain why he has not used his office to bring both sides of the dispute to the table and to chair a meeting so that sensible face-to-face negotiations may take place instead of little lads scurrying to and fro with letters? Will the right hon. Gentleman now come to his senses and allow negotiations to take place?

Mr. Walker: I can only say that talks have taken place across the table between the two parties on seven occasions and after every meeting Mr. Scargill's boast has been that he has not moved an inch. I am not sure which "little lads" the hon. Gentleman is referring to, but if he is referring to the seven trade union leaders who have done their best during this past week, I find that a rather strange comment.

Mr. Francis Maude (Warwickshire, North): As the NUM executive has made it quite plain that it is not prepared to make any concessions whatever, will my right hon. Friend make it clear that there is now no basis on which talks can proceed, and that the only hope of ending the strike lies in a continued return to work?

Mr. Walker: With regard to the crux issues which are dealt with in the document, the NCB has made its final position clear. That has been rejected by the NUM executive. Until the executive accepts those proposals, I fear that the strike must go on. But it is in the interests of the industry that every striking miner should recognise that he will serve his industry best by returning immediately to work.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Is the Secretary of State aware that Geoff Kirk, who had been at the NCB since 1947 and who had advised every chairman, and Ned Smith, the chief negotiator, who had been at the NCB since 1947 and who had advised every chairman, have left the board? Is it not a fact that they said that they could no longer stomach what the board, Ian MacGregor and the Government were doing to the miners and the mining industry?

Mr. Walker: What the board was offering in terms of pay, investment, early retirement programmes and businesses for mining communities was better than anything offered by any previous National Coal Board or under any Labour Government.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): How many more coal faces can the NCB afford to lose as a result of the strike before it is forced, even against its wishes, to withdraw the offer now on the table?

Mr. Walker: The situation is already serious in that 38 working faces have been lost during the dispute. Thus there has been a serious deterioration in the industry's capacity. Unfortunately, many of those faces were in pits

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

touch with Lancashire LEA to obtain what remaining facts are required; and the deputation which my hon. Friend is bringing to see me early next month will no doubt be of further assistance by providing other relevant information. My hon. Friend will understand that while this review is in progress I cannot give any undertaking that grant-aid will be available to enable St. Oswald's to be rebuilt in 1985-86. What I can undertake, and do so willingly, is that the school will not have to wait long for an answer.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Three o'clock am.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 February 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Order. As all the private Bills have blocking motions, I shall, with the leave of the House, deal with them in a single group.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

C-POULTRY COMPANY LIMITED BILL *(By Order)*

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL (GENERAL POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

HARROGATE STRAY BILL *(By Order)*

LINCOLN CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

PLYMOUTH MARINE EVENTS BASE BILL *(By Order)*

SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

STREATHAM PARK CEMETERY BILL *(By Order)*

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 28 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Medium-term Financial Strategy

1. **Mr. Bell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to achieve his targets as regards sustainable growth and jobs, as set out in the medium-term financial strategy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): Output has been growing steadily for the best part of four years and employment has been rising since the first quarter of 1983. With inflation under control, those trends are expected to continue.

Mr. Bell: The nation will not recognise the picture that the Chancellor of the Exchequer painted. Does he agree that output has not yet reached the level of 1979 when the Labour Government left office? Does he agree that the medium-term financial strategy had three elements: the conquest of inflation, sustainable growth, and job creation? Is it not a fact that they are mutually exclusive, that he has not conquered inflation, or achieved sustainable growth, and that he cannot create jobs? When will the Chancellor tell the House that he is abandoning the medium-term financial strategy?

Mr. Lawson: From someone who is normally as well informed as the hon. Gentleman, I have never heard so many errors in a single question. First, output, far from not having reached the 1979 peak, exceeded the 1979 peak in 1983, went still higher in 1984, and is expected to go higher still in 1985. The latest figures for employment published only yesterday show that during the 18 months to September 1984 there was an increase of about 480,000. That is a substantial increase, in which an increase in self-employment has played a large part. My right hon. and hon. Friends will be glad to know that. Far from the conquest of inflation being incompatible with a healthy economy, growth and more jobs, it is one of the essential elements in the foundation for more jobs, although there are also other elements.

Mr. Forman: While I welcome the Government's record since 1981 in boosting both output and employment, does my right hon. Friend believe that there is a place now for treating the public sector borrowing requirement calculation on an oil-adjusted basis?

Mr. Lawson: I read with great interest the pamphlet written and published by my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples). Many adjustments must be made to the PSBR in different directions to decide on an appropriate level. Those adjustments were all made. The factors were all taken into account when the last medium-term financial strategy was published in March 1984.

Mr. Wainwright: Since the Chancellor recently published a careful study of the effect on the number of jobs of lower employment costs, will he tell the House approximately how many new jobs he reckons will have resulted from the abolition of the national insurance surcharge last year?

Mr. Lawson: It is extremely difficult to put a figure on that, but the same factor would broadly apply as applied in the Treasury paper, that is, the 1 per cent. lower level of real earnings would over time be expected to result in between 110,000 and 220,000 additional jobs.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, in the light of the world recession and the decades of industrial decline that preceded this Government's tenure of office, his financial strategy is working well in the national economic interest? Will he acknowledge the great role being played by new and small businesses in the creation of jobs within the economy? Furthermore, will he have regard to the wishes of my constituents that that should be taken into account in the forthcoming Budget?

Mr. Lawson: I always take my hon. Friend's representations very carefully into account when framing my Budget.

2.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) obtained this Adjournment debate, as it allows me to pay tribute to him for the way in which he diligently and successfully represents the interests of his constituents. I have noted carefully the points that he has made about St. Oswald's school in Accrington and shall do my best to respond fully in the short time available to me.

I should like to start by expressing my sympathy to the pupils, staff and parents of St. Oswald's for the loss of what was clearly a well-loved school building. I quite understand how important this issue is to local people in Accrington, and I am aware of the difficult conditions in which St. Oswald's is having to work, as so graphically described by my hon. Friend. My hon. Friend's constituents have left me in no doubt on that matter. I should also like to pay tribute to the efforts of the headteacher and staff of St. Oswald's to ensure that, despite the inevitable disruption following the fire, the damage to the education of the pupils has been kept to a minimum. It is clear that they have retained the full confidence of pupils and parents alike throughout these difficult circumstances. I should like particularly to acknowledge the charming letters written by pupils of the school, many of which are illustrated with their designs for a new school.

In replying to my hon. Friend, I shall try to explain the background against which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has to take his decisions about this particular school. I shall start by explaining the history of our involvement with St. Oswald's, then I shall cover the national issues and Government policy that affect this case, and finally I shall discuss the way in which Lancashire's aided schools, and in particular St. Oswald's, fit into this background.

First, the history of the case. On 8 August 1983, we received a letter from the Salford Roman Catholic diocesan schools commission informing us that St. Oswald's school had been completely destroyed by fire on 6 July. The letter explained that exhaustive efforts had been made to find suitable alternative accommodation for the school's pupils and that the only possible solution involved using spare accommodation at Mount Carmel high school, supplemented by a double temporary classroom unit, for the purchase of which urgent approval was sought.

In this case, because of the urgency of the situation, approval was given over the telephone on 11 August for the work to start immediately, before the formal documentation usually required in such cases was received and processed. The House will see, therefore, that the swiftest action was taken in the Department to safeguard the interests of the pupils of St. Oswald's. When the appropriate documents were eventually sent in, the Department was asked to approve the purchase of three temporary classrooms, and so far some £34,000 has been paid in grant, at the rate of 85 per cent. towards the cost of that accommodation for St. Oswald's

We heard nothing further about St. Oswald's until February 1984, and I understand that, in the meantime, the Lancashire education authority had been conducting a general review of primary school provision in the Hyndburn area and was not prepared to commit itself on the future of St. Oswald's until that review had been completed. In February 1984 I received a letter from my hon. Friend enclosing one from the St. Oswald's action group, which said that Lancashire had agreed to the rebuilding of the school. My hon. Friend will recall that in my reply I pointed out that, as the project had not been included in the 1984-85 building programme by Lancashire LEA, and as that programme was already fully committed, there was no prospect of the rebuilding of St. Oswald's proceeding in the immediate future.

I am aware that since then both the Salford schools commission and Lancashire LEA have disputed the Department's view that the rebuilding from scratch of a school that has been completely destroyed by fire should be regarded as a new capital project to be met from the LEA's allocation for voluntary school building works. They have maintained that building works of this kind are equivalent to a repair and, as such, should not need to be met from Lancashire's annual allocation.

The Catholic Education Council has also challenged this view in the case of St. Mary's school at Madeley in Shropshire, which has suffered a similar fate to St. Oswald's. The issues involved are complex and have considerable ramifications beyond the two specific cases being considered.

I hope my hon. Friend will appreciate, therefore, that in the light of the wider implications, in particular my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's various statutory responsibilities, we must give the most careful consideration to what is the correct conclusion, and that I cannot at this stage say what that will be.

However, I would not wish to mislead my hon. Friend or his constituents about this issue. Even if we concluded that, legally, the rebuilding of St. Oswald's counted as repair, that would not necessarily mean that work on the project could start immediately. Work of this magnitude requires approval and must be considered against the total resources available.

Even for smaller repair projects we have for several years, run with the agreement of the appropriate voluntary bodies, run a system of voluntary rationing on repair projects. This involves assessing needs and priorities, and St. Oswald's would have to be considered against other competing claims.

If it were treated as a repair, the governors' share of the expenditure on which grant-aid would be payable would be some £150,000, and if it were to go ahead it would pre-empt a significant part of the budget for repairs, and other worthwhile projects would necessarily be delayed. When considering any project, however it is classified, my right hon. Friend has a duty to satisfy himself that it is a wise use of public funds, particularly at a time when, nationally, funds are restricted.

Until now the proposed work at St. Oswald's has been classified as a new capital project and was considered as such when the allocations for 1985-86 were drawn up. I would now like to devote some attention to the issue of why St. Oswald's failed to find a place within the total allocated to Lancashire for 1985-86.

Let me explain briefly how the funding of capital works at aided and special agreement schools is managed. The day-to-day running costs of an aided school fall to the local education authority which maintains the school. Most of the responsibility for providing buildings and improving them where necessary rests, however, with the governors

of the school. To assist the governors in discharging that function they are provided with grant-aid from central Government. The proportion of the costs which are borne centrally has varied from time to time, but currently stands at 85 per cent. The provision and maintenance of aided schools involves, therefore, a three-way partnership between the voluntary bodies, the local education authorities and the Government, and this is reflected in the way in which allocations for grant-aid on building works at aided schools are made by the Government.

LEAs are responsible, after consultation with the relevant voluntary bodies, for making bids each year to the Department for allocations for work to be carried out by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools in their area. Since invariably the total of the bids exceeds the sum available nationally, we face difficult decisions about priorities. First, priority has to be given to meeting the Department's 85 per cent. share of expenditure to which governors are already contractually committed. The next priority has to be basic need to provide "roofs over heads" in areas where we are satisfied that population and denominational demand is increasing and the need cannot be met from any spare capacity in existing schools. Once these priorities have been met, consideration is given to building work arising from statutory proposals under section 13 of the Education Act 1980 that have been approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. When such proposals are approved, the proposers are under a statutory duty to implement them. Clearly, we must make the necessary provision to enable them to do so. Any remaining resources are allocated to projects designed to replace or bring up to standard school buildings which are currently substandard with priority being given to those projects that would lead to the removal of surplus places.

We ask LEAs when making bids to list those for major projects costing more than £120,000 in priority order. The LEAs, with their detailed local knowledge and overview of all the schools in their area, are of course best placed to make those judgments and also have a direct financial stake through their responsibility for maintaining the schools. For building work costing less than £120,000, LEAs are simply required to put forward an estimate of the total sum required. Once an allocation for such works has been made, it is for the LEA and the voluntary bodies to decide on priorities within that total.

In making the 1985-86 allocations for work by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools, we faced a particularly difficult task because the total of committed expenditure within LEAs' bids far exceeded the provisional figure arrived at a year ago on the basis of LEAs' estimates of the likely phasing of expenditure on projects to be started last year. In many cases there appears to have been significant unforeseen slippage. Because of this it was necessary for us to be extremely selective in deciding which major new projects could proceed in 1985-86. All justified claims of basic need and all the projects arising from approved section 13 proposals were included, but this left only a tiny sum nationally for improvement and replacement projects. In order to allow some minor works to proceed, this remaining sum was divided between all LEAs to be used for that purpose.

Lancashire's allocation for building work by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools in 1985-86 is £2·244 million, the second highest in the country. The great majority of this is for committed expenditure. When Lancashire was informed of its 1984-85 voluntary school allocation, it was given a provisional indication that £750,000 committed expenditure would be met in 1985-86. But its bid last September for 1985-86 included £2·2 million of committed expenditure, £1·4 million in excess of that provisional indication. Lancashire was able to convince us that the slippage had arisen from factors outside its or the voluntary bodies' control, and since it had made a timely surrender of excess provision in 1984-85 we agreed to cover all the estimated committed expenditure for 1985-86. This of course had to be at the expense of provision for new work nationally. None of Lancashire's bids for new major projects fell into either of the two categories to which we gave priority and therefore Lancashire did not receive an allocation for this purpose. Apart from committed expenditure, the only allocation for building work at voluntary aided and special agreement schools which Lancashire received was for minor works.

So what does this mean for St. Oswald's? Given the shortage of resources for grant-aid to voluntary aided schools nationally, the Department clearly has to make sure that those resources which are available are used to best advantage. When a school is burned down, therefore, we have to ask whether a school is still needed in the area and, if it is, whether it needs to be the same size. That is a particularly important question at a time of falling school rolls, which are creating surplus school places in many areas. It would be a waste of public resources, for which we would rightly be criticised, if scarce grant-aid were spent on building a school that was no longer needed, or which was much larger than was justified by the numbers of pupils expected to attend it in the years ahead. That is what we have been seeking to establish in the case of St. Oswald's.

In this context I have to mention the priority which Lancashire LEA affords to the rebuilding of St. Oswald's. When making its bids for capital expenditure in 1985-86 Lancashire indicated that there were a lot of projects which it would like to see proceeding, but asked us to look at four in particular. These were placed in order of priority and St. Oswald's appeared third on the list. The LEA really is better placed to assess the relative needs of different schools in Lancashire than the Department. It appeared that it believed that projects at Thornton Cleveley's Roman Catholic primary school and at Our Lady and St. Gerard's Roman Catholic primary school in Walton-le-Dale were more urgent than the rebuilding of St. Oswald's.

It is, of course, open to my hon. Friend and his constituents to try to persuade us, or indeed Lancashire LEA itself, that it has got the order of priorities wrong. I am always prepared to listen to such arguments and, as my hon. Friend knows, I have agreed to meet a deputation of his constituents who wish to come and put their point of view on the matter. I should add that one point which is already in St. Oswald's favour is that I understand the governors recognise that what is needed is school premises for about 120 pupils, rather than the 345 which was the capacity of the original building.

I can also say that I fully recognise that the diocese, governors, teachers, parents and children have now had to endure 19 months of uncertainty about whether their school will be rebuilt. July 1983 must seem to them to be a very long time ago. The Department is therefore conducting an urgent review of this case. It is already in

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

The Secretary of State ought to be ashamed of himself. He is forcing the taxpayer to foot this bill for the rest of the strike.

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman mentioned it, I shall give the figure for his constituency. The fact is that 90·7 per cent. of the miners there are at work. I accept that that is not true of the whole of north Derbyshire because the hon. Gentleman does not have the same influence over the rest of the area.

On the cost of coal, I can only say that the result of this strike, called without a ballot, is that markets have been lost instead of markets having been gained. If during the past year we had put into the industry the capital investment that was available, we should be gaining new markets and producing cheaper coal in the interests of miners.

Business of the House

4.4 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House if he will state the business of next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 25 FEBRUARY—Motion on the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order.

Motion on the annual report of the European Court of Auditors for 1983.

TUESDAY 26 FEBRUARY—Completion of remaining stages of the Water (Fluoridation) Bill

Motion on the British Shipbuilders Borrowing Powers (Increase of Limit) Order.

WEDNESDAY 27 FEBRUARY—Opposition Day (8th Allotted Day) (First Part). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion on local authority capital expenditure.

Afterwards, completion of remaining stages of the Representation of the People Bill.

THURSDAY 28 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on Welsh affairs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Second Reading of the Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* and proceedings on the Companies Bill *[Lords]*, the Company Securities (Insider Dealings) Bill *[Lords]* and the Business Names Bill *[Lords]* which are consolidation measures.

FRIDAY 1 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 4 MARCH—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the Government's expenditure plans 1985-86, Cmnd. 9428.

The House will wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Easter Adjournment on Thursday 4 April until Monday 15 April.

[Debate on Court of Auditors' Report for 1983 on 25 February 1985

Document

OJ No. C348 Annual Report of the European Court of Auditors for the financial year 1983.

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee HC 5-ix (1984-85), para. 4.]

Mr. Kinnock: First, may I thank the Leader of the House for giving to the House the dates of the Easter Adjournment? May I also offer him my personal thanks for ensuring that the debate on Welsh affairs is to be taken so near to St. David's Day? Dialch yn fawr. Finally, may I also thank the Leader of the House for agreeing to hold a debate on Monday week on the public expenditure White Paper, a debate for which we have been pressing for some weeks? May I ask the right hon. Gentleman how it can be appropriate to debate the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order next week when the matter is still before the courts? If the information upon the rate-capping decision is to be given to one council and is now to be given to the courts, surely that information ought to be given to Parliament before any debate on the order takes place.

May I renew my request to the Government to provide time for an urgent debate on Britain's immigration laws, especially in view of the very disturbing evidence from the Commission for Racial Equality in its report which was published last week? Will the Leader of the House arrange

for a statement to be made early next week on the very serious allegations that were made against the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence in the "20:20 Vision" television programme which was withdrawn last night by the Independent Broadcasting Authority? Finally, in view of the statement yesterday by the Prime Minister to the United States Congress in which she expressed her eagerness for British participation in star wars research, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a debate takes place as quickly as possible on this issue so that hon. Members can expose the dangers and delusions of such participation?

Mr. Biffen: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments upon the timing of the Welsh debate. I acknowledge his few words in Welsh which, although not comprehended, I am certain were well intended. I, like the right hon. Gentleman, am glad that we shall be able to have a debate upon the Government's public expenditure plans and that it will take place well ahead of the Budget. As for a debate on the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order, I think that the matter which the right hon. Gentleman has in mind refers to the precepting capacity of the Greater London council. This was the subject of the previous order, not of the order that will be debated on Monday next. However, I acknowledge that in a sense there is commonality between the two. Perhaps we may consider through the usual channels whether there might be a debate on the immigration regulations. Again I note the right hon. Gentleman's concern about what was highlighted in the "20:20 Vision" television programme. I acknowledge the importance that the right hon. Gentleman attaches to his request for a statement. Perhaps we may also look at that matter through the usual channels. Star wars research will, I think, be a matter of continuing political controversy. I noted what the right hon. Gentleman said as an opening shot.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Has my right hon. Friend's attention been called to early-day motion 174—

[That this House calls for an increase in the resources devoted to the Overseas Services of the BBC and notes with interest the possibility of an experimental BBC Overseas Television Service.]—

which calls attention to the desirability of increasing the resources made available to the overseas services of the BBC and, by an amendment standing in my name and those of other hon. Members, the resources of the British Council:

[At end add "and also believes that an increase in national resources devoted to the British Council would improve Great Britain's influence and prestige in the world, and be beneficial to the interests of this country."]?

In view of the nearness of the Budget and the finalising of the Estimates, can my right hon. Friend hold out any hope of a debate before the Budget?

Mr. Biffen: I have to say, in all candour, that the chances are slim. Let me try to compensate by saying that I recognise the importance of the topicality of the matter. As my hon. Friend is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, that adds even more importance to its consideration.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): May I reinforce the request for the House to be given an early chance to debate the issues raised by the Channel 4 programme on MI5's official secrets, banned by the IBA last night? When former long-service MI5 employees are prepared to state publicly that the secret services have broken their rules by mounting clandestine operations against organisations and individuals who pose no conceivable threat to state security, is that not an issue that this House should have an opportunity to debate at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of the hon. Gentleman's question and I am certain that the anxiety that he expresses extends to all parts of the House, but I cannot go beyond the answer that I gave to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to consider the implications of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill having been given a Second Reading by such a substantial majority? Will he agree with me that, while it was entirely right that the Government should have adopted a neutral attitude to the Bill until the will of the House was made known, now that the will of the House has been made known in such overwhelming terms, it would be appropriate for the Government to ensure that sufficient time is given for that Bill, so that the will of the majority cannot be thwarted by a small minority of people using parliamentary procedures to that end?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend might like to reconsider the proposition that the neutrality of the Government should be balanced by the Government making time available. I do not think that that is how the House would regard neutrality.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that anyone who saw the programme on Channel 4 last night, to which reference has been made, must have considerable concern over the way that MI5 operates, and must ask whether MI5 is now out of ministerial control?

Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that either the Prime Minister or the Home Secretary will make a statement to the House next week? Will the Attorney-General also give an assurance that in no circumstances will the person interviewed in the television programme, a former employee of MI5, be prosecuted under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act?

Mr. Biffen: I gave a measured reply to the Leader of the Opposition and I refer the hon. Gentleman to that. But as the hon. Gentleman raised the wider issue of the Attorney-General giving an assurance, I shall make that point known to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Notwithstanding what the House might be hearing later this afternoon on the question of the limited list of drugs, may I suggest to my right hon. Friend that it will not be sufficient for this House to consider the matter by the negative resolution procedure? Will he promise us a whole day's debate on the subject in due course?

Mr. Biffen: I note the strength of interest that my hon. Friend has in the matter and I shall bear it in mind, but I would mislead the House if at this stage I held out a likely prospect of a full day's debate.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): Is the Leader of the House aware of the difficulties that are created for Select Committees when Members who leave

[Mrs. Renée Short]

them are not replaced quickly enough? Is he aware that for some months now the Select Committee on Social Services has been two members short, one from each side of the House? It is a very serious disadvantage to the Committee. The right hon. Gentleman will remember that his hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) raised the same matter last week. When may we expect some action to remedy the inconvenience?

Mr. Biffen: It is a matter of seriousness. Attempts are being made, through our own sort of Westminster ACAS, to see whether the difficulties can be resolved. It requires patience, and I hope that eventually I shall not strain the patience of the House.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch)? Is he aware that the limited list of drugs is a matter of intense public interest? While we may not expect a full day's debate, we should at least have half a day — and it should take place in prime time and not in the small hours of the morning.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes his case twice as attractive by asking for half as much time, and that must be merely the starting point of the consideration. I have told the House that I recognise that there are strong feelings on the topic, but I have to have regard to all the other competing claims. It is in the context of the House having to vote upon a resolution, and I shall take account of the representations.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): In view of the statement by the Secretary of State for Energy this afternoon that the Government are not prepared to contemplate any further talks of any sort or kind designed to resolve the mining dispute, is the Leader of the House intending that the matter should be brought back to the House so that Members of Parliament can interrogate the Government about their policy as the strike enters its second year—and particularly as the Government will know, from the tapping of Arthur Scargill's telephone, the wide support that he has among his own members?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what the right hon. Gentleman says. No time is provided for next week, as he will appreciate. He will also appreciate that the Government do not have the monopoly of opportunity to enable the subject to be debated, but obviously I shall keep the matter under consideration.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the publication by the Common Market Commission of its reasoned opinion that Britain is breaking Common Market law by not charging VAT on bus and rail fares and on electricity and gas supplies, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Government to make a statement next week on whether they will oppose the measure all the way, when a decision will be arrived at, and what the consequences would be for the Revenue, particularly in view of the horrific impact that the imposition of VAT would have on areas that are dependent on bus and rail travel?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that there is an innocent and constructive content in my hon. Friend's request. *[Interruption.]* I have not laughed at all. I think that my first task must be to refer my hon. Friend's request to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and we shall see how we can take it from there.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the Leader of the House believe that pressure for a debate on the limited prescribing of drugs should come only from Conservative Members? May I, from the Opposition Benches, reinforce the point that there is a serious issue of principle involved in the alteration of doctors' contracts, which is apparently being imposed by order? Would it not be important to debate on the Floor of the House changes in clinical freedom, which may or may not be beneficial?

Mr. Biffen: I think we shall have to see how the resolutions are likely to be drawn in judging how wide a debate can be expected, but I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Rather than having a debate on the report by the Commission for Racial Equality, I wonder whether it would be more appropriate to have a debate on the Commission itself. Although well intentioned, and probably set up in the best circumstances, this body seems to have become somewhat one-sided. That has in part led to the naive report that it has produced which, instead of helping race relations, is rather damaging to them. I am sure also that my right hon. Friend is mindful of the public expenditure connections of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Biffen: I am surprised that any hon. Member who wanted to debate the Commission should find the fact that a report of the Commission is to be debated in some way an insuperable inhibition. I ask my hon. Friend to live up to his known reputation in these matters, and then there will be no difficulty.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): My understanding is that servants of the House are not permitted to make money out of any memoirs that they might wish to compile. Would it not be to the advantage of Parliament if the relevant body of the House were to examine the need to refrain future Speakers, who are primarily servants of the House, from such ego trips? Might we then not prevent the misrepresentations and the settlement of old scores indulged in by that malicious old maid Tonypandy?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a criticism of a Member of the other House. I think that the hon. Gentleman must withdraw those comments. *[Interruption.]* Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the adjectives — "malicious" and so on.

Mr. Faulds: I have every wish to comply with your requirements, Mr. Speaker, and I want to stay in the House. I shall, of course, withdraw the word "malicious", relevant as it is in this context. However, I have to maintain that there has been considerable misrepresentation in his stories of what the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All I required was that the hon. Gentleman should withdraw those adjectives, and he has done so.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend take note that of great public interest is the increase in television licence fees? It is time that there was a debate in the House on the whole question of the funding of the BBC for the public to hear. That is of paramount importance. Time is gradually slipping away, despite the

fact that we first asked for the debate over three months ago. It is not a suitable subject for an Adjournment debate or private Member's motion on a Friday, but needs to take place during the week.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of my hon. Friend's comments. He is referring to a problem that is commanding growing interest and I shall certainly refer his remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): The right hon. Gentleman will recall that I represent a rate-capped authority and therefore he would expect me to try to catch Mr. Speaker's eye next Monday. In the light of his previous answer on this question, is he aware that I usually try to do my homework on these matters and that it is impossible for me, because of the GLC position, to prepare an adequate case on behalf of my borough? Will he therefore reconsider the possibility of having that debate at a time when we can deal with the matter adequately in the best traditions of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry to hear of the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman has encountered, but I cannot believe that they are insuperable for the preparation of the formidable case which I have no doubt the hon. Gentleman will make on Monday.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will my right hon. Friend agree that, although it is possible that the statement shortly to be made on the question of drugs will be entirely acceptable to the House, it is also possible that it will not be? That being so, as the negative resolution obliges us all either to accept or to reject, will he suggest to the Secretary of State that he bring forward draft regulations so that he can consider what the House says before laying final regulations?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend is in his place and will have heard that suggestion. No doubt, if my hon. Friend is successful in catching your eye, Mr. Speaker, following the statement by my right hon. Friend, he will be able to repeat that suggestion.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May my hon. Friends and I invite the Leader of the House and all hon. Gentlemen on the Government Benches to Committee Room 11 this evening at 7 pm to watch the film by "20:20 Vision", which was banned by the IBA yesterday and which millions of people in the country want to see?

Mr. Biffen: It is always nice to have these chummy invitations across the Floor of the House. I must confess that it is rather short notice, but it is a kind thought and I shall think about it.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): In view of the historic importance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's visit to the United States, may we influence the Leader of the House to get her to make a statement next week?

Mr. Biffen: I shall most certainly draw that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): The Leader of the House, in referring to the question about star wars, said that it was a continuing affair. I can certainly testify to the fact that requests for a debate or even a statement about Britain's position in peace talks is a continuing matter, having asked about this for months, if not years, in the past. Since the Prime Minister made it the cornerstone of her speech in trying to ingratiate herself with the American Congress, does that not mean that we should have a debate about star wars and our position in the talks in Stockholm, which have been going on for over a year now without a single word being said about them, either in a statement or in a debate, at the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to remind us of his pioneering role in this controversy. I suggest that at least as an opening shot in the next stage he might like to use the advantages that are offered by defence questions next Tuesday.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 403?

[That this House calls on Her Majesty's Government to take the necessary steps to become a full member of the European monetary system without further delay.]

In view of the growing number of signatures attached to it and the fact that the Select Committee on EEC Legislation has specifically recommended a debate in the House on the subject, will he now seriously consider having a proper debate, not just after 10 o'clock, on Britian becoming a full member of the European monetary system, bearing in mind the overwhelming virtues and merits of so doing now that the pound sterling has fallen to a level where that policy could be tenable?

Mr. Biffen: The case may have been irrevocably flawed by being endorsed by the CBI, but I leave that to one side. It is a very lively topic which has growing significance as we approach the time of the Budget and I will certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to that suggestion.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion No. 414?

[That this House wishes to register its grave concern at the South African police operation on the morning of 19th February involving the arrest of the leadership of the United Democratic Front; and urges Her Majesty's Government to recall Her Majesty's Ambassador in South Africa for immediate consultations.]

This concerns the arrest of members of the United Democratic Front in South Africa. Is he prepared to get the Government to make a statement? I am led to believe that there has been a delegation this morning to the Ministers at the Foreign Office, who have, to say the least, shown some disquiet about the situation there. It has now been raised at the European level and again disquiet is shown about the problems of South Africa. While it refers to only one incident, the whole question of Crossroads and the other problems in South Africa could well be something of a powder keg. Could I ask, therefore, that the Government make a statement next week similar to the statements that have been made by other member states of the European Community? This is an extremely important point and one that could develop in the next few weeks.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman indicates, at least, that concern is felt by the Foreign Office on this matter, and of course I will refer to it his request for a statement.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): May I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House the fact that yesterday the Select Committee on Employment

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

published a document on the polygraph, which is a lie detector, in which grave reservations were expressed about the use of the instrument? May I remind him that this instrument is at the moment the subject of a pilot test at GCHQ? Considering all the humiliation and aggravation created at GCHQ, will the Leader of the House seriously consider an urgent debate on the report?

Mr. Biffen: I see the force of the argument that reports of the departmental Select Committees should be incorporated in the work of the House as far and as speedily as possible. I cannot think that there is an early prospect of a debate, but I will draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to the findings of the Committee.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): On 11 February the House debated regulations concerning hazardous materials. There is a major problem in the implementation of these regulations in that, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, it is still possible for warehouses storing non-hazardous materials to be converted without planning consent to store extremely dangerous materials. Since some of these installations are in very densely populated areas and since the Minister of State, Welsh Office has informed me that the Government intend to bring forward proposals to supplement sections 22 and 23 of the Act, will the Leader of the House bring some urgency to the situation so that we may avoid any major problem should a dangerous incident occur in this area?

Mr. Biffen: I will look into that matter and be in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The Leader of the House has more than once this afternoon resorted to the usual channels. Will he accept that, worthy as the usual channels may be, they work very slowly? Will he also accept that repetitions of requests for debate are probably the only weapons that we have? I therefore urge upon him the importance of having an early debate on the report by the Commission for Racial Equality, which has caused enormous concern throughout the country. If there is not an early debate, many people will believe that the Government have a great deal to hide.

May I press him further on the need for a debate on the "20:20 Vision" film on MI5's official secrets? The fact that he has not seen it may account for his rather lethargic —or perhaps I should say lackadaisical—attitude to the request for a debate. The film contains the most damaging indictment of what is being done by MI5, and breaches of guidelines and assurances that have been given by successive Ministers. It is not good enough to say that we might have a debate at some time or another. Individuals have been implicated; their telephones are being tapped and they have no chance to answer back, not least my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). If the Leader of the House cannot see the film at 7 o'clock this evening, I can reassure him by saying that I shall put a video copy of the film into the Library so that he may see it at any time.

Mr. Biffen: I note that the hon. Gentleman is not optimistic about the prospects of a debate, otherwise he would not have made his speech now. I sought to reply to the Leader of the Opposition on this issue in a way that I hoped would be helpful to the House. I think that it would be more constructive if I left the matter there.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the usual channels. A usual channel that is reinforced by him becomes an even more formidable proposition. I shall see what can be done about a debate on immigration laws.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has not been rising in his place previously but I shall call him if he will be brief.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Leader of the House explain by a statement or otherwise next week how the Government come to organise their double standards on the continuation of talks with bodies that include the National Union of Mineworkers? Why is it, for instance, that the Government are prepared to talk and talk with the Common Market about the budget, despite——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should be asking about business next week.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am asking about the making of a statement next week.

Why is it that the Government are prepared to continue to talk at length about international debt with bankers from countries throughout the world? Why is it that they are prepared to argue about peace talks—*[Interruption.]* I am asking that there should be a statement about this next week. Why is it that the Government are prepared to send representatives to Geneva to take part in peace talks, even when the Russians walk out and the Americans walk out——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Why does not the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) walk out?

Mr. Skinner: Why are the Government prepared to hammer the miners in the way that they are doing while they are prepared to negotiate with member states in the Common Market and others elsewhere throughout the world?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman has had a bad day. He finds that he is light years away from the leadership of the TUC. He is in a bad way because, like many others, he has argued for months that the Government should be seeing the TUC——

Mr. Skinner: Not me.

Mr. Biffen: The Government have now seen the TUC and the Government have shown themselves so good at negotiating with the TUC that——

Mr. Skinner: That is a lie.

Mr. Biffen: —in the hon. Gentleman's words——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I have never asked that question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover, even from a sedentary position, must not use the word "lie".

Mr. Skinner: Well, I have done and the Leader of the House should withdraw his comment.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman has had rather a good week. I believe that the House will agree that yesterday came into that category. I am asking

him now to withdraw his statement. If the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to withdraw the word "lie", I must ask him to leave the Chamber for the rest of today's sitting.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman said——

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Gentleman to leave the Chamber for the rest of today's sitting.

The hon. Member withdrew accordingly.

Prime Minister's Question Time

4.35 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I gave you notice that I wished to raise a point of order arising out of Prime Minister's Question Time today. Prime Minister's questions today, as on virtually every other Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, consist of the first question being repeated ad nauseam. This is a matter that could be examined by the Procedure Committee. When my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram) began with a supplementary question on rising to his feet, you, Mr. Speaker, said, "No. Question No. 2." My hon. Friend then had to say, "Question No. 2." My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House had to rise and say, "I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave a short time ago." That was done five times today.

Do you have discretion, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that that procedure is not repeated five times during the course of Prime Minister's questions? If it did not happen, at least two other Members would have a chance of asking a question. If the first seven questions to the Prime Minister are identical and it is decided merely to call those following on supplementary questions, that would be fairer to those who do not presently get a chance.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that I have that discretion. However, if the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about this he should ask the Procedure Committee to consider it. When the Procedure Committee submits a recommendation, I shall consider it carefully.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a further point of order, Mr. Speaker. Although there are dozens of questions on the Order Paper for the Prime Minister to answer that are exactly the same, there is one that is not, which has been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) concerning Conqueror and the General Belgrano.

Mr. Speaker: It happens that today most of the questions to the Prime Minister on the Order Paper are open questions. I share the concern of many who feel that this use of the Order Paper is perhaps not the right way to list these questions. I think that the Procedure Committee should consider the matter before I do anything about it.

Limited List Prescribing

4.36 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the limited list of National Health Service drugs.

I told the House on 8 November that the Government intended to introduce a system under which a selected range of drugs would be available on the National Health Service in seven categories. These were: antacids; laxatives; analgesics for mild to moderate pain; cough and cold remedies; bitters and tonics; vitamins; and tranquillisers and sedatives. I published at that time a provisional list of medicines which might be selected within each category. This was the basis for consultation, which continued until the end of January. We made it clear from the outset that our intention was to produce a list from which doctors would still be able to meet all the clinical needs of their patients.

The chief medical officers of the health Departments wrote to all doctors individually to seek their views on the list. I am grateful to all the many doctors who responded and I hope they will recognise that their views have been taken into account. My chief medical officer also brought together a group of independent experts practising in the relevant medical specialities, including three general practitioners and a pharmacist, to assist him. That group has now unanimously recommended a list of medicines that it believes will meet all clinical needs. I have accepted its advice in full and I am most grateful for its help in this important task.

This extended list of medicines will contain some 100 different medicines, compared with 30 on the provisional list. Most of the medicines will be generic, or unbranded, products; but a number of proprietary medicines will be retained where the group concluded that they were necessary and where no generic preparation currently exists. I should emphasise that the quality of all the selected drugs is assured. They all conform to the very high standards we require of all medicines under the Medicines Act 1971.

For the purposes of the regulations that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I will introduce, it is necessary to list all the products that will no longer be prescribable on the National Health Service. The regulations will also cover those products which the advisory committee on borderline substances has advised are not medicines and should not be prescribed by general practicioners. I am today publishing both the selected list of drugs and those no longer to be prescribable. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

I shall also today be giving the representatives of the medical and pharmaceutical professions the opportunity to comment on these regulations as they affect the terms of their contracts with the Health Service.

I shall mention three specific issues concerning the operation of the limited list that have been raised during the period of consultation. The first is the question of the arrangements for reviewing the list itself. This was raised by, among others, the Royal College of Physicians. We fully accept that it is essential for independent professional advice to be available after 1 April on the need for changes to the list. I do not believe that complex machinery is required but I shall be very ready to discuss with the professional bodies concerned how the arrangements that have been used to formulate the extended list should be developed for the future.

Secondly, questions have been raised about the implications of the new arrangements for dispensing doctors—that is, doctors, predominantly in rural areas, who themselves dispense drugs to their patients. For these doctors the regulations will in effect retain the status quo. Dispensing doctors will still be able to supply any medicine to those of their patients for whom they already dispense although they will have to issue private prescriptions for medicines that are no longer available on the National Health Service. Concern has also been expressed about the position of retail pharmacists who now hold stocks of drugs that will no longer be available on the National Health Service. I am quite prepared to examine any relevant evidence that pharmacists may present on their stockholding of drugs.

Thirdly, the question has been raised whether there should be some form of appeal mechanism for individual cases in which a doctor believes it is necessary to prescribe on the National Health Service a medicine that will no longer be available. Most concern was expressed by doctors who felt that there were serious omissions in the provisional list. My unanimous medical advice is that the selected list is now comprehensive and will make it unnecessary on clinical grounds for patients to use medicines not on the list. Nevertheless, let me say this: if, after examining the complete list and in the light of experience, the medical representative organisations still wish to propose that such a mechanism should be provided, my right hon. Friend and I will be ready to discuss it with them. I should make it clear, however, that any mechanism would need to be very carefully controlled to ensure that it could be used only in genuinely exceptional circumstances.

During the period of consultation a number of alternative proposals have been advanced. None of these offered the same prospect of achieving sensible savings in the Health Service drugs bill without either harming the interests of patients or threatening the fundamental and legitimate interests of the pharmaceutical industry. The selected list, which I am publishing today, is likely to produce savings in the drugs bill of some £75 million now, rising to a higher figure in due course. It is by making sensible savings of this kind that we are able to provide health authorities with the increased resources which I announced recently. I am therefore convinced that the approach that we have adopted remains the right one in principle. I also believe that the selected list, which I am publishing today, will demonstrate that in practice the Health Service will continue to provide all medicines required to meet the clinical needs of patients.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that the fact that his final list is no less than three and a half times as long as his first attempt shows what a hash he made of his original statement? For three months he has unnecessarily caused enormous upset and anxiety because of his total failure to consult doctors and the other professions involved. Since the Government included only 31 drugs in the original list yet have always claimed that the list will meet all clinical needs, what guarantee can there be, since the Government

got it so wildly wrong the first time, that even this much extended list is completely proof against further error or misjudgment?

Why, after three months, are the arrangements for reviewing the list not yet finally determined? Does it not show continuing divisions in the Government's thinking when the Secretary of State comes to the House today and says that most medicines in his limited list will be generic products yet the Minister of State said in the House only three weeks ago:

"There is no, and never was any, element of generic substitution in the limited list proposals".—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1985; Vol. 72, c. 59.]

Is the Secretary of State aware that these proposals will still produce a two-tier system, which may well suit Tory interests since privatisation within general practice is more likely if some medicines are obtainable only on a full-cost basis, but will certainly deprive many poorer patients of drugs that they need but cannot afford? Is he also aware that operating a so-called white list of 108 items and a black list of some 1,500 items will produce a bureaucratic nightmare, which will also substantially whittle down any potential net savings?

I have two more technical questions. Why are these provisions being introduced by way of amendments to the terms of service of doctors? On the hospital side, what precise arrangements are being made to override, which is in effect what he is doing, local drug and therapeutic communities where hospital formularies do not coincide with his final list? More fundamentally, his havering on both the review machinery and the appeal mechanism which is needed is not good enough. Will he give an assurance that both will be firmly in place when the scheme starts on 1 April?

On the financial side, since the savings on this list will now fall well short of the £100 million that he promised originally, will he give a commitment, which will be needed if he is to make up the savings total that he spoke of, that the rate of return to the drug manufacturers under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme will be reduced from the current excessive 21 per cent. at least to the 16·9 per cent. limit that is now accepted as the maximum for risk contractors under Government contract?

If this limited list is so good for Health Service patients, why is the Secretary of State not extending it to private patients?

Mr. Fowler: I think that is one of the silliest responses——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): That is not original.

Mr. Fowler: Regrettably, it is not original. That is just the point I was about to make. I have seldom heard such a silly response to a statement.

A few weeks ago the hon. Gentleman was pressing me to consult. I have now consulted and I have brought forward——

Mr. Meacher: Why did the Secretary of State not consult before his earlier list was presented?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that when I announced the proposal, I did so on the Floor of the House of Commons. That, I would have thought, he would support.

Mr. Meacher: No.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman had better make up his mind what the devil he does want, because everyone else is confused.

If I may try to explain to the hon. Gentleman what is happening, we made it clear from the beginning that we would consult on this and that the list was provisional. We have benefited from the advice of about 2,000 general practitioners and also from the advice of the chief medical officer and an independent team. The result is that we have a list of over 100 different medicines compared with the list that we originally proposed. That seems a sensible outcome to the consultation.

To pick up the hon. Gentleman's second major point, it is the unanimous view of the independent committee that the selected list of drugs will meet all clinical requirements. It is for that reason that we set up the independent committee.

In regard to savings, we expect the final list to cut the drugs bill by about £75 million straight away and by more later. I think that the original rough figure was about £100 million. I think that we will come to that in the not too distant future. As for the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme and the negotiations on it, the hon. Gentleman must know—otherwise, he has not been listening to any of the debate on drugs—that those negotiations are taking place at this moment.

As for the hon. Gentleman's last major point on generic substitution, I do not believe in indiscriminate generic substitution. It would not be right to apply that to all categories of medicine. It would undermine the pharmaceutical industry and make research into worthwhile and life-saving drugs difficult, if not impossible. I do not believe that is in the interests of the industry, the country, employment or all the things that the pharmaceutical industry has created.

We have consulted on this. We have brought forward an extended list which, I believe, meets all legitimate concerns. I have made it clear that I am prepared to consult further on some crucial issues. At the very least I think the hon. Gentleman's response is entirely churlish.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand the concern of the House about this matter, but there is a very important debate on the Royal Air Force in front of us. I shall allow questions on this matter to continue until 5.5 pm, so there will have been a full half hour for the whole statement.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the Secretary of State accept that his statement is a considerable improvement on what he said before and that, given that he means what he says about the possibility of an override facility, it should have a fair wind from members of my party? I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has resolved the problem that he had with his Scottish colleagues over dispensing doctors. However, does he accept that the problem now is that most of the "me too" proprietary drugs, which are the most expensive varieties, are outside the seven categories that the right hon. Gentleman is now listing for us? What proposals does he have to consult on including them in future? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the generics that are on the list, which are available only in proprietary form, are out of licence, so that other people can manufacture them? Otherwise, presumably they are still available only in proprietary form. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us

[Mr. Michael Meadowcroft]

whether the policing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."]—will be costly? Finally, can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House why, in altering the general practitioners' contract, he has not also looked at the pharmacists' contract, because, financially they will be hit seriously by the proposal?

Mr. Fowler: We are in the middle of negotiations with the pharmacists and, as I have already made clear, we shall make the draft regulations available to the medical profession. I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question because he has recognised —the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) singularly failed to do so—the considerable steps that have been taken to meet all legitimate concern on the matter. The review was the basic matter that the hon. Gentleman asked about. It was suggested by the Royal College of Physicians that there should be a review of the list. I am accepting that in principle. I should like to talk to the Royal College of Physicians and the other organisations about that, and I am willing to come to any reasonable arrangement with them. However, one or two of the things that I have announced mean that the BMA and organisations like it now have to be prepared to talk. In the light of what I have announced, it would be quite wrong if they were still to refuse to come round the discussion table.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Does not my right hon. Friend's statement show that he has consulted and, indeed, taken account of what was said? Does it not show how irresponsible the BMA's attitude has been? Did my right hon. Friend hear the remarks attributed today to Dr. John Marks, the chairman of the BMA, and were they not another example of utter irresponsibility?

Mr. Fowler: I think that Dr. Marks has got it slightly wrong. I do not want to raise the temperature on this matter again, but frankly I think that he got it wrong on the list and he certainly got it wrong with regard to our aims and intentions to extend the list. I say to Dr. Marks and the BMA that we have made it clear by the action we have taken that we are prepared to listen, change the plans and meet all reasonable requests that have been put to us. I very much hope that the BMA will now understand that and come and talk sensibly about the whole thing.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the statement as it shows some change in pattern. On the other hand, while the Secretary of State said that six independent members advised the chief medical officer, were they like-minded, or were they completely independent in the sense that they had different opinions? Will the right hon. Gentleman specifically tell us whether the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will issue an identical list and, if so, why he was not mentioned along with the Secretary of State for Scotland in today's statement?

Mr. Fowler: The Secretary of State for Scotland will make his own announcement following this one. There is no question about either the independence or expertise of the advisers. The advice that was given to me was unanimous, and has been accepted entirely and in full by me.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): May I assure my right hon. Friend that he has the support of the overwhelming majority of his right hon. and hon. Friends for the step that he has taken, as we recognise that money in the Health Service must be spent wisely and without waste, if it is to serve the Health Service? Has my right hon. Friend considered, in the flexible approach that he is taking to the matter, the patient who has a psychological tie to one particular drug? Will that rather special case be considered and weighed up in the procedure that my right hon. Friend described?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her support, and I think that she speaks for a great many people. With regard to an appeal mechanism for doctors to deal with the situation that my hon. Friend set out, let me repeat that it was the unanimous view of the committee that the selected list of drugs will meet all clinical requirements. Much of the concern was about possible gaps in the original list. Nevertheless, let me make it clear —this is in direct response to my hon. Friend—that if the profession wished to propose an appeal mechanism that would cover a case similar to the one that my hon. Friend raised, I should be ready to discuss that. It must be carefully controlled and concentrated on the exceptional case. Organisations such as the BMA will have to come to talk about that. I cannot do it by proxy.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does not the Secretary of State accept that the fact that the new list, which I have not yet seen, is now three and a half time larger than his list, represents a resounding vote of no confidence in his initial judgment? Secondly, I should like to make a specific point about clinical assessment. Is it not the case that some elderly people taking more than one drug rely on colour in choosing the drug to take? Perhaps it is a comparatively minor problem in some areas, but it is extremely important. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore operate the exceptions system for at least the first 12 months? Will he operate an appeal system to allow doctors greater flexibility during the trial period, with the appeal being made by the health authorities instead of the other way round, because individuals can suffer severely if the appeal procedure is too long?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot do that, but as I have just made clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight) I am prepared to talk to the profession on an appeal mechanism. However, I must underline the view that I have from the expert committee, which is that the selected list of drugs will meet all clinical needs. However, I am prepared to try and meet points such as the one that the hon. Gentleman is making, but in the way that I have set out rather than the way that he set out. He referred to consultation. The fact is that if I had come to the House and produced the same list, I would have been accused by the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of not having had any meaningful consultation. I have gone through consultation. I think that we now have a good list. I hope that that will remove much of the controversy and some of the misrepresentation that have dogged the past few months.

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): Does not the substantial extension of the list that my right hon. Friend has just announced fully vindicate his insistence, sometimes in the face of hostile and organised opposition, that he was willing to listen to the views of doctors and others? Does my right hon. Friend accept that his

announced willingness to contemplate an appeals procedure will be greatly welcomed both on Conservative Benches and in the country, and further vindicates the Government's reasonable attitude on the issue?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that the appeals procedure will be welcomed in the medical profession and generally by the public. With regard to consultation, it must be said that, although the BMA has not put detailed points to us, we have had the advice of just under 2,000 general practitioners who have written to us. Therefore, there is no question but that the basis of the advice that we have had has been extensive and sound.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the Secretary of State move forward from considering the appeals system to considering brand new drugs? What happens to the brand new drugs that are flooding the market? Who will decide which of those drugs is to be accepted on the NHS list? Will the Secretary of State assure us that the new machinery to evaluate those drugs will be open to public scrutiny so that we know that safety, efficacy and need are the overriding considerations? Cost should not be the overriding consideration. If it were, the right hon. Gentleman would be economising at the expense of the National Health patient.

Mr. Fowler: We are not, in any way, relaxing the licensing system. I entirely accept that any advice upon which we act must be independent and must be seen to be independent. I am certainly prepared to have talks about that type of mechanism. The review mechanism that I want would consider new drugs and whether there was a new suitable generic alternative to replace a branded drug. Obviously, this would occur within the seven categories that I have set out.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as one who has been connected for nearly 20 years with the pharmaceutical industry, I am deeply apprehensive that these new measures will inevitably lead to further restrictions on prescribing by doctors? Is my right hon. Friend aware that that cannot be in the interests of the pharmaceutical industry, of doctors and, above all, of patients?

Mr. Fowler: The Government support a prosperous pharmaceutical industry. My Department is the sponsoring Department. I understand that the industry does not want a change in those arrangements. Ninety-five per cent. of drugs on the NHS list that will not now be prescribed do not require a prescription in any event. When my hon. Friend has the opportunity to read the list, he will note that all kinds of drugs, which I think the public would find extraordinary, cannot now be prescribed. The list includes Barker's Liquid of Life, Dr. Williams Pink Pills, Mrs. Cullen's Powders and Rock Salmon Cough Mixture. I have no objection to people using Rock Salmon Cough Mixture, but I have the strongest objection to the taxpayer picking up the bill for it.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): If the Secretary of State looks at the first item under "Analgesics" he will see that doctors are now to be permitted to prescribe aspirin tablets. Will people be asked to pay £1·80 for a bottle of aspirin tablets?

Mr. Fowler: If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the list he will see that a much wider range of analgesics will be available. The advice of my medical experts on the independent committee is that that range of drugs will be adequate to meet all clinical needs.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that our principal concern should be for the patient rather than about telling the doctor what he may or may not do? Would it not be wiser to leave the doctor with his freedom rather than restrain an innovative and successful industry? Would it not be better to use education rather than edict to achieve the economies that are sought by my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend must recognise that I am trying to seek value for money throughout the whole of the NHS. That means that I am trying to ensure that money is directed towards patient care. I do not think that it would be defensible for me or the Government to leave any aspect of the NHS—the drugs bill or any other item—out of that scrutiny. That is what we have done. That is why I believe that this policy is right. I emphasise again for my hon. Friend's benefit that 95 per cent. of the drugs that will not now be prescribed do not require a prescription in any event. That is a fairly conclusive answer to my hon. Friend's fears.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I remind the Secretary of State that he is the first Minister of any political persuasion since the inception of the Health Service to interfere with a doctor's clinical freedom. Is this not a precedent? When a professional politician can order a doctor as to the treatment he will give, it goes beyond pharmaceutical services. It is really a red light showing throughout the NHS. Does a doctor—not a rural doctor—prescribing privately to a patient on his list have to charge the patients a fee? Does the doctor have to remove the patient from his list? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that clinical needs cover more than just the ingredients of a pill or medicine that is delivered? A range of aspects is covered. A doctor is the only person able to decide the best treatment for his patient. A doctor can take a million different approaches because of his knowledge of his patient.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman will know that a doctor cannot charge a fee for a prescription. On the hon. Gentleman's first point about my being the first Minister to interfere with the freedom of prescription, I would put it another way: this Government are the first Government to tackle the problem of the drugs bill inside the NHS.

Mr. Pavitt: The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) did.

Mr. Fowler: I thank the hon. Gentleman. That was another Conservative Government. This Government act when the Opposition have just wind and hot air.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the great interest in this statement, I shall allow questions to continue until 5.10 pm.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): On the issue of clinical freedom to which the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) referred, does my right hon. Friend agree that this same freedom is extended in no other country that has a publicly financed national health service? Why, therefore, is it considered that complete clinical freedom should prevail only in this country?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right. There are restrictions of one kind or another in virtually every other country in western Europe. This is a sensible policy, which other Governments have accepted. I ask the House to accept that the vast majority of the drugs that will not be prescribable under the NHS do not require a prescription in any event. This means that people can buy those drugs over the counter and do not require a doctor's prescription.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): Not long ago the Minister of State told me in answer to a parliamentary question that the estimated savings from the limited list will enable the Government to maintain the level of expenditure announced in the autumn statement. The Secretary of State has clearly retreated from that position. How will he know what savings have been made? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House the mechanism for checking that amount?

Mr. Fowler: We have not retreated from that position. The result of the consultation is that our original estimate of up to £100 million, which was a rough estimate at that time, has been reduced to £75 million. We always recognised that the consultation would mean reduced savings. Our aim now is to look for additional ways of obtaining better value from the drugs bill. One of the encouraging aspects of this debate has been the fact that more attention than ever before has been given to this issue. I hope that we shall achieve further savings through better prescribing and more competition in the generic manufacturing of the drugs on the limited list.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I ask my right hon. Friend, in his capacity as the sponsoring Minister of the pharmaceutical industry, what effect his new list will have on employment. My right hon. Friend will be aware that both sides of the House have received vigorous representations from the pharmaceutical industry telling us that his original list was destructive of jobs.

Mr. Fowler: It would be sensible for the pharmaceutical industry to look at the new extended list before rushing into any kind of estimate. I want to emphasise two points. The Government entirely support a prosperous pharmaceutical industry, and the industry recognises that. It also recognises that it does not want a change of sponsorship from the Department of which I am Secretary of State. The research into some of the most important drugs in the most crucial areas would be affected by a policy of generic substitution—it will not be affected by the policies that I propose.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Does the Secretary of State agree that the lack of initial consultation with the medical profession gave rise to the legitimate fears about the list being expressed by many people? Had he consulted initially with the medical profession on the basis of the Greenfield report, he could have presented the House not with indiscriminate generic substitution but with generic substitution involving medical consent, which would have led to greater savings than those that he has predicted this afternoon.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman's last point is entirely wrong. If he believes it, he should do a little more homework on the subject. It is bizarre to suggest that we need more consultation and more talks about how we should try to reduce the drugs bill. Ever since I have been in my Department—three and a half years—and for years before that we have talked about this subject and debated it in the House. What is required are decisions, and what I am putting forward is the basis of a reasonable decision for this House to reach.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend comment on the recent advertising campaign by the pharmaceutical industry? Does he regard it as a shameful example of exploiting people's fears and putting self-interest before public interest?

Mr. Fowler: The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry—and in some ways it does not speak for all the excellent companies—has gone entirely over the top in its advertising campaign and has sought to raise fears unnecessarily. When the only solution to the problem that the association puts forward is that of taking away exemptions from old people, I find it extraordinary and hypocritical that it should mount an advertising campaign in which it claims to be defending NHS patients.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that any Secretary of State with responsibility for the NHS who begins with a restricted list of 30 items and then returns to the House with 100 items has shown himself wholly unfit to have the care of the Health Service in his hands? Does the right hon. Gentleman admit that, although he is leaving 100 items on the list, he is taking 1,800 items off the list? Of those, the vast majority are prescribed for old-age pensioners. Is not the Secretary of State condemning old-age pensioners to having to buy their medicines across the counter?

I congratulate the 54 general practitioners in the constituency of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), who inspired the Under-Secretary to fight a little harder than he usually fights to ensure that the position of the prescribing doctors would be preserved. Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether it is the Government's intention to buy back from the pharmacists the drugs that they hold in stock and that will now be removed from the list?

Mr. Fowler: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has done any better than his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) who began the questions. We always said that we would consult, and that consultation has provided a list that is more extensive and which meets all the clinical needs of patients. That is what the consultation was about. I share the sentiments of the hon. Gentleman—I am glad to agree with him on one point—in his admiration for the views put by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland on dispensing doctors. They have been invaluable in helping the Government to come to a decision.

Rev. Martin Smyth: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that I may have had a response, from a sedentary position, to my question to the Secretary of State on whether the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to raise a question with the Secretary of State, which is not a matter for me. It is unfair on hon. Members who wish to contribute to the following debate to extend questions on the statement, which have already continued for much longer than I originally suggested.

Rev. Martin Smyth: How can Northern Ireland Members raise issues affecting the NHS when we have

been told that they have been turned over to the Northern Ireland desk, especially as this is a national debate? Ministers from the Welsh and Scottish Offices were present on the Treasury Bench but Northern Ireland was not represented. I asked the Secretary of State a specific question, which I think he answered from a sedentary position——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should table a question on this matter or write to the Secretary of State.

Skillcentres

5.16 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about skillcentres.

I advised the House on 29 November of the Skillcentre Training Agency's proposals to the Manpower Services Commission. On 24 January, the chairman of the commission informed me of the commission's conclusions.

The proposals for the reorganisation of the skillcentre network are designed to eliminate the present waste of resources and to enable the funds thus released to be employed in substantially increasing the number of training opportunities.

The proposals form part of the adult training strategy adopted by the commission over a year ago, after the widest possible consultation. Under that strategy, the number of adults being trained under the commission's programmes is planned to rise to 250,000 by 1986-87. That is more than double the 1983-84 figure. It includes a substantial increase in the number of unemployed helped. All parts of the country will benefit from this expansion.

The reorganised skillcentre network has an important role to play in further development of training. I very much welcome the emphasis the centres are now putting on new and higher technology skills, which will now be more widely available. I have today confirmed again to the chairman of the commission further capital investment in the network of £10·5 million for 1985-86. The addition also of a new 300-strong mobile instructor force is an imaginative and positive innovation. It gives greater flexibility, and allows coverage in remote areas not previously covered by the skillcentre network.

I have now considered the proposals, taking into account the evidence given to the Select Committee on Employment on this matter and all the further representations made to me. Following consultation with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales, I have today written to the chairman of the commission, and I am placing a copy of my letter in the Library.

In my letter, I have asked the commission to implement the agency's proposals. I have asked the chairman to make quite sure in doing so that when any closures are involved, they should not take place until satisfactory alternative provisions have been identified. I have asked that the fullest consultation takes place with the staff and trade unions, with particular regard to negotiating new working practices designed to help the overall efficiency of the network, and to avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

The proposals for the reorganisation of the skillcentres make sense as a necessary step in improving the cost-effectiveness of training programmes, thus enabling substantial expansion in training opportunities, for unemployed as well as employed people, throughout the country.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): This is a shameful statement. It calls for the closing of 29 skillcentres, the scrapping of their equipment, the scrapping of jobs for hundreds of skilled instructors at a

[Mr. Walker]

that had a good future. Miners must recognise that if the strike continues for much longer considerable damage will be done to their prospects.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Does the Secretary of State realise that the 130,000 miners who are still on strike will take great comfort from the fact that the decision of the NUM executive to reject the document was unanimous? While he is checking his figures, will he bear in mind that 70 per cent. of the Scottish miners are on strike, 90 per cent. of the Yorkshire miners are on strike and that 98 per cent. of the South Wales miners are on strike? Despite the documents that the right hon. Gentleman has referred to, this strike will not be over until every one of the 600 miners sacked during the dispute is reinstated and walks back through the pit gates with their colleagues.

Mr. Walker: Given the hon. Gentleman's interest in statistics, I am sure that he would like to know first that 78 per cent. of the miners in the colliery in his constituency are working. I only hope that he goes and listens to them. His figures are totally wrong. The hon. Gentleman is just clinging to the hope that the militant Left who organised this strike has some possibility of surviving. I am glad to say that it has lost this strike. It has done great damage to the Labour party and is now damaging the TUC; but, above all, it has damaged the miners.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Is it not clear that from the start of the dispute Scargill has been much more interested in play acting the British Lenin than in ensuring the well-being of NUM members? Is it not now time to stop just urging those on strike to go back to work? Should we not lay it on the line and say that if the strike continues for much longer we shall not be able to continue with the generous offers that are on the table and that mines will have to start to close?

Mr. Walker: I am certain that miners recognise fully the damage that is being done to machinery, to coal faces and to the prospects for their local communities. I believe that many miners have remained out for a range of reasons, including a strong loyalty to the union. I hope that they now recognise, particularly after the events of this week, that loyalty should not apply only to the present leadership of their union.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Is the Secretary of State aware that many Members on the Opposition Benches make a sharp distinction between the mass of the miners and the leadership of the NUM? Nevertheless, will the right hon. Gentleman understand that the mass of moderate miners throughout the country are deeply disturbed by the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that £4·5 billion, which the strike has cost, is a very good investment from the Government's view? The Prime Minister has talked about "the enemy within" —meaning the miners—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The Minister had better understand that moderate miners believe that. They are frightened by statements of very senior Ministers. Will the right hon. Gentleman, who is much more moderate in these matters than his leader, go back to Mr. Willis and see whether he and Mr. Willis can have one more try to solve this serious and damaging dispute in which there can be no winners?

Mr. Walker: In the speech by the Prime Minister to which the hon. Gentleman referred she made the same distinction as he makes between the present leaderhip of the NUM and the miners. She made it clear that she thought that the enemy was not ordinary, decent miners, but the manner in which part of the leadership operates.

Whatever the cost of the dispute, it was the Chancellor who agreed to a massive investment programme for the years to come in the industry, for hundreds of millions of pounds to pay for generous early retirement provisions and for millions of pounds to be spent on a new enterprise company to bring new jobs to mining communities. When one examines the reality of the Government's performance, there can be no doubt that they have made the most generous offers to the miners since nationalisation. Mr. Willis has shown great patience and was willing to work hard with his colleagues. I am afraid that it was not Mr. Willis who brought the talks to an end, but the NUM executive.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Bearing in mind that Mr. Buckton was one of the magnificent seven of the TUC, is it not time that he went back to his railwaymen and started the coal trains moving again?

Mr. Walker: There is not much need; they are all moving.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Is it not extraordinary that throughout the dispute the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister have repeatedly shirked their responsibilities on the pretext that the dispute is between management and trade unions and that they have refused to intervene since the strike started? Will the right hon. Gentleman now say whether he is prepared to intervene and to use his good will to initiate further negotiations between the unions and the NCB?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the jobs of other industrial workers, such as machine tool workers in the west midlands, are far from safe and that they would give their right arms for such an offer?

Mr. Walker: Yes. One of the things upon which I reflected as I spoke for several hours to the seven trade union leaders in my office was that none of them had had an offer for their union like that made to the miners.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Does the Secretary of State recognise that, whether he likes it or not, in a democracy miners have the right to withdraw their labour and to go back when they have a settlement? The right hon. Gentleman believes that the offer is generous, but obviously the miners do not accept the terms. Does he accept that the country needs the coal and to have the miners back at work? There might have been several discussions to date, but no direct discussions have taken place with the third party involved—the Government, who have the power and the responsibility and could, with a positive attitude to the dispute, resolve it. Why do not the Government call the two sides together and resolve the dispute?

Mr. Walker: The two sides have met seven times. On one, they both went to ACAS, which is generally accepted as a genuine machinery for arbitration. ACAS made a compromise proposal which the NCB accepted and the

NUM rejected. More recently, to the knowledge of the NUM, with the NUM discussing amendments to the document, the TUC has attempted to bring about a solution but has been rejected. The only conclusion that the House should come to is that we are dealing with an NUM leadership which has not been interested in a reasonable and sensible settlement. Our view is now shared by 47 per cent. of NUM members who are at work, and I believe that it will be accepted by many more.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Is my right hon. Friend aware that 83 per cent. of miners in my constituency are at work and that the pit at which they work is working near normally and is in profit? Is he also aware that they strongly welcome the efforts that the Government have made in an attempt to bring about an honourable settlement? Does he agree that it is only justice to those men who are working that those who persist in refusing to work must be served notice to quit as they clearly do not want jobs?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir; I do not believe that it would be in any way justified to give notices to quit. When miners consider the basis of what is on offer, its fairness and how the TUC has tried to intervene to their benefit. I believe that they will return to work. I shall have no part in saying that, at any given moment, miners, who might have been kept out by all sorts of intimidation, should be dismissed because they have stayed out. As for the numbers who have returned to work, I am pleased to hear the figures for my hon. Friend's constituency, but in north Nottinghamshire, 95 per cent. are back at work, in the south midlands, 80 per cent. are back. In the western area, 82 per cent. are back and in north Derbyshire, 76 per cent. are back. The pattern is being copied all over the country.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the Secretary of State stop attempting to mislead the House and make a proper statement about the document that was rejected by the NUM conference today, as it is not that the TUC recommended acceptance of it at the weekend? The document is nothing more than the NCB's and the Government's bottom line, and they want preconditions. The Secretary of State should be a bit more honest and state the facts. He is saying that there are no more negotiations and accepting preconditions, which many trade union leaders have said that it is nonsense for anyone ever to accept.

Mr. Walker: I repeat that seven trade union leaders said categorically at 10 Downing street that the document would be an agreement, not a point on an agenda or for further discussions. If the hon. Gentleman is accusing anyone of deception, he is accusing seven distinguished trade union leaders.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): My right hon. Friend has identified the position as adopted by the leaders of the TUC, the position as adopted by the NCB and the position as adopted by the Government. Has he at any stage during the past 24 hours received a declaration of the position as adopted by the leadership of the Opposition?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State spend a little time reflecting on what he has said? Is he saying that his prescription is to sit in the trenches and wait until the men go back to work and, in effect, declare their disloyalty to their union, thus breaking it? Is that what he wants? Ninety-nine per cent. of my miners are still out on strike and will not break their loyalty, not to Mr. Scargill, not to a personality, but to their trade union. The right hon. Gentleman ought to reflect upon what he said and call together the two parties directly involved and live up to his office as Secretary of State.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman ought to reflect upon what he has said—that because the miners in his constituency have a great loyalty not to Mr. Scargill but to their union they will not break that loyalty. However, the miners are also saying that until Mr. Scargill, as the leader of the union, is satisfied that his demands will be met they will stay on strike. There is no way in which Mr. Scargill's absurd and extreme demands will be met.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does not the Secretary of State owe it to the House to tell it what is in his mind about his future actions, which may or may not harm relationships in the mining communities? The Secretary of State said on the radio this morning that if 51 per cent. of the miners go back to work that will not be a magic number. Can he tell us what is the magic number which would trigger off action by the Secretary of State?

Mr. Walker: I believe that it is very important for the whole House to encourage miners to return to normal working as quickly as possible. I am sure that the board would be willing and eager to put into operation the very generous offers that it has made to the miners. I hope that the NUM executive will reflect upon that fact and will quickly accept the very good offers that are available.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that the refusal by Arthur Scargill and the National Union of Mineworkers to accept the proposals of the Trades Union Congress come as no surprise whatsoever, in view of the fact that Arthur Scargill set out not to preserve and save the remaining pits that are still in operation but to attempt to bring down the Government?

Mr. Walker: While I cannot speak for the motives of Mr. Scargill, I can say that his actions have done great damage to miners, mining families and mining communities.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that the reason why some of us believe that the TUC delegation was hoodwinked was that when the matter was put to the national executive committee every member, including the miners' leaders in those areas that have been working since the strike began, voted to reject the deal? Every one of them said that the deal was worse than the deal of the previous week.

Will the Secretary of State also bear in mind that, although he seems to be cock-a-hoop about miners returning to work, he ought to look at the area that I represent where miners have returned to work? The fact is that 30 per cent. of the miners are still on strike and coal is costing as much as £200 a tonne to mine. The Government and the National Coal Board have to pay the wages not only of the managers and deputies but of the working miners. Instead of coal being mined at the average cost of £38 per tonne which obtained before the strike, even in those areas where only 30 per cent. of the miners came out on strike it is costing five times as much to mine coal.

[Mr. King]

derive partly, as is widely known, from the training division of the MSC and its identification of need. The funds are there, and the question is what is the best way to use them. Opposition Members find it easy to stand back from the reality of these matters, but if they were faced with the same choice, would they waste money on unused bricks and mortar, or would they insist on making training available for people?

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): How does my right hon. Friend's strategy justify closing the annexe in Southampton, when both the main centre and the annexe are making a profit, when it is an area of recognised skill shortage, when it has the support of the local chamber of commerce, and when the people who work there work hard and are highly respected? Will he reconsider the matter and, if he will not, will he consider the alternative option of privatisation?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend will understand that it is a question of available capacity. If there is under-used capacity it makes good sense to use it in the most effective way. The question is not whether an individual centre is profitable so much as where capacity is. We want an efficient and relevant network. I certainly take note of my hon. Friend's comments, and I know that he has taken a close interest in the Southampton annexe.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Why does the Secretary of State persist in conveying the impression that he does not know what on earth we are worrying about, when we are all deeply worried about what he is doing? Does he remember that last week, despite his intimidation, many people came here to lobby the House? There would have been a bigger lobby if they had not felt intimidated and threatened with the loss of their jobs. Is it not a fact that 29 skillcentres will be closed, that many people who need training for the new technologies and who are out of work want to be trained but will not be trained, and that those people who came here know that more than 1,000 of them will lose their jobs? That is what we are worried about. We have come for bread but he only gives us a stone. He should explain to the House the words "satisfactory alternative provisions". No hon. Member believes that those satisfactory alternative provisions will come about, because the unemployed and the Opposition mistrust the Government and believe that an increasing number of people will be out of work.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman made an absolutely untrue allegation, which was referred to obliquely earlier, that somehow I sought to ban civil servants from taking industrial action about this matter. Ministers were not consulted. Civil servants followed normal personnel arrangements and asked, not whether they could come, but if they could demonstrate at the House on annual paid leave. Without consulting Ministers, civil servants observed the rules that had traditionally operated throughout the life of the Civil Service. I must tell the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), who I think was the parliamentary private secretary on one occasion to a Minister in the Labour Government, that we identified the occasions when precisely the same refusal was given. A refusal was given by the Labour Government to civil servants who sought during the winter of discontent and the Society of Civil and Public Servants' strike to take annual paid leave. So I hope that he will keep quiet about that.

I take the matter extremely seriously and I respect the right of people who wish to demonstrate, to do so, not on annual paid leave, but with the loss of pay, as under the standard Civil Service procedure. If the hon. Gentleman has not understood the point of my statement, if he thinks that losses should be made in the upkeep of old buildings that are being under-used, and that money should be denied to people for training, I am glad that he is not in charge of our training programmes.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I welcome the concept of the mobile training force, but how many places will be available nationally and how many will be available in the south-west? Can my right hon. Friend outline the basis on which arrangements are to be made?

Mr. King: The MSC intends to make wide use of various alternative provisions, sometimes involving colleges of further education, and sometimes using employers' premises for existing employees. Indeed, on Friday I saw excellent facilities at a substantial workshop in Cheshire. Those facilities are now under-utilised, but they could, for example, be employed by the MSC. The numbers involved will be as many as can get on to the appropriate programme.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Does the Secretary of State realise that the deep concern goes far beyond the staff affected? Today's statement will not end the public's puzzlement about why skillcentres are being closed when the country is desperately in need of skill. Have the disabled training facilities often found at such places been taken on board by the Ministry in its forward planning?

Mr. King: I think that the public were probably puzzled as to what on earth was going on in maintaining a training network that was only two-thirds used, especially when only half the people being trained used the skills. After all, the public know that there are serious skill shortages in other areas for which resources are not available. That was the cause of their puzzlement. If I am to be criticised, it is perhaps because the situation should have been tackled a long time ago. However, we shall certainly seek to maintain provision for training the disabled.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that misgivings will be felt in Langbaurgh and Cleveland this evening about the decision not to keep open the Middlesbrough skillcentre? Although the additional finance is welcome, if skillcentres are failing to do the job for which they were set up they should be revamped, reorganised and set up again properly. To close them before the experimentation of the travelling trainers has been carried through is to throw out the baby with the bath water.

Mr. King: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. I know of his close interest in the subject, as he has talked to me about such matters. He will realise that after these changes, the skillcentre network will have more capacity than is now needed, and that is even before we consider mobile training instructors, and so on.

The Opposition are being singularly unconstructive, but I hope that my hon. Friend will realise that the MSC and the Skillcentre Training Agency have made a determined attempt, with the support of the training division and professional trainers, to ensure that the very best training facilities are provided within the resources available.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): May I again ask the Secretary of State a question about the closure of the Llanelli skillcentre which serves Dyfed and West Glamorgan? Perhaps he will do what he failed to do on 29 November and answer my question. That skillcentre has one of the highest occupancy rates of any skillcentre in Wales and one of the best records for placing trainees in jobs and has responded over the past 18 months by providing courses to keep up with the technological changes. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether what I have said is incorrect? If it is not incorrect, let us have the facts.

Mr. King: I understand from my hon. Friend the Minister of State that it is certainly true that the skillcentre has improved its occupancy rate, but I think that there is still under-used capacity there. The matter has been fully discussed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, and he and my hon. Friend the Minister are determined to ensure that the undertaking given at the end of the statement about alternative provision is fulfilled.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the purpose of training is to spend money not on buildings but on the improvement of individuals' skills? Will he give some assurances about the training of the disabled in the north-west in view of the proposed changes at the Denton skillcentre in Manchester?

Mr. King: We certainly seek to protect the position of the disabled. I cannot give my hon. Friend the full details about the north-west now, but I shall arrange to write to him, and will give him the full details. However, I am grateful to him for stating so clearly the essential point at stake. If we are to compete with the new technologies and to meet the needs of an expanding economy in the years ahead, we must modernise our training. If the Opposition stick to their present attitude, when the lessons to be drawn about the steps that should be taken are so patently obvious, I tell them that the Government do not intend to sit back and to allow training to fossilise. We will modernise it and give the best chance of jobs for our people.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Secretary of State for Scotland was with him when the closures were discussed? Did the Secretary of State for Scotland acquiesce in the closures that are to take place in Scotland? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the commission reached its decision with the smallest majority possible, and that one of its members saw the error of his ways and would have wanted to change his vote if the commission had been recalled? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that one member of the commission was inadvertently absent on other business but would have voted for the retention of those centres? Given that, and the fact that Strathclyde region has the highest population of any region in Scotland and the highest number of people unemployed, will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider his decision and decide to save those centres in Scotland?

Mr. King: I consulted the Secretary of State for Scotland on these matters. When the hon. Gentleman referred to an absent commissioner, I think that he was referring to a TUC commissioner, and his vote was also considered. The commission's views, and the letter that the chairman of the MSC wrote to me — a copy of which has been placed in the Library — make it clear that the views of those not present were taken into account. I understand that that letter had the full support of every member of the commission.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Will my right hon. Friend ignore the hysteria that is usual for Opposition Members when any proposal is made to improve the quality and quantity of something in this country instead of just throwing money at it? Will he take it from me that the proposal for a mobile force of 300 instructors is most welcome? If it is discovered that we need more of them, will he guarantee to increase the numbers to whatever figure is necessary, as that will help rural areas such as mine?

Mr. King: I am very pleased to have been able to announce the increase in the number of training opportunities. I am determined to see how we can improve training. But to do that, we must be ready to make changes. We cannot allow the situation to remain as it has always been, when the facts are staring us in the face and we know that losses are being incurred by a failure to act. We will act, but we shall do so entirely in the interests of training opportunities for our people.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the annexe to the Southampton skillcentre, which he intends to shut, operates at a profit, has a waiting list of applicants, and is used largely by local firms, which are very satisfied with it? Will he ensure that the instructors who will not be so mobile at last visit my constituency—I hope that he is listening—as we could do with them? The right hon. Gentleman is shutting a profitable annexe and skillcentre, which is contrary to everything he has said from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. King: If an hon. Member cannot listen with both ears at the same time, he should not be in the House. But, to be serious, I am well aware of the concern felt about the Southampton annexe. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State has had discussions on that matter. He will be reporting hon. Members' views on certain aspects to the chairman of the commission. I take note of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I made a further visit to the excellent Perivale skillcentre in my constituency last week? May we have an assurance for the people working there, because some of them fear that they may be replaced by people who have served longer at other skillcentres which face closure? Will he also examine the cost recovery principle and assure me that he will not press that to the ultimate, bearing in mind that I chaired a conference designed to bring more money into that skillcentre? That has had some success, but it is not easy.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the close interest which he takes in his local skillcentre. His question is a sign of that interest and the positive role that he has played. My hon. Friend asks about changes in staffing and what might happen after reorganisation. That

[Mr. John Prescott]

time when Britain has more than 1.5 million long-term unemployed, and the least qualified labour force of any developed economy—all this at a time when, according to the CBI, industry is desperately short of every kind of skill. This will be music to the ears of our competitors, and it will add insult to injury. Instead of a justified increase in the number of places, the Government's emphasis is simply on quantity rather than the quality of skills. The Secretary of State is a disgrace to his office and responsibilities, quite apart from his shameful behaviour in joining with management to intimidate workers against joining their protest to this House last week.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that this is now a Government decision to close these skillcentres and to sack hundreds of skilled instructors? He cannot hide behind the commission, given that the majority of commissioners are against these proposals. Will he reaffirm his comment to the Employment Select Committee that he would be loth to go against the majority of the commission? If that is the case, why did he do so?

Is not the real reason for these closures the financial remit which the Treasury has set for the Manpower Services Commission, involving the closure of six profitable centres in London, Gloucester, Bristol, Southampton and Medway? What kind of market economics is that?

Does he accept that the Opposition welcome any proposal to increase training facilities, but we do not believe that the quantity of training should be increased and improved at the expense of quantity — [HON. MEMBERS: "Quality."] I apologise, that is what I meant. I hope that my point has got across to simple minds.

Does not the Secretary of State recognise that these proposals are a kick in the teeth for the 1.5 million long-term unemployed, who are desperate for such training courses? At a time when the Government have abolished industrial training boards, and given the collapse in the number of apprenticeships, it is hypocrisy for the right hon. Gentleman to talk about improving the quality of training.

Is he aware that the London Business School report, produced for a Select Committee of this House, emphasised the future viability of the network and made it clear that if policies such as these were applied to the whole network, the remaining centres would be unviable and could face possible closure? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his claim about yesterday's skills provided by yesterday's instructors finds no echo in industry, where there is a desperate shortage of every kind of skill? What is his definition of yesterday's skills which are provided by the existing centres?

Mr. King: It would be shameful if anyone in my position allowed the losses that are occurring and the under-use of capacity to waste existing financial resources, thereby preventing those resources from being made available to absolutely essential training which is needed.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman has studied the evidence given to the Select Committee. He will know that the effect of the proposals for the Skillcentre Training Agency will reduce available places from 17,000 to 13,000. He will also know that the number of places taken up this year is only 12,500, and that more than £20 million in lost money for under-used places could have gone towards training other people.

It is a sad reflection of the present employment situation and the change in skills that less than half those coming out of skillcentres find occupation in the trades for which they have been trained. Against that, there is an urgent need to ensure that training is increased in those areas where there are now skill shortages and where there is a real opportunity to ensure that people obtain skills which will give them the best chance of obtaining jobs.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I again remind the House that an important debate is to follow, but because of the great interest in this matter I shall allow questions to continue until 5.50 pm and then we shall have to move on.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The Secretary of State referred to under-used places, but is he aware that the skillcentre in my constituency has such places because it has been deliberately run down in anticipation of the decision that he has announced today? In any case, are not a majority of the MSC commissioners against these proposals? How, therefore, can the right hon. Gentleman go ahead on that basis, unless this is a decision of the Secretary of State rather than the MSC?

Mr. King: The right hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly fair point, but I am not sure whether I agree with it. As he knows, since the MSC met and the chairman wrote to me, I have received a letter from one commissioner who reported the commission's conclusions to me. That gentleman's proposal was not that the scheme should be rejected but that it should be postponed. Against that background, the adult training strategy has been agreed unanimously by all the commissioners, as has the cost recovery objective of the Skillcentre Training Agency. Are we then to have a further period of uncertainty, and should the commission reduce the training opportunities available which could otherwise be funded from the savings that could be made by eliminating waste, or should a decision be taken now? My judgment — and I have come straight to the House to announce it — is that a decision should now be taken.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Association of British Chambers of Commerce recently published a report on education and training, which makes clear its desire that employers should have the major say in the quality of training? Is he also aware that in the evidence given to the Select Committee it was made perfectly clear that the employers were not entirely satisfied with what was happening, and it was felt that the creation of mobile instructors, using employers' premises and equipment, was a much more satisfactory way of meeting training needs?

Mr. King: I accept what my hon. Friend has said. Perhaps I can also reply to the point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) about yesterday's training for yesterday's skills. I have never used that phrase. The truth is that the demand for some skills has diminished, but in my statement I paid tribute to the valuable part that the skillcentres have to play. Anyone who looks at these figures objectively will see that at present the range of the network is out of phase with training needs. There are urgent needs for training in other

areas, not least an expansion in the training programmes which I have announced to enable the unemployed to get back to work. There is simply no point in allowing losses to mount up in bricks and mortar and to under-use facilities of various kinds when that money could be made available for training people. We are in the business of giving the maximum help to people, not to institutions.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the great concern that has been caused in Redditch in my constituency by the proposed closures. If I noted his words correctly, he said that no individual closure would take place until satisfactory alternative provision had been identified. I believe that my constituents will take some comfort from that. Can he assure me that in an area such as Redditch the full resources released by the closures will be put into additional training facilities in the locality and that, in particular, employers will have a greater incentive to provide private training facilities on the premises and on the job? Let us get back to the old apprenticeship schemes to which we all believe we should return.

Mr. King: I certainly give that assurance to my hon. Friend in relation to the requirement laid on the chairman, which my hon. Friend correctly observed in my statement. We are trying to make training as appropriate and flexible as we can. I have made it clear that skillcentres have an important part to play, but at present their capacity is out of scale with the demand for them. We need to use the resources in other areas. If we can achieve this change and get the strategy going, we shall ensure that there will be a 157 per cent. increase by 1986-87 in the number of people in the west midlands area who will have training opportunities. I make no apology for making that possible.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Does the Secretary of State realise that his statement would be more credible if he identified the skills for which there will be less training and attention through these modifications? I am sure that he would not try to mislead the House that that is not the conclusion of his statement. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) referred to "satisfactory alternative provisions". Will the Secretary of State explain what that means? Does it mean satisfactory in terms of quality or quantity? Who will judge whether an alternative is satisfactory, because unless it is monitored that statement is meaningless, as I suspect it is?

Mr. King: I think that the hon. Gentleman is familiar with the structure of the MSC and with the area manpower boards, on which industrialists, educationists, trade unionists and local people sit and work with the MSC. They work extremely carefully. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman takes an interest in the training that takes place when he asks what the equivalent alternative provision is. We are now launching a whole range of different schemes. I would have thought that he of all people, as the representative for Cornwall, would recognise the values for rural areas, such as those that he and I partly represent, of having a mobile instructor team as a reinforcement and of making the very best use of the facilities that exist. I hope that he will recognise that this is an attempt to expand training opportunities and to make them as effective and relevant as possible.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend accept the appreciation of my constituents at the Dudley skillcentre that the Minister of State, Department of Employment came and spent many hours considering the position there? Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that there will be a smooth transition, if there is to be a closure, which is subject to consultation, and that it is critically important that training is expanded at in-house level? My only hope is that the money which is to be allocated will produce the figures that he quoted for more training in the area.

Mr. King: I am aware of the close interest that my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) take in their local skillcentres. I can certainly give the assurance that my hon. Friend seeks.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): How can it possibly make sense to close a skillcentre in an area where 100,000 jobs have been lost and 449 factories closed since the Government came to power in 1979? Is it not incumbent on the Secretary of State to tell the House what the real alternatives are for the people of Merseyside as a result of the closure of the Liverpool skillcentre? Does it not smack of putting the cart before the horse to tell the House that he will close the Liverpool skillcentre before he has alternatives, bearing in mind that many jobs are being lost, including 300 at Guinness, precisely because we do not have the skills for the new technology? We in Liverpool have a right to know what the alternatives will be before a closure takes place.

Mr. King: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman listened to my statement. His request for an assurance that the skillcentre should not be closed before alternative arrangements were made, was precisely the point that I sought to make because it is so important. I hope that he will recognise that, as a result of the reorganisation, we are likely to be able to double the opportunity for training for people in Liverpool and Merseyside. I would have thought that he would have welcomed that.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): While I accept the sense of my right hon. Friend's proposals for extending training opportunities, will he reiterate his assurances to my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) that when constituents, such as mine, are likely to be faced with the closure of a skillcentre, the MSC will make every attempt to explain what will happen with the greatest possible clarity?

Mr. King: I certainly accept that point. Part of the reason why I made the statement today was that there should not be any continuing uncertainty about the position.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Does the Secretary of State agree that this is another example of the short-sighted short-term policy pursued by the Government? The people in Doncaster will be disappointed. Will he assure the House that if there are no suitable acceptable alternatives, those skillcentres will remain open so long as there is a need for them?

Mr. King: I have spoken to the hon. Gentleman about that. He came with his colleagues to see me about the position in Doncaster. I understand their anxiety. In my statement I specifically sought to give the assurance that he seeks. The hon. Gentleman talked about the short-sighted attitude of the Government, but these proposals

[Mr. King]

is a matter for the Manpower Services Commission and the Skillcentre Training Agency. They will take note of my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Since the majority of MSC commisioners now disagree with the proposal to close 29 centres, and in view of the Secretary of State's previous statements about his inability to direct the MSC, could the MSC now reject the proposal in his statement?

The Minister says that no individual skillcentre closure will take place until a satisfactory alternative has been provided. Will he explain what is the satisfactory alternative to a good, well situated and well run skillcentre? Why close valuable skillcentres when the Minister has already conceded the need for satisfactory alternatives?

Does the Minister accept that his claim that he is expanding adult training is a charade because he will provide only a smattering of low-level, occasional training? Is not that completely in line with the Tory party's determination to turn Great Britain into a low-pay, low-technology economy?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman makes a brave attempt yet again to beat a flagging horse to life. We have discussed the matter long enough this afternoon to know that it simply will not run. The better alternative to many of the skillcentres is the establishment of skill training places that will be used, but put to full benefit and from which people will move to real and full-time jobs. That is better than facilities being under-used and being used by people half of whom will not be able to get jobs in the skills for which they are trained.

Can the hon. Gentleman explain to the House his claims about low technology and an inadequate service when I have just announced an increase in capital expenditure on the reorganised network precisely because we want to take advantages of the new technology?

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. From the Minister's response to the question by my hon. Friend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That immediately rules out the point out of order. I can answer points of order only if they concern questions that are put to me for my decision. It is no good drawing my attention to a Minister's response.

Mr. Clarke: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to refer to what I thought was your response to what the Minister had to say. I thought that you showed extreme impatience at the length of the reply. If you did, many of us would agree with you. I certainly do. I have been here since 2.45. If you were to make a plea to Ministers to give brief replies so that hon. Members like myself could ask brief questions, we would agree with you.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps it is a good thing that we do not have television in this place.

"20:20 Vision" Programme

5.54 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the ban imposed last night by the Independent Broadcasting Authority on Channel 4's '20:20 Vision' programme entitled 'M15's Official Secrets'."

The full IBA saw this programme first in January. It saw it at other times and again last night and decided to stop the public from seeing it. That is a most serious step which inhibits proper public debate on a matter of urgent public importance. It is also an act of censorship by the IBA because it is not a law enforcement agency. It is more properly a matter for the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions, after screening.

The film makes allegations about the surveillance methods used by the security services against individuals and organisations who are in no way suspected of terrorist or subversive activities. It alleges that even my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) was investigated, as well as human rights activists and trade unionists. It alleges misdirection of the security services in breach of their own operational rules, which state:

"The Security Services should be kept absolutely free from any political bias or influence."

The programme alleges a clear breach of those rules by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence. It is alleged that in March 1983 the Secretary of State for Defence established the DS19 unit to counter the growing effectiveness and popularity of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

In August 1983 the Home Secretary is alleged to have authorised a phone tap of CND headquarters. This was done for purely party political reasons, in clear breach of the security services operational rules and against assurances about the "entirely legitimate activity" of CND given by the Home Secretary to the House on 20 December 1984 and repeated to the Home Affairs Select Committee as recently as 30 January 1985.

These are serious allegations of political interference and misuse of the security services by Cabinet Ministers and the IBA has prevented proper public examination of them. Because of the seriousness of the allegations the House will agree that they should be urgently debated here. I seek the Adjournment of the House for that specific and important purpose.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the ban imposed last night by the Independent Broadcasting Authority on Channel 4's '20:20 Vision' programme entitled 'MI5's Official Secrets'."

I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that we may debate matters only when ministerial responsibility is involved. The hon. Gentleman heard what the Leader of the House said at business questions today.

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter to

be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Royal Air Force

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before the Minister opens the debate, I wish to inform the House that I shall impose the 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 o'clock and 8.50 pm. I hope that it will be possible to call all right hon. and hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate.

5.58 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): I am sure that the House will wish to be aware that today, as we debate the Royal Air Force, the funerals of six members of the RAF Germany band have taken place at Rheindahlen. The House will know that the bodies of the other 12 bandsmen and the RAF policeman killed last week have been flown home, in accordance with their families' wishes, so that their funerals can take place in this country. I know that the thoughts and deep sympathy of the House will be with the families of those who so tragically lost their lives.

The RAF is in the midst of one of the largest re-equipment programmes it has had for very many years —a programme that could not have been accommodated on its present scale if the Government had not achieved a real terms increase in defence expenditure of about one fifth since 1979.

The Tornado programme is the centrepiece of the RAF's equipment programme. Another four squadrons of the Tornado GR1 have formed since last year's RAF debate. We now have eight squadrons in all—three in the United Kingdom and five in RAF Germany. Eventually, 11 squadrons will be equipped with this aircraft, including two in the reconnaissance role.

The Tornado GR1 is capable of the highest levels of performance in the strike/attack and reconnaissance roles. The aircraft can exceed 800 knots at sea level and twice the speed of sound at high level. Depending on its mission, the GR1 can operate at ranges of up to 750 miles, though this can be extended by air-to-air refuelling. The GR1 is capable of operating at night in all weathers. With its ability to penetrate enemy air defence at low level and at high speed, and its highly accurate bombing performance, the GR1 represents a giant leap in capability over the aircraft that it has replaced.

I referred to the accuracy of the Tornado's bombing performance. The House may know that, last October, the RAF entered the Tornado, supported by Victor tanker aircraft, in the prestigious and fiercely contested Strategic Air Command bombing competition in the United States. This is a long-standing competition and it was ambitious to enter the new Tornado in a foreign competition so soon after its entry into service against well established American B52s, and American and Australian F111s.

The results were outstanding. Our teams came first and second out of 42 crews in the Curtis Le May bombing competition for overall high and low level bombing, first and third out of eight crews in the Meyer trophy for operational effectiveness, and second out of 21 teams in the Mathis trophy for performance over all six competition missions. These results reflect the greatest credit on the Tornado crews and their supporting tanker and engineering crews, on the effectiveness of the Tornado aircraft and on the capability of British industry.

[Mr. John Stanley]

Following on behind the Tornado GR1 is the air defence variant, the F2. The first two Tornado F2s have been delivered to RAF Coningsby for ground familiarisation and training, and instructor training with British Aerospace has now commenced. A total of seven squadrons are planned, and the F2, with its excellent range and loiter capability, will be a key element in the defence of the United Kingdom's airspace into the 21st century.

There have been some difficulties with the development of the F2's air defence radar, but these have now largely been overcome. This will somewhat delay the build-up of squadron deployment. Nevertheless the RAF will have received a small number of operational aircraft by the end of this year.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Minister say something about the "identification, friend or foe" system? I understand that there is no standardised NATO version yet.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman is right. The matter has been under deliberation in NATO circles for some time. There has been a difference of view. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Ministers have done everything possible to resolve the matter but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are not able to resolve it on our own. In the meantime, we are seeing what improvements can be made in our own IFF capability. It is an extremely important issue and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for highlighting it.

The defence of the United Kingdom's airspace will continue to be the responsibility of the RAF's Phantom squadrons as well. There are currently five Phantom air defence squadrons in the United Kingdom. Two will be run on following the introduction of the Tornado F2. Allowing for the phasing out of the two remaining Lightning squadrons, this will give the United Kingdom an increase in its front line air defence squadrons from seven to nine.

To make good the shortfall in immediately available aircraft for the United Kingdom's air defence caused by the deployment of Phantoms to the Falklands, a squadron of Phantom F4J aircraft has been purchased from the United States. This squadron formed at RAF Wattisham last November.

As the House knows, to provide additional aircraft for the air defence of the United Kingdom, the Hawk trainer is being modified to carry Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. A total of 72 aircraft are being modified. This programme is ahead of schedule and will be completed in 1986.

In considering the long-term future of the Buccaneer force, various numbers of aircraft were put forward. The latest position is that we plan to update 42 Buccaneers —enough to run on two squadrons in the maritime strike/attack role, and the training unit, well into the 1990s. They will be armed with the Sea Eagle anti-ship missile, which will enter service later this year. This sea-skimming missile will considerably enhance the Buccaneer's effectiveness by allowing low level attacks on surface ships at long range.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Is it intended to modernise the two squadrons of Phantoms that are to be retained as the Buccaneers are being modernised for their continuing role?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend is referring to the avionics update on the Buccaneers. We hope to be able to reach a decision on that shortly. I cannot tell him whether there is a similar avionics update on the Phantoms to which I referred. If I may, I shall ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement to deal with that in his winding-up speech.

The modernisation of the RAF's Nimrod maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine aircraft will be completed by the end of this year. The Mark II Nimrod is one of the most potent maritime patrol aircraft in the world. In the anti-submarine role, the Nimrod is equipped with advanced sonobuoys and on-board computers for location and tracking. Surface shipping is identified by the Searchwater radar. The Nimrod can be armed with the Stingray anti-submarine torpedo and the Harpoon stand-off missile for use against surface ships. Each Nimrod will be provided with an air-to-air refuelling capability which will enable a single aircraft to maintain continous surveillance over 10,000 square miles of ocean and spend over 10 hours on task.

As to the RAF's support aircraft, the programme to stretch 30 of our 60 Hercules is nearing completion. Twenty-three of these aircraft are being fitted with station-keeping radar equipment, which will allow the aircraft to maintain formation in all weathers and thus give us a greatly improved parachute assault capability.

May I pay a warm tribute to the Hercules crews and the Victor tanker crews for the outstanding way in which they have maintained the Falklands airbridge? Five days each week, Hercules undertake this 13 hour in-flight-refuelled journey with a 90 per cent. on time arrival record. It is a very long flight, a long way from diversion airfields, with weather that is always uncertain and frequently awful, and with plenty that can go wrong. Maintaining that airbridge has required from air crews and ground crews alike skill and stamina of a very high order. The Hercules crews have unfailingly demonstrated both.

During the past year there has been further substantial progress in improving the RAF's air-to-air refuelling capability, which is of much major operational importance. To supplement the two Victor tanker squadrons, six TriStars have been purchased and, with a squadron of VC10s, are being converted to the tanker role. The TriStar will retain a passenger and freight capability which will greatly enhance the armed forces' strategic mobility.

The Victors, which have been in service since the 1960s, will reach the end of their useful lives by the end of the decade. As a first stage in a replacement programme, three more TriStar 500s have been bought from Pan American World Airways during the past few months. Two of these aircraft have been handed over, the remaining one will be delivered in April.

On the improvements to existing aircraft, I shall deal finally with the helicopter force. The RAF has taken delivery of three Chinook helicopters out of the eight ordered after the Falklands conflict. Exercise Lionheart confirmed that these large helicopters have a very important part to play in support of the Army in Germany.

I have given the House details of the expansion and improvement of the RAF's existing aircraft. I shall now consider future aircraft. First, I should like to refer to the Nimrod airborne early warning aircraft project, which was started by the Labour Government in 1977 and has been continued by the Conservatives. There is no doubt that the

requirement to replace the AEW capability of the current Shackleton force was, and remains, very pressing. The Nimrod airframe has been successfully converted for the AEW role. Unhappily, major technical problems have been experienced in the development of the AEW radar and the associated electronics. We are now in a position where approximately £800 million has been spent or committed for the creation of a force of 11 aircraft. The imperative requirement is to devise the quickest and least costly route to secure the required operational capability of the AEW system. Discussions are continuing with the company to that end.

I cannot at the moment say what additional cost will be involved in achieving the required operational capability but, as of now, our best judgment is that an operational AEW capability for the Nimrod should be achieved in 1987. In the meantime, national AEW cover continues to be provided by the Shackletons. In addition, NATO E3A aircraft are available to provide AEW cover, if necessary, anywhere in the Allied Command Europe area, including the United Kingdom air defence region.

Mrs. Anne Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does the Minister agree that the Nimrod failure is the grossest example of the Government's failure to control defence spending?

Mr. Stanley: I agree with the hon. Lady that the project is a very serious example of a major overrun. Major lessons are to be learned from it. This Government have certainly learned such lessons. They are writing contracts now in a very different way from the way in which contracts were written by the previous Administration.

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): Would it not have been much wiser if we had joined the NATO AWACS programme, as many hon. Members suggested at the time?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend has made a very fair point. With the benefit of hindsight, his point is fairly unarguable.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Could my right hon. Friend tell the House whether, when the Nimrod AEW does finally come into service, it will be a very much more sophisticated and capable aeroplane than the system currently in service with the United States Air Force?

Mr. Stanley: I hesitate to draw comparisons in a very sophisticated electronic area. The European AWACs programme is a NATO programme. The British Nimrod programme is a national programme. We retain the benefit of national tasking as a result of going down the Nimrod AEW route. However, I hope that for this kind of expenditure we shall have aircraft that ultimately will be at least comparable to the NATO alternative.

Mr. Wilkinson: In view of the critical importance to the conduct of the air battle of having an effective airborne early warning system, particularly in today's air environment, could not my right hon. Friend consider the possibility of leasing E3 AWACS aeroplanes from the United States until such time as our own Nimrod system becomes operational?

Mr. Stanley: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion. As he will be aware, any such leasing arrangement would obviously result in further additional cost, which would have to be accommodated within the overall defence budget. We should have to consider what expenditure would be involved. That expenditure would not ultimately provide any additional hardware and would have to be considered in the context of the kind of sums involved in finally solving the problems of the AEW radar in the aircraft.

Turning to the European fighter aircraft, as the House will be aware, the Royal Air Force will need to replace its Phantoms and Jaguars in the 1990s. An outline staff target for a possible new European fighter aircraft was agreed by the air forces of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Spain in December 1983. This was subsequently refined into a European staff target. The feasibility studies of the five countries have been completed and are now being evaluated before being reviewed by the Ministers concerned. Along with our partners, we believe that this collaborative venture can succeed. However, there is a long way to go in defining the next stage of the programme, and I think it is unlikely that we shall be in a position to give a further substantive report to the House for some months.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that there is growing concern within the industry, at management, design and shop floor level, that we are being outmanoeuvred by the French? That is a matter which my right hon. Friend needs to take on board, as does the Secretary of State. I hope that my right hon. Friend will deal with that point.

Mr. Stanley: Again I note the concern of my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has great commercial experience. He is not a person who is likely to be outmanoeuvred.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): In 1982 the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and I, as two former members of the Royal Air Force, argued the case for a fighter, but it seems that it has slipped and slipped and tonight it has slipped again. The last information I was given was that a decision would be made next month. It appears that a decision will not now be made next month. Can I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether that is so?

Mr. Stanley: I am not aware of the commitment to which the hon. Gentleman refers. We are still evaluating the feasibility studies of the European fighter aircraft. I now turn to the new basic trainer, because I know that the House will wish to hear the current position on the RAF's basic trainer. The "best and final" offers from the four competing companies have been received and are now being evaluated. We shall reach a decision as soon as we can on the alternatives, which still include the option to retain and refurbish the existing Jet Provost aircraft.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): When a decision is made, should not the aeroplane that the RAF most wants be provided if its cost is on the right lines?

Mr. Stanley: I assure the hon. Gentleman that all the relevant factors will be taken into account. In two to three years' time we shall be bringing into service the new mark of the Harrier, the Harrier GR5, which is being developed and produced in a collaborative programme with the United States. This aircraft is not a rebuild of the existing Harrier but an entirely new design, which will have a very much greater operational capability than its predecessor, while still retaining the Harrier's unique ability to operate

[Mr. Stanley]

from hidden sites away from its main base and close to the front line. We are planning to procure 60 Harrier GR5 aircraft to replace GR3 Harrier squadrons in Germany.

As for future helicopters, the United Kingdom has decided to enter collaborative feasibility studies with France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands for a future light support helicopter known as NH90. The NH90 could constitute a replacement for the RAF's Puma and Wessex helicopters, which is the subject of air staff target 404. At this stage, however, neither the United Kingdom nor its partners are committed beyond the feasibility studies.

Other options remain for meeting air staff target 404, and the United Kingdom's participation in the NH90 feasibility studies does not rule them out. In particular, the Westland W-30 remains one of the contenders for air staff target 404. Westlands will also take part in the NH90 feasibility studies.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): The United Kingdom is keen to take part in such collaborative projects but they do slip a good bit. It is unlikely that the NH90 will be in service before the late 1990s. Surely the Wessex and Puma helicopters could not remain in service until the 1990s and would therefore need to be replaced.

Mr. Stanley: I can assure my hon. Friend that the time scale for the NH90 work is compatible with the need to replace the RAF's Puma and Wessex helicopters. We believe that at this stage it is right to take part in the first stage of an international collaborative project, besides looking at the same time at other options for satisfying air staff target 404.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): If, by means of the NH90 project, a boost is to be given to Westlands which, it appears, is producing an aircraft specifically for air staff target 404 and if in due course it is favoured by the Government, is it not right that another aircraft that was produced specifically for air staff target 412, the Hunting Firecracker, should be similarly favoured?

Mr. Stanley: I do not think that my hon. Friend should think at the moment in terms of "favouring". The Government's view of the situation is that we should look simultaneously at the international possibilities of satisfying the particular requirement, while at the same time retaining the existing options for satisfying AST 404. It does not mean anything more than that.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil) *rose*——

Mr. Stanley: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman but I suggest to the House that, if I give way much more—which I am very ready to do—a good many hon. Members will not be able to make the speeches that I am sure they wish to make.

Mr. Ashdown: I am very grateful to the Minister for giving way, particularly as he knows that I shall probably be touching on these matters in my speech. His statement that the replacement may well be tangled up with the NH90 will come as a great disappointment to many in the RAF and elsewhere. I hope that the Minister will recognise that, if he were to put that policy into operation, he would find that Westlands would be significantly weaker, as a contributor to the NH90, than it would otherwise be if the Westland 30 were now able to be developed to fulfil AST 404.

Mr. Stanley: I note what the hon. Gentleman said. In relation to the NH90, I used the word "could", not "should". No doubt the hon. Gentleman will wish to develop that point further in his own remarks.

I have concentrated so far on the RAF's re-equipment programme. The process of improving the RAF's capabilities does, of course, go well beyond improvements to the aircraft themselves, and I should like to refer to a few of those other improvements.

With regard to missiles, I have already mentioned the introduction of the Sea Eagle anti-ship missile this year. Improvements to current air-to-air missiles such as Sidewinder and Skyflash are being considered, while the collaborative development of the new generation of advanced air-to-air missiles, ASRAAM and AMRAAM continues.

The procurement of the ALARM anti-radar missile for Tornado is progressing well. The missile is being procured as a fixed price package covering both development and production form BAe Dynamics, the prime contractor. We believe that this programme will prove to be a good example of the benefits that the Department, and therefore the taxpayer, can gain from the use of competition in the procurement process, which in this case led directly to our being able to secure a fixed price contract. One wishes that more contracts had previously been negotiated on a fixed price basis.

An improved version of the BL755 anti-armour weapon will enter service this year. It will substantially improve the RAF's ability to destroy the latest Warsaw pact tanks. The Harrier GR3 and later the GR5 will be equipped with this weapon. Also this year we shall see the introduction of the JP233—the airfield attack weapon—which will significantly improve the Tornado's ability to put airfields out of action.

It is not just aircraft and weapons that the RAF needs; it also requires sensors, electronic counter-measures, communications, and so on. I should like to highlight the United Kingdom air defence ground environment, which provides warning of air attack. UKADGE, as it is known, gathers information from a chain of radars and other sensors.

In the United Kingdom, the network of ground radars and associated command, control and communication systems is being completely replaced. For example, in each air defence sector operations centre, there will be five computers, each of which has more computing capacity than the whole of the system being replaced.

For the future, secure jamming-resistant links between UKADGE, airborne early warning aircraft and Tornado F2, links known as the joint tactical information distribution system, JTIDS — we are not short of acronyms in the RAF—are planned for the late 1980s.

The House will be aware of advances in technology which can be used to reduce the detection of aircraft by enemy air defence systems. We are continuing to investigate ways in which this technology—commonly referred to as "stealth" technology—can be applied to RAF aircraft and missiles.

The protection of our key air assets on the ground is of vital importance. A largely NATO-funded hardening programme is being implemented at 11 of our key operational airfields in the United Kingdom to provide protection for our tactical aircraft and other essential operating facilities.

The first airfield has been completed and the squadrons are operating permanently from the hardened complexes. Work at four other bases is well under way and the programme should be completed by around the end of the decade. The hardening programme at the four RAF airfields in Germany has, of course, already been completed.

At this point I should like to comment briefly on the RAF's budgetary position. I do not, of course, wish to minimise our concern over the difficulties, which I have described to the House, on the Nimrod AEW project, but it must be seen in perspective against the very substantial increases in expenditure that have already been achieved.

When the Government first took office, the defence budget was some £7,500 million. The budget for 1985-86 is over £18,000 million—an increase in real terms of some 22 per cent. During that time, the proportion of the overall budget spent on equipment has risen from 40 per cent. to 46 per cent. — an outstanding achievement, which means that we spend a higher proportion of the budget on equipment than any other NATO country, including the United States.

Over the same period we have spent some £14 billion on air equipment—most of which goes to the RAF—and in the past year alone over £3 billion. Since the Government took office, expenditure on air equipment has risen by over 40 per cent. in real terms. That gives the lie to those who seek to argue that our conventional forces are being in some way neglected by the Government.

Finally, I turn to the RAF's most valuable asset—the men and women in the service. I shall mention first those who serve in the RAF's reserves.

Last year the Royal Auxiliary Air Force celebrated its 60th anniversary. Next year will see the golden jubilee of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. During recent years those voluntary reserves — the RAuxAF in particular—have expanded considerably.

In the last statement on the Defence Estimates we announced that consideration was being given to further expansion over the rest of the decade. A new Auxiliary RAF Regiment squadron will form in April to operate Skyguard anti-aircraft weapons captured from the Argentine forces during the Falklands campaign.

The new squadron will join the six field squadrons which provide local airfield defence, the three maritime headquarters units which support maritime operations, the movements squadron, and the recently formed aeromedical evacuation squadron. Personnel from the last two units made a valuable contribution to Lionheart last year.

I am pleased to say that recruitment in respect of both the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve is most satisfactory and I am most grateful to those who give their time and energy to this invaluable service.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am most grateful to the Minister for the praise that he has given to the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the other reserves. In the defence White Paper, he has given consideration to a flying role for the auxiliaries. Has any progress been made towards that end? They are most efficient and cost-effective.

Mr. Stanley: That is something that we would very much wish to do, being sympathetic in principle, but at present we do not have the resources to devote to it.

Mr. Wilkinson: How is it that the so-called non-flying services, the Navy and the Army, have flying reserve units, whereas the RAF does not?

Mr. Stanley: Each service has to look at the relative priorities that it will give to its assets of manpower and of finance. With regard to the Army, there was the availability of Scout helicopters, as I recall, which made it relatively easy to form a reserve unit for the Army Air Corps. I am afraid that the same is not true in respect of the RAF. The types of helicopters that are likely to be released for a flying role for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force will require a great deal more maintenance from regular people than the aircraft that have been released, for example, to the Army Air Corps. This is something towards which we are very sympathetic but I am afraid that we have a resource problem at the moment.

There are many ways in which I could highlight the personal qualities of those who serve in the RAF as a career. I would suggest that they are personified in the RAF's round-the-clock search and rescue activities. Over the past year the RAF has recorded 949 incidents in the United Kingdom and 121 overseas in which its search and rescue aircraft have been involved. During the past week alone there have been 30 incidents in which Royal Air Force search and rescue forces have reacted; 26 in the United Kingdom and four overseas.

In addition, Royal Air Force mountain rescue teams provide an invaluable service to the community at large, and over the past year there have been well over 200 incidents in which climbers and walkers have been rescued by RAF teams. The House will know the appalling weather conditions and physical hazards which often face the search and rescue teams, who unfailingly respond with skill, determination and personal bravery of the highest order.

I also want to mention the major contribution that the RAF has made to the relief of starvation in Ethiopia. The appalling problems facing that country are compounded by the remoteness of many of the famine areas. Our aircraft have made it possible to deliver vitally needed relief supplies to some of the worse-hit regions.

The RAF has already delivered nearly 8,000 tonnes of food, medical supplies, blankets and other equipment to those in need, and much suffering and many lives must have been saved as a result. I can vouch personally for the consummate skill the RAF has shown in operating in the most demanding conditions—on rough landing strips, with few or no landing aids, and with the ever-present risk of burst tyres and heavy bird strikes. I am glad to say that with the assistance of a number of Army air-despatch personnel our detachment has now started to air-drop food into particularly inaccessible areas where there is a crying need for relief supplies. The speed and efficiency of our operation has deservedly won for the RAF widespread praise from the relief organisations and the Ethiopian Government.

Finally, after the nearly two years now that I have had the great pleasure of working with the Royal Air Force I am left with the abiding impression of a service that is very expert and very dedicated. Its performance in NATO tactical evaluations, in the international bombing competition, in national and international exercises, in search and rescue, in quick reaction alert scrambles, and in maintaining the Falklands airbridge is eloquent and

[Mr. Stanley]

visible evidence of the depth of skill and the strength of commitment of the men and women of the RAF. The country is very fortunate to have their service.

6.33 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): First, I wish to join the Minister in again expressing the sympathy of the Opposition to the relatives and friends of the RAF bandsmen who died so tragically last week. I have already paid tribute on other occasions to the reputation of that band and to the service which those bandsmen gave to this country. They were great ambassadors.

I wish also to pay tribute to the late Lord Cameron of Balhousie, the former chief of air staff and chief of defence staff, who died last month after a long illness. He was a man who served his country well both in peace and in war and who gave distinguished service to both my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and Lord Mulley. It would be wrong to suggest that he necessarily approved of their political ideas and aspirations. Nevertheless, he was a devoted servant and in many ways his contribution to the idea that we must depend less and less on the nuclear alternative strikes a chord on this side of the House and, I suspect, on the Conservative Benches as well. He will be sorely missed in the other place.

I join the right hon. Gentleman in the tributes that he paid to the men who serve in the RAF. Like him, I am lost in admiration for the work they have done in Ethiopia. They have undertaken a tremendous mission and they have brought great credit both to their service and to this country. I only regret that it was found necessary to finance part of their operations out of the budget of the Overseas Development Administration. It should, I believe, have come straight from contingency funding. That apart, they have our admiration—as do, indeed, the men who fly the Hercules airbridge. Those of us who have had the privilege of witnessing the servicing and the mid-flight refuelling taking place know the enormous strength, courage and skill that those men have shown.

When a debate on the RAF is slipped into the business of the House at less than 48 hours' notice, one wonders why the Government have chosen to do this, particularly when the debate starts at the end of a great number of very important statements. One wonders about the degree of importance which the Government give to the RAF or the degree of embarrassment which they feel about their treatment of it.

Although we have had a very impressive catalogue from the right hon. Gentleman of the work that is done by the RAF, the projects under way, and the weapons, missiles and aircraft that are coming into service, it is our contention that he has missed and failed to cover the real problems faced by the RAF and the defence needs of this country.

We understand that on the recent budgeting within the RAF there was an estimated overspend of nearly £400 million. That led to such cheeseparing as the 10 per cent. fuel cut, the reduction in pilot training and the reduction in operational flying. The Opposition believe that what we are likely to see over the years is the stretching of programmes, the postponing of programmes and probably the cutting of programmes. This is, as the right hon. Gentleman has said, the most impressive re-equipment of the RAF—perhaps the best that has taken place since the Korean war. So far the brunt of the cuts in the services in order to meet the Trident commitments has fallen on the Navy. Now, we believe, we are to see the RAF's capital projects also damaged by that programme and by the whole of our nuclear posture.

While the right hon. Gentleman claims credit for the great sums of money which have been spent on the armed forces, next year there will be a very different picture indeed. The NATO supplement will be disappearing; the special forces inflation factor recognised by the Treasury will be disappearing; there will be a cut in terms of the moneys which will be absolutely available for the armed forces.

The Minister of State said, with a degree of uncharacteristic candour, when speaking in the Navy debate earlier this Session:

"There is one misapprehension under which the right hon. Gentleman is labouring"—

he was referring to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

"I should like to draw attention to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in a letter to the leader of the Liberal party. He was quite clear about the impact of the Trident programme on the Royal Navy's expenditure. He wrote:

'As for the effect on Royal Navy expenditure I would emphasise that individual Service programmes are not considered in isolation from the remainder of the Defence programme.'

It is therefore not correct to envisage the burden of Trident falling exclusively on a limited area which is now perceived to be the naval budget. We take a tri-service view of priorities in the defence budget." — [*Official Report*, 29 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. 1143.]

If that view of priorities means maintaining concentration upon Trident and our commitment to Trident, the conventional role of the Air Force, as well as that of the Navy and the Army, will suffer.

The Opposition believe that the Government have a choice of either Trident or a credible conventional Army, Navy and Air Force. We do not believe that with the budget that is available we can have both. Nor indeed would we want both. We want to maintain strong conventional forces and to get rid of the Trident nonsense. But, if we are to have an effective Air Force and an effective defence posture, we need a coherent defence policy and an industrial base capable of rational planning into the foreseeable future. We also need to retain the skilled design teams and production workers.

An examination of various sectors of the RAF shows that the Government will not be able to achieve their aim of a coherent defence policy. The Minister has skated quickly and easily over some of the problems of which we are all aware. There is a severe gap in the United Kingdom's air defence network. Our air defence forces consist of between 80 and 90 interceptors, and some of them are very old. If these aircraft are to be brought to bear effectively in a counter-attack on forces from the east, there must be an adequate early-warning capability. Without that, neither the existing force nor the Tornados, which are to come forward, will be a positive and properly effective force. Our sole airborne early-warning capability against low-level attack in the northern sector is upheld by five 30-year-old Shackletons. They are there to protect the nation by giving warning of the approach of a large number of TU22 Backfires and SU24 Fencers, which are all-weather, long-range aircraft. The Shackleton is long overdue for retirement.

We have the Nimrod programme, but we know that it faces many important problems. The time scale which the Minister presented to the House for bringing the Nimrod into operation was in many ways an over-optimistic one. On 2 February, Jane's said:

"The problems of the Nimrod AEW are massive, deep and interlinked. While a two or three year time scale has been talked of to solve the development problems, this must only be regarded as a 'best guess'. A sudden cure is unlikely to be found".

We believe that we cannot wait for the problems to be solved without some interim measures being taken.

We are aware of the problems. They were highlighted for many in the "Panorama" programme earlier this week and they are well known to those who have been following the Nimrod programme over the past few years. the problems are real and important. For example, we know that the present computer is too small, too slow and overworked. It cannot handle the targets required of it and it cannot distinguish between targets and clutter. Communications are easily jammed and the radar system cannot hold and trap low-flying fast-moving targets, which is the main purpose of the system. In addition, there are serious problems with the airframe. We are told that with the full radar system, crew complement and a full load, the Nimrod undercarriage cannot take the weight and that it might be necessary to refuel in mid-flight. If these facts are correct——

Mr. Robert Atkins: They are not.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman says that my information is not correct. He is capable of advancing that argument when he contributes to the debate. However, the comments which I have made have been made repeatedly by others. The Minister who is now responsible for the procurement programme has not felt able, except in the most vague terms, to say that the real problems that are being spoken about will be overcome. He cannot guarantee that the original air staff target will be reached for the Nimrod. That is what we want to hear and that is what we should hear.

Sir Patrick Wall: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that it was the Labour Government who introduced Nimrod III, against the advice of many who formed the then Conservative Opposition, who wanted to go into the NATO AWACS programme.

Mr. McNamara: That is an interesting statement. The Minister for Information Technology, who was earlier the Minister responsible for procurement, supported the Nimrod system and said that the AWACS system would be a more expensive alternative. He contended that AWACS was not superior to Nimrod and would not be ready at an early date. That Minister, when in opposition, led the powerful campaign that was mounted by Conservative Members in favour of the Nimrod programme. The official Opposition came down strongly in favour of Nimrod. If anything, it was their power which pushed the then Secretary of State to come to the decision which he eventually took. I am not seeking to make a political point although the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) sought to do so.

We are faced with an important problem in the defence of the United Kingdom. That leads me to the point that the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) raised. If we have the problems that I have described—I am glad that the hon. Gentleman and I are ad idem on this —we should be considering leasing the AWACS programme from the United States for a period until we solve Nimrod's problems, assuming that we can do so. We may have to decide whether there is an alternative. I understand that it is being suggested by some in the industry that we should put the Nimrod kit into the frame of the European Airbus. They claim that many of Nimrod's problems could thus be overcome. At the same time, the aircraft itself would have a longer lease of life than the existing Nimrod airframes.

The Minister skated over the problems of the European fighter aircraft project. The hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) and I and many others have fought strongly for a sole British Aerospace involvement to meet the RAF's requirement. The Ministry decided in its wisdom that it wanted to go on a European collaborative venture.

We read in today's edition of the *Financial Times*—Bridget Bloom is a well informed correspondent—that there are two feasibility studies, one from the French and one from the rest. Despite what the Minister has said about the conduct of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, we have been given the impression that the French have been leading us all by the nose. We have been prepared willingly to go along with European collaboration, but the French have been spinning out deliberations on various parts of the project, be it the airframe, the engine or the weight of the aircraft, to try to secure the opportunity to sell and market the Mirage 2000 as much as possible.

That is the real problem, and that is why we are suspicious of the French. I do not blame the French for taking this attitude because they have a good aeroplane and want to sell it. However, we must look after our home base and our other allies.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. He has talked about feasibility studies and two aeroplanes are being considered. Is he aware that the French option is vastly more expensive, especially its engine, than the EFA programme, which is the other option being considered?

Mr. McNamara: Yes, I am well aware of that. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has introduced that issue because my speech will now be two minutes shorter. I am able now to discard some of my papers and thus ensure that more right hon. Members are able to participate in the debate.

Rumours are circulating that, if necessary, the British aerospace industry could go it alone and that we could meet the RAF requirement by a project of our own. I would regard that as a dangerous course of action. I believe that when the pressures come on the Ministry and it is forced to make cuts it will find it easier to make them in domestic programmes than to fall foul of our NATO allies. Secondly, the opportunity to go in with our Tornado partners in a European venture, minus the French, will bring economies of scale. The advantage of that will be overwhelming when compared with going it alone. If there is a large market, it is possible to tailor the kit to produce individual aeroplanes, as it were, to meet the needs of individual countries.

We have considerable experience in dealing with our colleagues in the Tornado programme. Collaboration would enable us to have a strong and viable European aircraft industry. There is a danger that there will be moves

[Mr. McNamara]

by the United States to gobble up the separate European industries if we have too many go-it-alone projects. The argument for maintaining a European collaborative venture minus the French is overwhelming, so we should disregard any other options.

A matter of some importance to us and to the industry generally is what will happen at Warton if the date for the EFA is pushed back and back. We know that the Tornado is scheduled to end in December 1989 and British Aerospace will need follow-on work immediately if it is to maintain its work force and design teams. If they are broken up, I do not say that we will lose our capacity for the development of high performance fighter aircraft, but it will be far more difficult to maintain and improve that capability. Therefore, it is essential that something be done about it.

The Tornado programme has been stretched and the seventh batch of attrition aircraft is in doubt. Will that batch be supplied to Warton where it is very important to maintain the work force, particularly as the mid-life update has already been cancelled to save money?

There was talk of two major export orders, one to Turkey and the other to the Saudis. We withdrew the export credit on the Turkish order and the Turks could not go ahead. That is surprising, because Turkey is an important NATO partner on a sensitive flank. For the Government to have taken that decision, without consulting our NATO partners to try to reach agreement to help finance the Turks, was regrettable.

What is happening about the Saudi order? Has pressure been brought upon the Government by the United States not to go forward with that order because the planes might be stationed near the Israeli border? Is that why we are not getting it? We know that the French are busily peddling the Mirage 2000 to the Saudis. Our plane would be better able to meet Saudi needs. It is wrong that American or other pressure should prevent a legitimate defence sale. I hope that we shall have more of this type of information later from the Under-Secretary than the Minister of State, with his traditional coyness and disinclination to give information to anybody about anything, was prepared to give us.

No doubt the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr Ashdown) will be speaking later about helicopters. I am confused by what the Minister said. There is a real need to replace the Puma and the Wessex, which comprise nearly 100 aircraft. The role of the helicopter on the battlefield is becoming increasingly important, as we saw in the Falklands and in Operation Lionheart. In their development of the operational manoeuvre groups the Warsaw pact countries are seeking to develop the use of the helicopter. An early decision must be made in favour of Westland. A collaborative venture has some of the advantages that I spoke about earlier in regard to the European fighter aircraft. Westland cannot afford to wait for a decision. The Under-Secretary should give us more information about the time scale for the feasibility studies. Westland has run out of orders, but before it comes to the EH101 helicopter for the Royal Navy it is likely to face severe cash flow problems if it does not have an order for the RAF.

Then there is the competition from Sikorsky and Aerospatiale. A failure to give an order for the Westland would be as bad as giving an order to foreign competition. If Westland cannot retain its viability in the period leading up to the naval order, it may lose its independence, go out of existence or be taken over by someone else. More important, Westland is unique in this country. It is the only competent helicopter firm we have, serving both civil and military users. It is essential in our national interest to keep it in operation. The Government should intervene to ensure positive orders for Westland.

Mr. Best: I respect the hon. Gentleman for his staunch advocacy of a British company. Will he exhibit the same staunch support for the only British contender for the new RAF basic trainer?

Mr. McNamara: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall be dealing with that in a few moments because I have a marginal interest in it; 2,000 of the employees live near my constituency.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Taking the Westland case, does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that 1,500 of my constituents work for the British Hovercraft Corporation, which is a Westland subsidiary which does helicopter maintenance work amongst other things? If Westland does not get this order their jobs will be in jeopardy. The unemployment rate in the Isle of Wight is 17·1 per cent. and it would be well over 20 per cent. if that happened.

Mr. McNamara: I hope that the level of 20 per cent. male unemployment will never be reached in the hon. Gentleman's constituency because it would not be pleasant to live with it.

In relation to the sad and sorry story of our basic trainer, if ever there was an example of the Government messing around with British industry, that is it. I shall not dwell long on the fact that they should have gone for a turbo jet rather than a turbo prop because that is water under the bridge. It was a foolish decision. The history of all this is amazing. On 16 March last year, from the original 20 contenders, the Government went down to four. On 18 June they made invitations to tender to British Aerospace, Shorts, Hunting and Westland, with submissions to be in by 18 September. Suddenly, they changed the submission date to 1 October. We all confidently expected a decision by the end of the year. On 11 December the Minister of State for Defence Procurement—incidentally, although we are pleased to see the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, I am surprised that on this occasion the Minister of State for Defence Procurement is not taking part in the debate because RAF debates are often about procurement and procurement policies——

Mr. Stanley: May I point out that my right hon. Friend is on an important overseas ministerial visit to Australia and New Zealand?

Mr. McNamara: I hope that he enjoys the one-day tests, and I hope that we win.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement promised the House on 11 December that a decision would be made on the matter before the next Question Time, which was to be on 29 January. Then, on 18 December, it was said that there was no clear winner, Hunting and Westland were eliminated and best and final offers were to be sought from British Aerospace and Shorts. On 20 December we had verbal inputs about best and final offers, with the completion date to be 21 January, and then 28 January was mentioned. In late December or early January, suddenly Hunting and Westland were brought back. On 4 January a formal letter requested that best and

final offers should be received by 24 January and the bids were to be valid until 31 March. Suddenly on 17 January the Ministry of Defence announced that the completion date would be extended to 31 January, not at the request of British Aerospace. On 24 January, the MoD announced that bids would be valid until 30 April, again not at the request of British Aerospace.

We are entitled to ask why we must have that strange time scale, that opening and closing and extension of dates. What contender felt it necessary to go back time and again to the RAF to have the time scale opened up for it? We know that in terms of its handling, stalling, spinning, aerobatics and flying qualities, the PC9 was entirely suitable for the RAF training role. It was highly regarded. Any modifications that might have been needed could have been carried out within the bid price without any problem. However, we know that the other main contender had to go back on three if not four occasions to Boscombe Down for further reappraisal and training. It has had not one but four engine changes. Therefore, we must ask why decisions were made to try to make particular allowance for that aircraft, the Tucano. We must ask why it is still in the field.

The Tucano does not offer as many jobs as the PC9. In terms of foreign sales, it offers nothing compared with the PC9, particularly when Embraer has made arrangements for sales in South America and Egypt. The planes for the middle east market would be built in Egypt.

Why has the Tucano remained in the field? Jobs are very important for the Northern Ireland Office. That is understandable. I appreciate what it is seeking to do. However, where the plane is to be built in Belfast, unemployment is no worse than it is in Humberside and parts of Scotland. In this bid, we have not heard Shorts making any of the promises that it made to the United States about building the Sherpa in parts of Belfast , which it had to do to achieve that order. I should like the Minister to say whether Shorts——

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: I shall give way in a moment, but the hon. Gentleman is taking up other people's time as well as mine.

I should like the Minister to say whether Shorts has given any undertaking about building the aircraft in the old De Lorean factory in west Belfast, if the company got the order.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, in good faith, the Fair Employment Agency accepted Shorts' commitment that in future there would be equal opportunity for all sections of the community to find employment with that company?

Mr. McNamara: I accept that the company said that. We are waiting for the evidence that that will be carried through.

There is also the Foreign Office interest in the matter because of its interest in Brazil. It wants to repay part of the debt that we owe Brazil for its benevolent neutrality during the Falklands war. We understand that. But I suspect that the real reason why Shorts is so interesting to the Government has nothing to do with jobs in Northern Ireland or debts being repaid to the Brazilians. It is purely and simply the ideological reason that the Government want to privatise Shorts in the same way as they have already privatised British Aerospace. I say that not only because of my natural suspicion of the Department of Trade and Industry with its present head and its record on privatisation, but because of what was said by the managing director of Shorts, reported in the Prufrock column in the *Sunday Times* on 10 February, which stated:

> "Then, music to the ears of Norman Tebbit at Industry: 'The Tucano will get us into military aircraft work, which we haven't got at the moment. Having some military work will make us a better prospect for privatisation.'"

—said the managing director.

That is what it is all about. That is what Tucano is all about. That is why the RAF might be given an aeroplane with problems with its stalling characteristics, landing characteristics, low-level ride and marginal speed and flying performance. All those things are being sacrificed; and the RAF's interests are being sacrificed to the Government's ideological attitude and the Secretary of State's desire for privatisation. We should not accept that for the RAF. We want the best plane, capable of filling the air staff target in the best way. The only plane that has never had to go back to Boscombe Down for a second, third or fourth re-run, and that has been able to carry through all its training, is the PC9. That is why we expect to have it in the United Kingdom. We want to have it in Brough and Prestwick, and we want the 2,000 jobs over 10 years and the 2,500 other jobs in the industry.

The Minister of State opened the debate in a characteristic manner, glossing over all the difficulties, barely mentioning the problems and suggesting that somehow, with a wave of the magic wand, they will disappear. They will not disappear. They will accumulate. The Government will have to postpone, cut and cancel programmes, not only because the budget for the forces has been overcommitted already, because the Ministry felt that it could spend freely, with the great increases in the budget over the past five years, but, more important, because, as Trident goes ahead, as dollar costs increase and as the pressures increase, the pressures on the RAF and our ability to defend ourselves conventionally will increase. The Government will be condemned by the nation for that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Before I call the next hon. Member, I should like to remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation. To assist hon. Members, I shall use a little sign language when they are beginning to run out of time.

7.7 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): It is a rare occasion when I can agree with at least two points made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). The first was his comment about the Tornado order to Turkey, with which I heartily agree. I understand that the Turkish defence authorities have never reneged on any arms purchase. It is an extremely important front-line country and a NATO ally, which we should supply with our products.

The other comment that the hon. Gentleman made was that the debate is likely to be substantially about procurement. He may not know that in my constituency Westland Helicopters has its second largest installation, employing about 1,600 people. It is the largest employer

[Mr. A. E. P. Duffy]

Even conventional improvements would not achieve enhanced security in Europe. Negotiated reductions of conventional forces and the implementation of militarily significant confidence-building measures represent an alternative and complementary method of pursuing enhanced security and conventional stability in Europe.

Arms control considerations are often overlooked in the debate on conventional force improvement, but two forums offer enhanced European security through confidence building and reduction of conventional forces — the conference on disarmament in Europe and the mutual and balanced force reduction negotiations. Reconciling the various and sometimes divergent economic, military and political considerations in the current Alliance discussions on improving conventional deterrence is of paramount importance if the conventional force debate of the 1980s is to be positive rather than divisive—that is, if we are to achieve some success in reducing NATO's reliance on nuclear arms.

7.26 pm

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): I join with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) in his complaint about the timing of the debate. It is quite disgraceful to debate each service on one day only per year and then start after three statements and business questions. I want to make a few points about NATO and finish with a constituency point.

The House will know that the Soviet army attacks on a narrow front but in great depth — the first echelon about 50 km behind and the second echelon about 100 to 150 km behind. Currently, the second echelon would have to be attacked by the Tornado, which I believe would mean a high rate of attrition. I believe that the aircraft could be shot down easily.

The most important thing for the RAF is to have a long-range stand-off missile. The Navy has the Sea Eagle, but the RAF has no long-range stand-off missile. As the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) said, I understand that a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the United States, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany. May we be told the approximate production date? It is most urgent.

In the near future, that task will be undertaken by the multiple launch rocket system phase III, with its terminally guided sub-munitions and its much longer range, by the Copperhead laser-guided shell and by the Assault Breaker that will release the Tornado for its proper job, which is to counter the enemy air forces.

The second most important issue is to destroy the enemy airfields after the first strike has left. That can be done by the JP233, but again that is not stand-off. I do not believe that the three Tornado aircraft coming in and dropping JP233 could survive. In future the cruise missile and possibly a conventional ballistic missile such as the Pershing I, which has been withdrawn, might be used for that purpose. Aircraft are in short supply and should be used for countering the enemy aircraft threat. They must be safeguarded as much as possible when on the ground. The Nunn-Roth amendment led to an increased expenditure on NATO infrastructure—$7·8 billion was allocated recently, among other things, to strengthen shelters for the RAF and allied air forces. Since 1951, NATO infrastructure has provided 229 runways in Europe, which is a very good record.

We have already discussed Nimrod III compared with AWACS. I admit that many Conservative Members wanted Nimrod III, although many others advocated the NATO AWACS. This is a lesson for us. These international projects are sometimes much more expensive, but they are brought to fruition at a reasonable cost, are difficult to cancel, and do not give rise to the cost escalation that is bound to arise with Nimrod III.

Another means of detecting enemy aircraft is NIS-NATO identification system — which in my day was known as IFF. For years different air forces have had different identification systems. It has been said time and again that RAF aircraft could be shot down by our allies unless we had a common standard. I understand that the United Kingdom, France and Germany have agreed on a common system, but that the Americans are advocating another. I hope that these systems will be standardised, because it is not much good having two systems in the Alliance.

As to the European fighter, I merely remind the House that the Americans are at the same time developing their own advanced tactical fighter. It is a different type and has a longer range, and I do not believe that the European fighter will have much chance of success unless there is some arrangement with the Americans on comparability, common sales and so on. ASRAAM and AMRAAM have also been mentioned. Both are currently in difficulty. The European contribution, ASRAAM, has been held up twice by Germany's failure to produce the cash on time, although I now gather that it is again on line. This time the American AMRAAM has gone wrong and it is being examined by the Secretary of State.

I remind the Government that Ford aircraft in America are going ahead with the AIM9M, which it hopes will take the place of both ASRAAM and AMRAAM if they go wrong. Therefore, we had better look to our laurels.

SDI is purely a research project, but it will cost $26 billion. It is non-nuclear defence. If it succeeds, it is expected to bring down all ballistic missiles, including the SS20, SS21, SS22 and SS24 — the shorter-range battlefield weapons. SDI intercepts at the boost stage before the decoys are deployed and when it can home in on the heat. It also intercepts at the mid phase and at the terminal phase. I stress again that it is non-nuclear——

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Sir Patrick Wall: I would rather not give way as I am short of time.

SDI depends largely on laser particle beams and kinetic energy, some of the lasers being reflected by mirrors. It also depends on very high speed integrated circuits—the most modern computer technology.

Are we keeping up to date with this research? The Prime Minister mentioned this in Washington only yesterday, but I should like to know whether we are keeping up to date with the computer technology which is an essential part, not only of SDI but of all advanced technology affecting the RAF.

The PC-9 will be built largely in my constituency. It is favoured by the RAF—at least that is what we are given to understand. I also understand that 85 per cent. of the aeroplane will be built in this country as well as 75 per

cent. of the equipment—the most valuable part of any aircraft. There are joint marketing arrangements with the Swiss and, most important, this is a package with the Hawk. If countries buy the PC-9, they will buy the Hawk. I am pretty certain that the Swiss will buy the Hawk if we choose the PC-9.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Does my hon. Friend agree that the decision to purchase the new trainer should be based on what the RAF believes best meets its purposes, not on employment considerations or the desirability or otherwise of floating a company on the market?

Sir Patrick Wall: I agree with my hon. Friend. I remind the House that Shorts has just won a lucrative aircraft contract which will keep it pretty well occupied for some time, and that Humberside and the Prestwick area of Scotland could benefit by about 2,000 jobs if we were to order the PC-9. I commend to the Government early-day motion 217 which has been signed by more than 100 hon. Members. I very much hope that our choice will be the best aircraft, the one which the RAF wants.

I do not expect the Minister to answer any of my latter points, but I should like him to reply to my comments on NATO, IFF, and long-range stand-off missiles, which will be vital in any battlefield of the future.

7.35 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) tempts me to discuss the SDI and the broader questions that are now before us. However, I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if, in view of the time, I concentrate on one issue—Westland, which is of special interest to my constituency.

I should declare an interest, apart from my constituency interest, in that my only shareholding in British industry is in Westland. It is a modest sum of £20 which enables me to attend the annual general meeting. It is certainly no speculative, profit-making deal.

I wish to concentrate my remarks on the AST404, the replacement for the Wessex and Puma helicopters. The AST404 was originally due in 1987-88, but the in-service date has now been extended to 1991. Recently, it may even have been put on the back burner—the so-called regulator—with no funds yet identified. That causes concern.

The RAF's need for a replacement for the Wessex fleet is unquestionable and urgent. About that there can be no doubt. The Wessex fleet now supports our troops in Northern Ireland, but in time of war would be used to support our forces on the central front. These aircraft are 26 years old, and were designed in the 1950s. I was disturbed when the Minister said that perhaps this aircraft would be run on to the NH90, because the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) rightly identified the fact that these collaborative projects almost never meet their targeted in-service delivery date. The Minister may talk about 1994 or 1995, but he knows as well as I do that the NH90 will probably not become available until the year 2000. Are the Government really asking the RAF to use aircraft—the main element of its fleet—whose design is 50 years old? We have good reason to wonder how long an essential component of our defence can depend on these clapped-out machines. They are good machines for their age, which have done sterling service in their time. I have had good reason to know that, having flown to and from active service in them in Borneo, Aden and Belfast. However, these machines need replacing soon—indeed, now.

As other hon. Members have said, the helocopter's role in the battlefield is that of a force multiplier. It should be used to make better use of our forces. That is vital and is well recognised elsewhere. If there is an imbalance with the disposition of Soviet forces in central Europe, which I accept, we can overcome that through the use of helicopters.

As the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare also said, other nations seem to be much more aware of this than the Ministry of Defence. A typical American corps in central Europe will have 800 helicopters at its disposal, whereas a typical United Kingdom corps will have 180. All defence experts now recognise the increased and growing role of the helicopter in the battlefield. To meet that requirement, the Government have set up air staff target 404. There are three contenders, but only one is British—the Westland W-30. The W-30 meets in full, admittedly with no frills or fur trimming, the precise requirements laid down by the RAF. Unlike other competitors, the W-30 is designed to meet the need fully but not excessively. That is why it seems that the costs will be about 30 per cent. lower than those of foreign opposition. Running costs will also be lower.

We have made a considerable investment in the W-30, which is the derivative from which Westland will build its aircraft. The Department of Trade and Industry has invested £40 million in it, and Westland has done an almost pound-for-pound matching investment of about £35 million. There have been further investments in the blades and gearboxes. My community and that of the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare have also invested their ingenuity and skill in that aircraft. That stands at stake on the Government's decision.

Considerable opportunities also stand at stake. Exports may be more than double our sales to the RAF. If the RAF's imprimatur is on the aircraft and we can say to other countries that the British Government have bought the aircraft, we may be able to sell twice as many as we would supply to the RAF. That would give us a prime position in the European collaborative deal, the NH90.

Westland is a committed collaborator, as the EH101 shows. The W-30 would provide 6,800 man years work, which is about 1,000 jobs in production, 400 in support, and a further 2,000 in the other British industries that supply Westland. A typical helicopter today is only 50 per cent. in house, and the other 50 per cent. is bought in from other industries all over Britain. Therefore, there would be about 4,000 jobs overall. We would maintain a major British defence industry in a strong condition. We would maintain a stand-alone capacity to make our own helicopters. We would also maintain in the best condition a firm which is about to produce a key new helicopter, the EH101. There is a necessity to build a bridge from the present position to the EH101 in the early 1990s.

I recognise the Secretary of State's problems, as all hon. Members must do. They may be generated by Trident. We recognise that he now faces a matrix of difficult decisions. I remember calling Trident "that cuckoo in the nest", and he is now undoubtedly finding good reasons to elbow other projects out of its way. I do not wish to make a political point about this, but Trident

[Mr. Jerry Wiggin]

in my constituency, which has an unemployment rate of about 2 per cent. above the national average, and the highest in the county of Avon.

I should like to refer to the A20, which fills air staff requirement 412. The big criticism that is thrown at that aircraft is that it has never flown. However, I must say to the critics who see that as some sort of a bull point that the Royal Air Force is now capable of making an assessment of an aeroplane that has not flown. In most cases, it has purchased aeroplanes that have not even been beyond the drawing board, let alone tested. With the latest computer technology, that should not be a barrier.

As a result of the retendering process, there has been a substantial change in the status of the A20, the most important point being the offer of the installation of the Garrett engine. I recall being told some horrendous figures about spare parts stocking for the RAF because of the many different types that we still have in operation. One of the advantages of the Garrett engine is that it is already in service in the Jetstream, so, we hope, there will not be a duplicate requirement for many of the spare parts. It is now the fastest and best performing aircraft because of the installation of this high-powered engine. On those two grounds alone, I should have thought that the A20 was very much back in contention.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My hon. Friend will acknowledge that the Royal Air Force Jetstreams are not Jetstream 31s; they are the ordinary Astazon-powered variety.

Mr. Wiggin: I am informed that there is quite a commonality of parts in these Garrett engines. That will be a plus point in relation to the new offer.

The Australians, who are in partnership on this project, have taken this opportunity to reduce substantially their prices. I understand that the price of the A20 is now much more competitive. It may well be, of course, that the competitors have taken the opportunity to cut their prices. I sincerely hope that those factors will weigh with the Government.

British Aerospace and the Shorts contender will be competing for worldwide sales with their partners' less sophisticated aircraft. The A20 will be wholly made within the partnership, and there will be no competition with less sophisticated versions worldwide.

The A20 has the Hawk cockpit and is designed specially to fulfil completely the air staff requirement as written and is not a modified aeroplane. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister will be bored sick with hearing the various merits of the competitors in this contest. A noble Lord in the other place said that this was the first competitive tender for an RAF aeroplane for 70 years. That seems to be a strange statement, but I cannot think of an example in recent years. This has done the colour brochure printing industry much good, to say nothing of the expensive meals that aircraft manufacturers have found it necessary to give hon. Members. Westland, because of its natural diffidence, has not until now been accustomed, because of its position as a sole supplier, to flying its flag as high as we would wish. I shall send my right hon. Friend the Minister particulars on the A20.

It would be disastrous to believe everything we read in the Sunday newspapers and to assume that Westland is anything other than an extremely prosperous company. It is true that the company did not make a profit last year, but neither did many other helicopter companies worldwide. There is a huge surplus of helicopters on the world market—the French are virtually giving them away and the Americans cannot sell theirs. This naturally means that Westland is facing a temporary recession.

I cannot believe that there is a thought going through Ministers' minds that they should not keep Westland Helicopters in business. It is vital that we have our own domestic helicopter producer, not just for employment and technology reasons but for strategic reasons. I was privileged to be in the Ministry of Defence during the Falklands war, and I know the work that was put in at short notice to ensure that the various modifications necessary for operating in that specific circumstance were fulfilled in a way that I do not believe any foreign supplier could have done. I hope that the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence will ensure that there is sufficient work to keep Westland in business.

If the Government are to have a helicopter system between the time when the Wessex and Puma helicopters are phased out and the time when the NH90 comes into operation, they must act. I believe, from my limited observation of the Concorde and the helicopter co-operative programmes, that the concept of four countries co-operating to make a new type of helicopter before the end of this century is unrealistic. The order for the 85 or so W30s that are required will be a huge shot in the arm for Westland. They will be an extremely important acquisition for our services. I cannot believe, when the cost of the W30 is 30 per cent. less than the cost of the American contender and 45 per cent. less than the cost of the French contender, that any Conservative Government could decide other than to go for the W30. I shall not spell out the huge number of jobs that would be involved. Those jobs would be important to my constituency, to the constituency of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and to the whole of the aviation industry. I hope that my right hon. Friend will soon say that the W30 will move from being an air staff target to being an air staff requirement. I hope that this spring the Government will be firm in what they propose.

I am conscious of the time limit. I should like to go into the arguments about spending on helicopters within the whole of the Ministry of Defence. I believe that the helicopter is a much underrated asset on the modern battlefield and that the Americans have begun to understand that. In the United States there are 14 helicopters for every 1,000 soldiers while in the United Kingdom the figure is 2·7 per thousand. If we had had more helicopters during the Falklands war, the war could have been conducted more efficiently and could have been concluded faster. I well remember the cost of losing the Atlantic Conveyor when the Chinooks went down with her.

My right hon. Friend the Minister includes the Meteorological Office in his responsibilities. I suggest that he should spend a good deal of time seeing what happens in that organisation. Between 1979 and 1985 the cost to the civil aviation industry of meteorological information increased by 225 per cent. It costs £100 to provide the meteorological information necessary for the shuttle to fly between London and Glasgow. For every major aircraft on the United Kingdom register, the airlines have to pay £40,000 a year in meteorological charges. I do not think that I have to persuade the public about the Meteorological

Office, because when I was responsible for answering for its activities, my assurances that the office was doing a good job were guaranteed to make hon. Members shriek with laughter. It is time something was done about the Meteorological Office. If necessary, we should privatise it, but we should not go on spending £50 million or more a year on it, at vast cost to the British taxpayer who does not trust the stuff that comes out of it.

7.17 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Minister of State said that the RAF is in the middle of a large re-equipment programme. The RAF is undergoing the most extensive modernisation programme for 20 years, involving the expenditure of £14 billion on major projects in the coming decade. I shall examine some of those projects and then, in the light of the emerging technology which some of those projects reflect, assess the possibility of our armed forces, including the Royal Air Force, placing less reliance on nuclear arms.

According to paragraph 4.10 of the 1984 defence statement,

"Later this year, the Tornado F2 will join the RAF and crew training for the operational conversion unit at RAF Coningsby will begin."

In opening the debate a year ago, the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that the Tornado F2 would be introduced into service in 1985. I should have liked the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in his opening references to that programme to have been a little more specific. The right hon. Gentleman was more specific on UKADGE, the United Kingdom air defence ground environment. The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that it was being completely replaced, but, along with JTIDS, completion is not expected before the late 1980s. That is disturbing news for hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Three squadrons of Tornado GR1—the strike-attack variant—have now been formed in the United Kingdom, and their introduction into RAF Germany in place of the Buccaneer and Jaguar has begun. Is there any foundation for the suggestion that problems attend the introduction of the GR1 in RAF Germany? The Comptroller and Auditor-General stated in a report in November 1984 that the Tornado collaborative project had

"developed a substantial work-sharing imbalance that was losing Britain defence work worth as much as £250 million."

I should like the Minister to comment on that.

The Minister mentioned the AV8B — GR5, a development of the original Harrier. Its avionics will include equipment, principally a forward-looking infra red, known as FLIR, which will give the aircraft a night attack capability. I understand that the United States and the United Kingdom night attack requirements are similar and that the possibility of a collaborative FLIR programme is under consideration. I think that the House would have liked the Minister to say a word about progress on that.

I understand that two firms—the dynamics group of British Aerospace and GEC Avionics—are competing to supply a FLIR system to meet the United Kingdom requirements and that the successful contractor will be selected in 1985. The House is looking to the Minister for comment on that also.

On the survivability of priority one airfields in the United Kingdom and RAF Germany, we are looking for a progress report—preferably tonight. That leads us to the Rapier air defence missile system which, as we know from Falklands experience, is indispensable to the survivability of our airfields. Until the tracked Rapier is fully deployed, will not air defence be inadequate?

In the debate a year ago, I questioned whether the ASRAAM programme was safe. The Tornado 2 will enter service with its Skyflash and Sidewinder missiles. In the early 1990s, we plan to replace them with a new generation AMRAAM and ASRAAM, on which we are working with our American and German allies. The Minister will be aware of my fear that the United States will compete for ASRAAM and that it is, in fact, preparing to take over both programmes.

The Minister will recall my concern that the Government should move beyond the stage of studies into air-launched systems or stand-off weapons for Tornado. With the look-down, shoot-down capability of the Soviet air force and its airborne early warning, and given the dramatic modernisation of the Soviet air force—which the Minister a year ago described as Warsaw pact air superiority—Tornado may not be able to get over the target by the late 1980s, but will have to engage it from a distance.

The defence statement of 1983, paragraph 4, claimed that studies were in hand to assess the conventional armed long-range stand-off missile or complementary systems to manned aircraft. Of course, Tornado was in mind. However, there is no mention of that in the 1984 defence statement. I believe that a memorandum of understanding with the United States on two new programmes—the long-range stand-off missile and the short-range anti-radiation missile—are in hand. Again, I look to the Minister to comment on progress.

I understand that on a visit to RAF Finningley in 1979, the Prime Minister pledged that service men's pay would match that of their civilian counterparts. We all endorse the Minister's closing remarks when he paid tribute to the men of the RAF. Therefore, I am bound to ask whether the pay review body is being guided by that principle of parity with civilian counterparts.

There is general consensus in most west European countries that it is desirable to lessen NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons. To assess more adequately how much is enough to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons, it is first necessary to arrive at a consensus on what is meant by the nuclear threshold and what level of nuclear dependence political authorities and publics within the Alliance are prepared to accept.

Of all the various measures for raising the nuclear threshold—that is, for improving conventional defence—one merits special attention because it has received more attention within the Alliance during the past year than any other, and that is sustainability. Lack of adequate sustainability within the NATO forces is, according to Saceur General Rogers, the most serious military deficiency facing the Alliance. NATO guidelines call for 30 days of war stocks — for example, ammunition, petrol and spare parts—all of which apply to the RAF. Yet most countries' war stocks fall well below that level. Therefore, how can any of them claim that they are keeping in touch with public opinion and its increasing sensitivity about the present reliance on nuclear weapons? They are not putting in hand the improvement of conventional forces which would have the effect of raising the nuclear threshold.

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

creates difficulties for him. We recognise how he will be tempted to delay decisions to a future date when he will have more room for manoeuvre.

However, I caution the Minister, in case he considers delay a mechanism for solving his problems, that the consequences are severe. The RAF needs will remain unmet in the key area of our defence. That will inevitably push the replacement helicopter into a position where it clashes with other capital programmes. Delay will weaken our capacity for export from Westland and other British industries. Westland will not have the bridge to secure itself a future position. It will be tied into the NH90 collaborative helicopter in a weaker position than would otherwise be the case.

If the Secretary of State cannot commit himself to a date, we shall be disappointed, although we shall understand why. If only he would commit the Government to choosing the W-30 on principle, we can, perhaps, live with uncertainty about the date, because we shall at least have one foot on the ground and something that we can use to encourage exports. With that, Westland's hand will be strengthened for exports.

The Secretary of State realises that he is dealing, not with a weak company, but with one whose work force and management have shown themselves capable of taking courageous and tough decisions to enable them to survive in an increasingly competitive market place. The Secretary of State is dealing not with an ailing industrial sector, but with a world sector with an assured growth for the future. He is not dealing with a company that has no future orders. On the contrary, the company has an assured future in the EH101, which is the greatest single helicopter project in which the company has taken part. He is dealing not with a company that cannot supply the essential needs of the RAF less expensively than others, but with a company which can supply a British buy from a proven record. We know from the experience in the Falklands that it can supply the goods—and, in this case, supply them at a cost 30 per cent. less than its competitors.

In asking the Minister for a decision now or soon, Westland is not seeking charity. It has no need of that. It does not want gifts or handouts. It wants the Government to make a decision so that it can plan its future, get on with the job, and do the thing that it knows best—building the best helicopters in the world for the RAF's needs.

7.44 pm

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): There is a lot that I want to get through and in view of the time limit, I hope that I do not gabble too much. I agree entirely with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) about the sale of Tornados to Turkey. We are talking about £1 billion of export orders. I thought that Farnborough existed to deal with our defence sales among other matters. I can do no better than to quote from a letter I sent to the Prime Minister. I said:

"As you have indicated on many occasions, the British aerospace industry is a shining example to the rest of the country in its design, production, marketing, delivery, profits, workforce and general management. Is it to suffer at the hands of the Governments of France, U.S.A., and others, in that they bend over backwards to support their aerospace industry in competitive foreign sales, or can they be assured of the necessary financial assistance equivalent to the predatory financing being offered elsewhere? Is it to lose out to the Mirage 2000 taking up sales which should be Tornados or E.F.A.'s or even a national version of a new fighter, breaking up design teams and the backs of many sub-contractors, or can the situation be retrieved as a matter of urgency?"

Hon. Members will not be surprised to learn that I want to talk largely about the European fighter aircraft. It has been the subject of a continuing saga under various mnemonics and titles since I was elected in 1979. There will soon be a meeting — it causes me and my constituents some anxiety — to discuss the feasibility plan, development and production of the EFA for 1985 onwards. I was sufficiently worried about it to raise the matter with the Secretary of State in the House. He recently wrote me a letter and confirmed that there may have been

"a slippage of perhaps 4 weeks on the timescale we had in mind last summer. We realise however that a further period will be needed for officials to assess the results of the studies, for the Air Staffs to consider the capability offered, for National Armaments Directors to prepare the ground for a Ministerial Meeting and for us to take a view on the military, financial and industrial aspects."

As I predicted, and said earlier in an intervention, France is at the nub of the argument. A French industry spokesman said:

"It is important to join forces with the UK, not because of the physics but because of the money required for development."

However, Emile Blanc, the national French armaments director said:

"We are taking steps to ensure that France controls technology in areas where we lead other nations."

I have a document from the company, for whom I seek to speak because of my constituency interest. It states:

"British aerospace industries would prefer a national solution to the new fighter requirement."

The company believes that it will be at no extra cost to the percentage of the United Kingdom collaboration, which is proposed within EFA because of the great cost of the French aviation industry, to which I also referred in an intervention. The document states:

"British aerospace industries would prefer a national solution to the new fighter requirement for the RAF in view of the greater opportunity to utilise the industries resources and technology, as developed by the EAP with the substantial industrial involvement in that programme.

However, they recognise the value of a major collaborative programme with the enlarged overall programme and long term stability which would ensue, and consequently have co-operated fully in the five nation feasibility study for the EFA which has just been submitted to the five Governments.

In any programme which hopefully will follow on from these studies they would expect the following aspects to be respected by HMG to safeguard the UK national position and the continuing viability of the aerospace industry.

1. The weapon system resulting from the programme must meet the minimum operational target of the RAF.
2. There must be equality of worksharing with GE and FR during the development phase, recognising that subsequent adjustments can be made in production to reflect the numbers of aircraft bought by each nation.
3. Workshare arrangements should apply *separately* to airframe, engine, and equipments.
4. There should be equality of management authority and responsibility between the five nations with no overt leadership by one nation for either airframe or engine.
5. A central NATO agency should be established with authority to place contract on the industries.
6. To ensure maximum penetration of the export market it is necessary to get aircraft into service as soon as possible and no later than January 1995."

Anything that does not meet those criteria will be wholly unacceptable to the company, management and work force, to the British aerospace industry and to those

of my constituents who work in it. It will also be wholly unacceptable to me. I make my position quite clear. I can do no better than to quote from some of the recent remarks made about this project in various trade journals. For example, the national aerospace organiser for TASS says:

"We don't seem to know what we are doing or where we are going; that's bad for Britain's defence. Tass is concerned that the UK will come out 'the worst' from any negotiations because there appears to be an absence of policy as to what we want".

The editorial in *Flight International*, the United Kingdom magazine on aviation, says:

"Neither German nor British governments have shown a willingness to put even their own nation's interest first, and departmental pride is allowed to inhibit possible spending . . . France has also taken an export-led stance, and geared the development of new aircraft to the potential export market, without allowing that consideration to govern France's own military requirements."

Dornier and Northrop are continuing to work on the ND-102 project as a fall-back position, because, as the vice-president and chief designer of Northrop said:

"We think there is enough chance [that the EFA program will fail] that we want to continue to be prepared for the opportunity if it comes."

Aviation Week and Space Technology, the leading American magazine, says:

"U.S. government officials contemplating the difficulties are convinced the entire program will never get off the ground. The skeptics at this point have a reasonable bet."

That shows the concern that has been expressed about the EFA project. The importance of the project cannot be underestimated. I know what the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement did, what my hon. Friend the Minister is doing—as he has a constituency interest—and, above all, what the Secretary of State is doing. but the industry's perception is that the French are outmanoeuvring us. They have indicated that Dassault wants 46 per cent. of the airframe. People at all levels of industry tell me that the French are getting away with murder. I am not prepared to tolerate it any longer. I am fed up with urging the project and with apparently not getting very far. The Government and the industry together must get a grip to ensure that that plane gets off the ground. If we cannot get a collaborative project, which is what we all want, we must have a national project.

The situation in relation to jobs, technical expertise, the world leadership on offer within the British aerospace industries, and in relation to the strategic and industrial requirements demands that that project goes ahead now. It must not be delayed any longer. I, the Royal Air Force, hon. Members generally and, above all, the British aerospace industry, including my constituents, demand that it should happen now. I hope that the Government and the House will recognise the urgency of the project.

7.52 pm

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): I shall return later to the challenging points made by the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), as I agreed with everything that he said. I do not always agree with him, but on this occasion I agreed with him in toto.

The Minister made some very unfortunate remarks in his opening statement. He referred to Phantoms bought from the United States, modified Hawks, updated Buccaneers, stretched aircraft, reborne Shackletons and reincarnated Jet Provosts. In many ways he reminded me of Ron Moody when he appeared in the film musical of "Oliver Twist". Even though I am a Welshman, I shall not sing, but the phrase that I have in mind is:

"We are reviewing the situation".

That is about all that the Government do. If reviews were aircraft, the RAF would be well off. But, in effect, the Department sits back and fails to make any decisions. If the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) had been in the Chamber I think that he would have agreed with my next point. After all, I wonder what would have happened if Mitchell had not built the Spitfire or its prototype for the Schneider trophy, possibly even before the Minister was born. We did not have enough Spitfires in 1939, but at least we had them. In 1995 will there be any aircraft, or will there be just another review?

I should be delighted to see the Secretary of State in a flak jacket standing by an advanced fighter ready for 1995. But I believe that we are standing in the shadow of Trident. It is influencing events and preventing decisions from being made. I need not rehearse the points made by the hon. Member for South Ribble, because he spoke well on behalf of his constituents and the industry. I commend him on that and I agree with everything that he said. It is about time that the Department made a decision.

There was an interesting development this week. Some hon. Members will know that I have been fighting a battle to get the Super 748 over to the Caribbean. But I believe that that decision was bedevilled by a Frenchman, who was a Commissioner. I had a fascinating reply from the Prime Minister this week, indicating that she intends to find out exactly what went wrong with that deal. The 10 nations wanted it, the airline wanted it, the bank wanted it but the French said no.

As the hon. Member for South Ribble has said, it is about time the French were told that they should either be a partner, and an equal partner at that, or should let us go alone. This is no time for being mealy-mouthed, and there is no point in dressing up and being photographed. This is the time for action. The French must be told that if they want the European fighter, they must collaborate on a fair basis, with the Brits being allowed to maintain their technology and work force as well.

Let us consider this renovated Jet Provost, Pilatus or Tucano. Why do we not return to the simple concept of letting the RAF choose its own aircraft? It is the RAF that flies them, and not the Minister or the Secretary of State. The RAF knows its requirements. When I was in the RAF, I was given a very good aircraft. I was very grateful to the manufacturers. I had a Mosquito, the best 'plane of its day. The Secretary of State has a duty to ensure that the skilled members of the RAF have the best aircraft available for training as well as operational purposes. That is his prime duty. There should be no more reviews, dilly-dallying or finger trouble. I am reminded of old Pilot Officer Prune who was given an award for failing to do things on time. He was awarded the Highly Derogatory Order of the Irremovable Finger. The Minister must ensure that he is not given that order. I shall certainly present him with it, if he does not make the right decision. I am sure that hon. Members will associate themselves with my comments.

I turn to Woodford and to the importance of maintaining a skilled work force. It is the last place in the United Kingdom where a large-scale military aircraft can be built. There is no point in the Secretary of State using one of his favourite terms—"It's front loading." That is rubbish. If we are to sustain a large aircraft building capability, Woodford must be supported.

I shall obtain favour all round tonight, because I now turn to the subject of helicopters. It must be the W-30. We

[Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones]

must maintain the helicopter capability in this country. It is sometimes assumed that the west country is an area of full employment, but is not. The work force can build the aircraft or helicopter that is desired, and that will at the same time provide employment, and sustain and maintain the technology that we need in this country.

The Minister spoke about the search and rescue scheme, but there is something else that the RAF could do with its helicopters. It could involve itself more and more in perinatal care and in the new-born baby. The RAF could help to take babies to special units quickly. That is humane work and requires skilled training.

I have been speaking of conventional defence. Some of the delays have been occasioned by the awesome burden of Trident. I believe that implicitly.

The Minister must ensure that the RAF gets its preferred aircraft. The overwhelming need is to sustain British technology in the aircraft industry. The Minister must preserve the skills and initiatives of the work force. No more reviews. Action, please.

8.1 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): In many ways the debate has been untypical. Usually in debates on the Royal Air Force we discuss the depth of pile in the carpets at RAF Germany and whether English programmes are shown on television there. Constituency pre-occupations have not dominated this debate. That is to the good.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State set the right tone when he concentrated on the operational capabilities of the service and its equipment. I want to take the debate into the future—into the next century and beyond. This is the appropriate time to do so.

This month two leading representatives of our European Alliance have spoken about the significance of President Reagan's strategic defence initiative, launched in his famous speech on 23 March 1983. Chancellor Kohl in his Wehrkunde speech at Munich and our Prime Minister in her speech yesterday to both Houses of Congress welcomed the idea of European industry participating in the research programme.

I should like to examine how the strategic defence initiative and the new technologies for the military utilisation of space will affect RAF strategies, its order of battle, procurement policy and manpower planning. The most important element concerns the men and women of the RAF.

Lord Trenchard was one of the greatest men of our century in terms of the work that he did towards the creation of an independent Royal Air Force and for building a structure which would endure. That structure endured through the second world war and proved itself in that conflict. Basically it endured until the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the 1950s the flying squadrons of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force were disbanded and in the 1960s changes were made in the training of officers. They were profound alterations from the old Trenchardian mould.

For the next century we must attract people who will be capable of servicing and manning the space-based systems that will ensure our deterrents, and our defence. For that we need a new tri-service cadet college to train people in the appropriate military sciences. I have always said that the place to do so should be at Greenwich and that when cadets have completed their training there they should go on to their respective academies and that for the Air Force it should be Cranwell. At present Cranwell courses are short and not appropriate to the future scientific and professional training required. The United States Air Force academy has a course lasting four years and is of the highest calibre.

I do not wish to decry the role of graduates from our universities and colleges. They will continue to be essential, but we need a new, highly professional, properly trained stream of permanent commissioned entrants.

In mid-career we must enhance the role of the college of air warfare at Cranwell. It already provides an astronautics course. We should carry it further so that the course ultimately involves space experience. We should approach the task in co-operation with our European allies.

We and our European allies must co-ordinate our whole approach to the strategic defence initiative. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has shown the way forwrd in his industrial approach. We must resolve our military role. First, we shall have to deploy in Europe point defence systems against ballistic missile attack. There is nothing new in the concept of protecting from pre-emptive or first strike our own deterrent forces and our centres of population. We did it in the 1950s and 1960s when Fighter Command protected the bomber bases of the V force. The point defence systems will be the easiest component of the SDI to evolve and I believe that they will be the first to be deployed.

More futuristic elements are involved also. I refer to the means of intercepting ballistic missiles in their boost, post-boost and mid-course elements of flight. Those aspects of SDI will require space-based systems. Some could be manned, but certainly they will have to be serviced and maintained. The shuttle has shown that this is possible. It is already possible to retrieve, maintain and repair satellites in space. The Royal Air Force and its personnel will have a role in that.

We must examine too how we are to deny to a potential enemy the eyes and the ears that control military operations. Increasingly those eyes and ears are satellites. The Soviets have already deployed a rudimentary first generation anti-satellite system. They are keen that the United States should not fully develop and deploy their own anti-satellite system. I have no doubt that the Americans will pursue its development—and they will be right to do so. I hope that the system will be operational shortly with the F-15.

The ability to intercept and destroy satellites will not be unique to the American component of our Alliance. We Europeans will have a similar requirement. I hope that the air staffs of our respective countries are addressing themselves to the problem already. I believe that the Tornado F-2 and, ultimately, the European fighter aircraft will be the appropriate launch vehicles for such a system. Command and control operations will also be required. That will be costly and is another matter which must be addressed.

We have dealt with today's problems, the problems of the 1980s and we have looked to the 1990s. There is no doubt that in the next century the RAF will have a spatial role. I hope that is so. The motto of the service is not "per ardua ad caelum" but "per ardua ad astra". In that spirit I hope that the Secretary of State and his colleagues will

encourage the Service and Civil Service to examine the changes required within the RAF to meet the challenges of the space age.

I hope that the strategic defence initiative, which has undoubtedly brought the Soviets to the negotiating table again and which offers some hope that the pattern of mutually assured destruction will be broken, will mean that there will be greater security for our peoples. I trust that we shall play our full part in this process and that the RAF will play a leading role.

8.9 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): As the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said, this is a strange debate in some ways as hon. Members with such diverse views as the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) apparently agree and almost feel mutual admiration. I hope that the Minister is aware of the pressures that might be being applied.

I shall confine my speech to the urgent need to provide the RAF with a new trainer. I trust that the Minister was not being serious when he suggested the refurbishment of the present trainer as a credible alternative. I hope that the laughter that went around the Chamber when he said that was not nervous laughter, but a sign that the House has discounted such an alternative.

I speak on behalf of all hon. Members from Ayrshire, except the Secretary of State for Scotland, when I say that there is only one aircraft that should be the replacement for the trainer—the British Aerospace PC9. In a debate such as this, there is a danger of overstating the case, so I shall not go into detail about its technical qualities. I do not wish to denigrate other aircraft as, in their way, they are all first-rate, but the PC9 shines out like a throughbred.

An important feature of the PC9 is that it meets all of the RAF's requirements. The Minister and others have paid respect to the skill of the RAF. They should seriously consider giving the RAF the airplane aeroplane that it wants. The PC9 can meet the required specifications with minimal changes whereas its competitors are apparently having some difficulty. Why are there delays? Some of us suspect that the PC9's competitors are being given extra time to reach the specifications required.

Moreover, the PC9 is the best industrial solution. Several hon. Members have spoken of the influence on their constituency if the PC9 were chosen. I have a constituency interest in it. Although Prestwick is not in my constituency—it is 11 miles away in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Scotland — engineers and aircraft fitters based at Prestwick live throughout Ayrshire. In the initial stages, the PC9 can provide 150 jobs where the average rate of male unemployment is about 22 per cent. That number could be extended to 250. That is important to an area that has just lost a British Steel Corporation foundry with the loss of 280 jobs.

Despite the claims of its competitors, the PC9's airframe is 85 per cent. British and I understand that about 90 per cent. of the technical equipment is British. The Minister must consider all of the factors which make up the equation, but the RAF has said that it wants the PC9, it will provide about 2,400 jobs for British industry, it is almost wholly British-built and it would provide jobs throughout the United Kingdom. The best craftsmen in the world will be employed in building it. I would be astonished if the PC9 was not chosen.

8.16 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I agree with everything that the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) said about the PC9. It might surprise him that my constituents have an interest in it as Ferranti is involved.

It would be churlish if I did not say that I spoke in the House last year arguing that Ferranti should get a contract for the GR5 Harrier. In the past few days, my right hon. Friend the Minister has awarded that contract. The significance of it is the relationship with the European fighter — because Ferranti will now be in a much stronger position to compete for the avionics of that fighter. Recognition of the work of Ferranti as a world leader has been enormously strengthened by my right hon. Friend's decision, for which I thank him very much.

My right hon. Friend the Minister said that he hoped that collaboration will succeed, but there are serious potential difficulties with France. I understand that the British aerospace industries want a partnership that involves equality of work-sharing and of management authority. During discussions, France might prove to be less genuinely interested in that policy than us. I appreciate that Minister Hernu might do his best to deliver, but the power of the French industrial and trade union lobbies, especially in regard to the Dassault company, are so powerful that the French will be unlikely to accept a genuine partnership.

I hope that my right hon. Friend is right to think that collaboration will succeed but, in the event of it being difficult to get a genuine partnership, I hope that he will have readily available an alternative policy and plan for a national solution to preserve the structure and capability of the British aerospace industry. "Jane's All the World's Aircraft 1984-85" said recently of the European fighter:

> "With the first flight scheduled for the far future of 1990-91, there are many people, notably in the USA, who expect it to be abandoned long before then, in the case of five-nation failure to compromise."

I applaud my right hon. Friend's will to make it succeed but I hope that he will be prepared if the worst comes to the worst.

On the PC9, the argument advanced earlier that the view of the Royal Air Force should prevail carries weight. The employment arguments are relatively evenly balanced, although we look forward to hearing the arguments to be put forward by hon. Members from Northern Ireland. Obviously it would lead to more employment in Northern Ireland but by the same token it would probably lead, over the years, to less employment in British Aerospace.

I believe that what the RAF want is the argument which should carry most weight, but I do not wish to conceal from the House that I have an interest in the matter. In the past I have, as an author, written about Prestwick. Moreover, when my father was a Member of Parliament for a Scottish constituency he helped to found Prestwick and the Scottish aviation industry. It began as a very modest project. However, after a series of mergers it became the Scottish division of British Aerospace.

As it nears its 40th anniversary I hope the House will forgive me if I say that there could be no stronger recognition of and encouragement to the work force at Prestwick than if Prestwick obtained this order. It would reinforce the belief of the work force that it has a continuing and permanent contribution to make to the

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

industry as the headquarters of the Scottish aviation industry, and that is no more than the RAF deserves and desires.

Finally, I wish to refer to the restoration of the flying role of the auxiliary air force. It could have either a search and rescue role, or a training capacity or be used as reinforcement. It would be very good for morale if those who have served for many years in the Royal Air Force, who have developed considerable expertise and who wish to retain a connection with the RAF could play such a role in the auxiliary air force. As and when economic circumstances permit, I hope that the Minister will accede to that request.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Owing to the splendid co-operation of hon. Members, there is no longer any need for me to enforce the 10-minute limit upon speeches. Nevertheless, I still appeal for brief contributions.

8.21 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): May I place on record the admiration and appreciation of the Ulster Unionists for the excellent service given by the men and women of the Royal Air Force, both nationally and internationally. The Ulster Unionists believe that the RAF should be provided with the best basic trainer that is available for training its pilots. The Government are aware of the importance of job creation and we would be pleased if such a project were to come to Northern Ireland. I recognise that a very fine balance has to be drawn and that there is an equal need for jobs to be created at the Shorts factory in Belfast and on the mainland. However, such a decision must not be made simply on social grounds. If that were the case, I believe that Northern Ireland would outstrip all contenders. Unemployment in Northern Ireland stands at 21 per cent., with 50 per cent. male unemployment in some areas.

My duty as the Ulster Unionist spokesman on trade and industry is to draw to the attention of the House what I believe to be a scandalous attempt by British Aerospace to force the so-called merits of its aircraft upon all and sundry, not only by means of an expensive and continuous campaign in the national press but also by means of an organised invasion of this House through *The House Magazine*.

Mr. Stephen Ross: I cannot allow that remark to pass unnoticed. I wrote to the chairman of Shorts congratulating him upon his campaign. I even received a Christmas card from him with a Tucano on it. I think that the Shorts campaign has been magnificent.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the hon. Gentleman for such a tribute. However, those hon. Members who have listened to the whole debate will probably have come to the conclusion that I am the lone ranger in this exercise. The strength of the case presented by Shorts has contributed to the recognition paid to it by English, Scottish and Welsh hon. Members who support the Shorts motion. I question whether it is right that a company which is 48 per cent. funded by the public should spend such vast sums of money upon advertisements in the national press.

Those who live in Northern Ireland know only too well the true value of money. We should prefer to pitch performance and price against publicity and pressure. We do not believe that ideological considerations should prevail when a decision is finally made. However, on performance and price we are prepared to accept the outcome. I believe that the methods used by British Aerospace in its efforts to win this contract are quite obnoxious. An attempt has been made to misrepresent the qualities of other aircraft. Unfortunately some, though not all, hon. Members have swallowed some of the information that has been peddled. However, I am confident that such unworthy tactics will not influence right hon. and hon. Members and that they will not be fooled.

Mr. McKelvey: The hon. Gentleman's remarks about British Aerospace are not true. If I had to condemn the management of British Aerospace I should say that it has lagged sadly behind Shorts, vis-à-vis Shorts' Tucano. There has been consistent and persistent lobbying from the trade union movement.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. It is quite right and proper that on behalf of their members in British Aerospace factories the trade unions should make representations to those hon. Members who represent constituency interests. However, I am in a unique position. I do not have a constituency interest to put forward. When we apply the rather scarce commodity, truth, to the debate we find out why the advertising campaign by British Aerospace is necessary. In the best and final offer stage, Short Brothers produced a package which shines through the smokescreen thrown up by British Aerospace.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): My hon. Friend has referred to a smokescreen. Could that be due in part to the fact that the new Garrett engine that is expected to be fitted to the Tucano is equal, if not better in terms of speed and rate of climb, to the PC9?

Mr. Beggs: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, but since we are discussing truth I do not intend to exaggerate. All I would say is that the Shorts Tucano has always met the requirements of the Royal Air Force, even when it appeared that the specifications had been increased. Indeed, the Garrett engine performs in every sense up to the level of the PC9. I said that I would not boast but the facts are there for all those who are responsible for examining the details to see. However, when the running costs are considered, the Shorts Tucano has cheaper running costs than its main rival. The life cycle costs of the Tucano are substantially lower than those of the PC9. There is a further bonus in the fact that spares for the Tucano are much cheaper than those for its main rival.

Claims that only one aircraft fully meets the RAF performance requirements for its new basic trainer are simply not true; nor is the suggestion that employment created by the PC9 will be greater than that created by its competitors. As for the claims for a perfect marriage between the Hawk and the PC9, I believe that hon. Members and the British taxpayer will be more influenced by and interested in the facts than in such speculative romance.

Almost everyone is agreed about the need for a new basic trainer, and the decision will be taken by the Ministry of Defence on the basis of the facts as they are known by the Ministry, without any element of favour.

The reaching of a decision is not assisted by the spectacle of mass national press advertising, especially when the claims made by British Aerospace for its aircraft and its uniqueness cannot be factually supported.

Shorts has based its campaign on the well-proven principle of offering a better product at a more competitive price overall. The decision will be made by the Ministry of Defence on the basis of the facts. It is regrettable that the issue has been confused by claims made by British Aerospace which have no foundation in fact.

The most important matter of all is that the RAF should be supplied as soon as possible with a modern basic trainer which meets all aspects of technical requirements and specifications which it has put forward. Shorts' Tucano meets all performance requirements. There is clear evidence of long fatigue life. Short Brothers has the industrial capability to deliver a first-class product on schedule. Shorts' Tucano has competitive first-cost and low life-cycle costs. It combines maximum United Kingdom content with the greatest United Kingdom job creation potential. It is right for the RAF, it is right for the United Kingdom, and the time is right for a decision by Government in favour of the Shorts Tucano as a basic trainer for the RAF.

8.33 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): My speech this evening must begin on a note of great sadness, because my constituent, Junior Technician Colin Wilson, just shortly after his 22nd birthday, was one of the young RAF bandsmen who so tragically were killed recently in Germany. I pay tribute to the courage, camaraderie and expertise of our RAF bandsmen. We hold them in the highest regard, and I know that the whole House will wish to share my expression of sympathy to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson of Holyhead.

My constituency is the home of RAF Valley, where all our fast jet pilots are trained. The station makes a valuable contribution to our island's economy, and none can be busier than the station's search and rescue and mountain rescue teams, which are kept fully occupied by accidents on Snowdonia. My right hon. Friend paid tribute to them in his speech.

The young pilots at RAF Valley have a great interest in which aircraft will be the next RAF basic trainer. The speeches by hon. Members on behalf of their constituents are commendable. British Aerospace has a strong lobby. I propose for a few moments to indulge in some special pleading, but I do not have a constituency interest, so I hope that hon. Members will accept that in my comments I can be regarded as being disinterested.

I might say, perhaps with a note of detached amusement, that the speeches for the Pilatus PC9 and for the Tucano would probably have cancelled each other out if one were conducting the debate on the basis of some sort of competition, but during a period in which there has been the most intensive lobbying for any new military project it appears that there has been a change of emphasis in the Government's interpretation of the specification.

Originally, the clear impression was conveyed that there was no point in or advantage to be gained by any contender for the project seeking to produce an aircraft much better than AST412. Now, however, the goalposts seem to have been moved, and it appears that encouragement is being given to those who have exceeded the requirements of AST412. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, when he replies, will make clear what is the order of the day. In any event, can my hon. Friend deny that the Hunting Firecracker's performance is well in excess of AST412 and can be equated with Swiss Pilatus? It is extraordinary that there is a debate as to which aircraft is best for Britain. Only the Hunting Firecracker is of total British design and can offer jobs in the long term on the back of export orders.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Can my hon. Friend tell me what proportion of the components of the Firecracker are British?

Mr. Best: A very large proportion indeed. I do not wish to go down that route or to argue whether there is one percentage point more British components in one aircraft than in another, but I can tell my hon. Friend that it is a very large percentage. It does not derogate, in any event, from my statement that the Hunting Firecracker is of British design. If my hon. Friend will bear with me, I shall seek to persuade him of my point of view. Being the reasonable man that he is, no doubt he will be persuaded by the force of the argument.

It is only the Hunting Firecracker that can offer jobs in the long term on the back of export orders. I have never understood the argument that buying a foreign product is better for Britain when there is a British alternative. If there were to be a decision in favour of the Swiss Pilatus, backed by British Aerospace, we may smell the sweet breath of the Treasury down the back of my right hon. Friend, perhaps more with the thought of boosting the quotation of British Aerospace shares in a few months' time than with the thought of what is the best aircraft for Britain. I hope I am wrong, but that is a thought.

Is there any connection between the Government's interest in the Brazilian Tucano, built by Shorts, as it would be, and privatisation of the company? That is another question that it is perhaps proper to ask.

Mr. Wilkinson: I hesitate to say so, but I have flown all three aeroplanes, and on the basis of that experience I would not presume to make any suggestion; it is for the air staff to decide. Should not we say that the air staff should be allowed to have the aeroplane that they want and select?

While my hon. Friend is talking about other aeroplanes than the Firecracker being foreign, does he not remember that one of the best RAF trainers ever was the North American Texan or Harvard?

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend has a great deal of expertise and knowledge in these matters and the advantage over practically every hon. Member of having flown the aircraft concerned, and many other aircraft as well. I would not seek to cross swords with him as to his view of the aircraft. Although it is important that due weight should be given to the air staff's desire for an aircraft, I know that my hon. Friend, having been in the RAF himself, will no doubt be the first to agree that the air staff will go for the aircraft which they think is the best. It may be the most expensive, because the two are very often synonymous. That may not necessarily be in the best interests of this country. I know that my hon. Friend would not pursue that argument to its logical conclusion — that every piece of procurement should be done on the basis of precisely what the particular service demands at the time. But I accept the important point that he makes, that due weight should be given to the air staff's desire and expression of preference.

[Mr. Best]

Is it the Ministry of Defence or the Treasury that will make the decision on procurement for our armed forces? If it is the latter, perhaps we do not need the former and can make substantial departmental staff savings — I speak in jest and do not propose that seriously. The House should have regard to whether some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) in his intervention about the preferences of the air staff, the question of employment and what is best for this country will be uppermost in the Government's consideration when making the decision, or whether the decision will be based entirely on finance. Although I appreciate the need for economy, I should certainly be very unhappy if the defence of the realm were to be based entirely on what was the cheapest product going at the time.

Are we to be led by the nose by foreign competitors subsidised by foreign Governments, in one case with money borrowed on the international market which is unlikely ever to be paid? Can it be right to see the extra marketing in the world of a foreign aircraft which has been given the boost of endorsement by the Royal Air Force?

Hunting Firecracker would make no profit whatsoever on this project, but would seek to make its profit on future export sales, on which, of course, the Government would get a royalty, which they would certainly not receive on a foreign aircraft. There is no guarantee whatever that we would sell Hawk on the back of a Swiss deal, and even Pilatus is convinced that any such thing is at least five years in the future.

Hunting Firecracker is competing with aircraft subsidised by foreign Governments to be produced by Government-funded industries. It does not sound like the actions of this Conservative Government. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what has been achieved so far by the Government for the Royal Air Force. I believe that it is a verifiable manifestation of our commitment to the first duty of Government—the defence of the realm. I can only ask my right hon. Friend to fight for his Department and for his Department's right to make the decision on the RAF trainer, not that of the Treasury, and to fight for the best interests of Britain and the RAF, which is in the forefront of the defence system.

8.43 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): There is an obligation on all of us to be succinct.

Refuelling crews—and I agree with the Minister on this—do a fantastic job on the airbridge. These guys work at the margin of safety and it is a tribute to their skill that a Hercules has not yet gone into the drink. The skill of the air-to-air refuelling pilots and personnel is so great and the job is so hairy that a tribute must be paid to those who carry it out.

I wish to concentrate on the airbridge and on Mount Pleasant and ask a number of precise questions which are probably best answered by letter rather than in the debate.

My first question is this. I understand that the Argentine air force has taken delivery of the Durandel anti-runway bomb which is made by Matra in France—and which is purchased in some quantity, incidentally, by the United States air force. Unfortunately, it can be delivered by small aeroplanes like the Skyhawk, which can take up to 10 Durandels. It can be dropped at low altitude and we cannot be certain that every plane would be engaged by Rapier.

I understand that when the Durandel is released a parachute opens to slow the bomb, creating a safe distance of some 600 m between the detonation and the aircraft. A second parachute is then deployed to swing the bomb round to an impact angle of between 30 deg and 40 deg to the horizontal, minimising the risk of a ricochet. The rocket motor then ignites to produce 90 kN of thrust lasting about 0·45 seconds. Durandel strikes the concrete at around 260 m a second. After a one second delay the 15 kg of warhead explodes. Against reinforced concrete 40 cm thick, the weapon will produce a 5 m diameter crater at least 2 m deep and will break up a surface area exceeding 250 sq m. According to Matra, it takes more than a day to repair the damaged area and to resume operations.

This information comes from several sources. I ask, first, is it accurate and what is the Government's assessment of the Durandel weapon in relation to the Mount Pleasant airport?

Secondly, what is the Government's assessment of the Argentines' having acquired the Durandel, and have there been discussions with France about it? It seems very unsatisfactory that French industry should continue to supply the most sophisticated weaponry, given the situation in the south Atlantic.

Mount Pleasant has problems because there is no alternative to the Stanley airstrip. I ask, thirdly, could the Stanley airstrip take the TriStar on an emergency landing, because the whole policy, in the view of many of us, is vulnerable? Here we have a big runway, which therefore presents a big target.

I ask about the size of the repair squads. This may be classified information, on which I would not press the Government, but it would take only one Durandel to create havoc. What are the support facilities, and are the Government prepared to give possible targets and any indication of the sheer cost of the repair squads in Royal Engineer terms? That is my fourth question.

Fifthly, on the whole airbridge operation, what about the escorts? Whether conflict starts again is irrelevant to the Air Force debate, but I do not think that Alfonsin is going to start a war. However, the Argentine military have not gone away. Macho men humiliated are dangerous and it could well be, heaven help us, that the Falklands is used as an excuse for what many of them want to do anyway —destabilise the infant civilian regime. Therefore, we have to talk about the hypothetical situation of hostilities and I have to ask about escorts and how many are needed, because presumably everything in the airbridge, particularly the TriStars, has to be escorted.

This leads me to question no. 6, the whole question of interception. They do have Skyhawk. Is it the Government's assessment that they have Sidewinder? If they have, what representations have we made to the American Government about the supply of Sidewinder?

The whole interdiction situation really puts pressure on the entire line of flight. It is a very long chain of access to the Falklands, given also that there are heat-seeking missiles and the possible possession by the Argentines of Condors with German rockets and Italian guidance systems, approaching the Mount Pleasant airport at 4,000 miles an hour from a distance of under 500 miles; this really is a problem for Rapier.

I ask question 7: What is the assessment of that?

If a runway is lost the brutal question 8 that has to be faced is, can our Phantoms operate, because then we would have no long-range interceptors? Once it was put out of action, presumably, without the Phantom cover it could be kept closed day after day. Once closed, the long-range interceptors—this is a curate's egg situation—cannot operate. It may be that there are many emergency arrangements for quick repairs. I do not know whether it is proper to ask question 9, but what are the contingency plans? In the eventuality of any fighting, these are highly relevant questions.

My next question, no. 10, concerns air-to-air refuelling and the resulting effect on our tanker squadrons, which are certainly needed in Europe. Can we have extra tankers? What is the standby force in the South Atlantic? Our tanker resources are somewhat scarce. I do not know whether the Government are prepared to comment on that.

I come to question 11. We know that Argentina has developed relations with Israel. Is it the Government's assessment that they have anti-radiation missiles from the Israelis? I put this in terms of pure speculation as I do not know whether such missiles have been supplied by the Israelis, but I know that Argentina has received advice from the Israelis, who are extremely good at tearing up runways. It is clear that there is a heavy logistic requirement in keeping an airport such as Mount Pleasant in operation. Money is important but to what extent are the resources that we are making available in the south Atlantic at the expense of air defence in Europe? Even if there is no fighting—heaven forbid that it should take place—considerable pressure can be imposed and one can be extremely nasty without killing anyone. The vulnerability of land-based planes in the south Atlantic is considerable. We are adopting a policy there that is rather different from our policy in Europe.

My 12th question concerns the cost of the Mount Pleasant airfield, which I understand is at least £350 million. The Minister may say that this is a matter for the Department of the Environment. If he does, I shall accept that response. He will be aware that there are questions on this topic on the Order Paper. However, I should like to know rather more about the crime that we read about. I understand that if people are couped up in temporary accommodation on building projects there is the possibility of an awkward situation. Against the background of press reports and the stories that some of us have been hearing — to which I have not given publicity — about crime in the construction of the airfield, there should be a Government statement.

My next question, no. 13, is directed to the cost of our presence on Ascension Island. We have a full-scale base developing on Ascension Island and I understand that the cost will be more than £40 million. When we think of the cuts at home, the £40 million that will be spent on Ascension Island highlights the incredible cost of the Government's policy in the South Atlantic.

My 14th question is about the cost of the extra TriStars, to which the Minister referred in opening the debate. I understand that there are to be three extra TriStars. Is it intended that they should be on standby?

My 15th question is on a different subject but one that is related to the previous issue. It is directed to Wintex '85 and the rules of engagement. In the light of the subject of 1982, which, rightly, I am forbidden to go into tonight, it seems that the change in the rules of engagement was extremely muddled, which is alarming in itself. Alternatively, orders on a particular occasion were given to the war cabinet. Who alters rules of engagement? I am not asking how alterations in rules of engagement are translated into fleet tactics or into Air Force tactics because I understand that the translation can be secret and sacrosanct. That is the proper domain of secrecy. However, it is right that Parliament should ask for what reasons rules of engagement are changed, to what they are changed and on what basis they are altered.

Wintex '85—the Minister will correct me if I am wrong but I think that he should refer to this issue when he replies — is about command and control and the lessons that should be learned from them. Before April 1983, Argentina had 130 aircraft. After the war it had 70. I understand that it now has 160. Included among them are some extremely sophisticated aircraft from France. For example, there are Mirage IIIs which are Nesher-Israeli adapted. Heaven help us, Argentina has some Mirage Vs. What are we to say — question 16 — to our French colleagues about this supply of arms?

Finally, I turn to a subject on which I am rather sensitive and which I think reflects on all forces. It is said that by constantly asking questions about what has happened in the past one revives painful memories. Therefore, with permission I shall read a letter I have received from Mrs. Iris Hall of 109 Barnes road, Cowley, Oxford. She wrote:

"I have wanted to write to you for many months but with my husband so desperately ill, thought it might be unwise if it got back to him and could upset him further. However, he died today, having been very ill for more than two years, since he never got over our only son Ian's death on HMS Coventry. I want to say please keep up your fight for what you believe should be."

She who was personally affected wants the truth of what happened, as does Mrs. Patricia Potter of Oriel cottage, Stafford road, Fordhorses, Wolverhampton, whom I saw last week. Her nephew, Lieutenant Adrian Anslow, was killed on the Atlantic Conveyor. I shall read a letter from an ex-service man, Squadron Leader Peter Nettleton, DFC, who wrote:

"It seems clear to me that the tireless persistency and integrity which you have shown on the Belgrano affair were reflected in today's Ponting verdict at the Central Criminal Court. You will doubtless agree that the verdict itself amounts to a massive vindication of the much criticised jury system. My thanks, congratulations and best wishes, Peter Nettleton."

I have read these letters because I know that there are some service men who have been upset by my recent activities. However, there are others who think that the truth should come out.

Finally, I want to make it clear that as a junior and new Member I used to visit a man who was married to my father's favourite cousin, and a distant relative of mine, who was a marshal of the Royal Air Force, Arthur Tedder. He used to impress upon me—this was at a time when he was physically ill, though mentally alert — that politicians had considerable obligations to the services. In my view, one of those obligations at present is to be concerned about the defence of our country and to make it clear in Parliament that questions should be asked about policies involving the services when it is not quite proper that the services should be asked to carry them out. I believe that even in military terms it is important that questions be asked about the role of the RAF—however skilled, courageous and dedicated to their profession its personnel might be—that the House is giving it in the south Atlantic.

8.58 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I had not thought that it would be my privilege to follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Having heard what he said, I will forgo taking a similar approach to that of the hon. Gentleman. His actions, whether well motivated and well meant, have done a disservice to the nation. We are fortunate in having a Government who have the guts to take right and tough decisions, particularly at a time of crisis. I have had not one letter or telephone call of complaint from my constituents. I had a message from a constituent of a neighbouring Member of Parliament who said that the Government were right in their decision on the General Belgrano. Many of my constituents asked why that decision had not been taken earlier.

It is a great pleasure for me to take part in this debate, the first on the Royal Air Force in which I have had the opportunity to participate. I come to it without a special constituency interest. Sadly I have no aircraft factory or Royal Air Force station in my constituency; we would welcome either in Cannock if we could persuade them to come. I have some modest credentials in so far as I have served for three years in my university air squadron at Southampton and was commissioned in the Royal Air Force volunteer reserve, whose tie I proudly wear today.

There are three issues of major concern, two of which have already been referred to. In regard to air staff target 412, I was alarmed at the remarks by my right hon. Friend at the outset that the Minister of Defence is still persisting with the idea that the option of resparring the Jet Provost remains open. That is wrong for several reasons. The Minister should put that ball firmly out of court now.

The Jet Provost is 25 years old. Even if it were resparred, we would still have a thirsty turbo jet whose equipment is many years old. Originally about 19 companies tendered for the new aircraft and we are now down to a shortlist of four. Those companies have gone to considerable expense in order to be able to tender for the contract. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement will be able to reassure us tonight that resparring the Jet Provost is out.

Originally there was anxiety amongst the professionals in the Royal Air Force that we were even contemplating a turbo prop solution rather than a turbo fan aircraft which everyone knows was on the British Aerospace drawing board. I understand that many of the sceptics have been won over to the idea of a turbo prop as a result of their experience with aeroplanes which are currently flying.

The competition has done a useful service in that it has resulted in the Royal Air Force definitely being provided with an aeroplane which will be superior to the one it would originally have been offered. All the companies have gone out of their way to ensure that they have fine-tuned their offers to produce the best option.

I speak with a personal interest because it was possible for me last summer to spend three days at the central flying school, flying a variety of aeroplanes, including the Jet Provost mark 3 and the Jet Provost mark 5. In the mark 5 I was undertaking a typical low-level sortie that a student would undertake, with the objective of flying over the Pennines at 250 ft to locate a target and fly back. The importance of speed in the equation was impressed upon me.

Unless a student pilot is pushed to fly at high speeds of around 300 knots, there will be a substantial leap between the speed of the basic trainer and the aeroplane which the student will next fly, the Hawk. This low-level exercise is central to the role of training in the Royal Air Force today. Today's modern aircraft fly at a low level. Therefore, it is important that a student gets such experience from the outset.

Speed is also important because it enables the aircraft to climb quickly through our invariably muggy weather where there is low cloud, very often extending up to 10,000 or 15,000 feet. Therefore, we want an aircraft which can get up to a working height as quickly as possible. I am pleased that the Minister is considering a speed of a usable 240 knots instead of a desirable 240 knots. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best); I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber at the moment. He had a point when he said that the goalposts have been shifted. Air staff target 412 was not drawn up correctly.

All four companies which have tendered have met the specification but they have a valid criticism. Some of them, principally the company tendering for the Firecracker, say that they were told that the speed should be 210 knots, with 240 knots at the maximum, and now the Ministry is saying that the usable speed should be 240 knots. Therefore, I have that sympathy with them.

I agree—I think that this is the mood of the House today—that we do not want a political aeroplane. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has got that message—I am sure that he has—and that he will convey it to the Secretary of State and his colleague, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. It would be wrong to favour one area of the country with jobs as against another. As has been said, if jobs were created in one area, they could be lost in another. It would also be wrong to allow foreign policy considerations to enter into the argument. It would be wrong to buy an aeroplane simply to boost the balance sheet of a company that the Government have high hopes of bringing into the private sector—that is, Short Brothers, which is an excellent, first-class company. I agree with privatisation, but it would be wrong if we were to make the major objective privatisation rather than finding the right aeroplane for the RAF.

All the contenders, in their way, are excellent aeroplanes. They would not have been on the final list if they were not. I have flown two of them—the Tucano and the PC9—so I speak with some experience of them. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), I have not flown the Firecracker. The Westland A20 is not even off the drawing board.

The campaign has often been vitriolic. I should like to deal with each of the contenders in turn. I strongly commend the initiative that has been taken on the Firecracker. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends do as well. The people in the company have put their money where their mouth is. They have done what the Government have asked the industry to do and what they have asked our talent in the design teams to do, which is to produce a British product that can be a world-beater. However, I believe that they have not been entirely straight in the way in which they have conducted their campaign on Firecracker because it is not an all-British aeroplane. For a start, the engine is Canadian and other

parts, which my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn was not willing to divulge to us, are not of British manufacture. For example, I understand that the escape system is a United States Stencil system, although I believe that the company is considering putting in a Martin Baker seat.

Westland is an excellent company, and we have heard from the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about it, as well as from my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), who eloquently put the case for it. It is important that we look carefully at the predicament in which Westland finds itself over its helicopter production schedule. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take careful note of that. That aeroplane is not off the drawing board yet, so the RAF is entitled to look at something that is flying.

Mr. Wiggin: Will my hon. Friend consider the history of aircraft acquisition by the RAF? Every major aeroplane bought since the last war and, indeed, some during and before it, has been bought off the drawing board. Therefore, that criticism is not valid.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that remark. What he says is true. However, we are faced with real as well as drawing board options. There are some good real options, so we should look more carefully at them.

I have already saluted Short Brothers. It has done a magnificent job. Its recent order in China was the latest in a series of highly successful deals that it has pulled off under its highly dynamic and excellent chairman, Sir Philip Foreman. However, there are one or two problems with the Tucano in terms of export prospects. There is already the Embraer 312, on which that aeroplane is based, and there is the aeroplane that is being produced under licence in Egypt, both of which will be competing for that export market. Although Shorts' Tucano will be a more sophisticated aeroplane than its competitors, it faces a ready-made competitive market.

It is not true to say that British Aerospace does not need this contract. It needs this contract just as much as the other companies. We should not put British Aerospace out of court simply because it is the major defence and aeroplane manufacturer in this country.

The Hawk and PC9 package is a sensible support package. Although it is true that the Swiss are not committed to buying the Hawk, it is true also that, if the PC9 is not bought, there is no chance whatsoever that the Swiss will buy the Hawk. We should bear that important point in mind.

It is not my job to evaluate the technical merits of these aeroplanes, because that has already been done at Boscombe Down. I do not deny that, in a sense, I speak for the Royal Air Force, although I am in no way authorised to do so. I believe, as do most other hon. Members who have spoken in this debate, that the aeroplane that is chosen must be the one that the RAF wants. I have drawn on my experience as a pilot—admittedly, of limited hours—and I believe that speed is the vital factor. One aeroplane is faster than the rest. It is important to note that, if the AST412 was wrong in the first place, it is not my job as an hon. Member to go along with a mistake. Speed is important and the PC9 is marginally ahead of the rest. I believe that that is the position as the RAF sees it.

Mr. Robert Atkins: As my hon. Friend knows, I do not hold a particular brief because I was not a pilot——

Mr. Wilkinson: Except for British Aerospace.

Mr. Atkins: That is not true. I do not hold a brief for any particular organisation. The Garrett engine has now been made available to the Tucano, and, in terms of speed, the Garrett engine will exceed the RAF's requirements. That puts a whole new complexion on the Tucano.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is correct. I was discussing this matter the other night with Short Brothers. The fact is that that engine has not yet been mated with the aircraft frame. There must be further developments. It is not for me to judge whether that is good or bad; it is for the Royal Air Force to judge. I am trying merely to bring to the debate some of my experience as a trainee pilot sitting in the front seat having my head beaten by an instructor and being told not to make mistakes.

There are pros and cons to be considered when proposing collaboration. Although collaboration may be a splendid objective, complex decision-making procedures —often involving changes of Government—must take place. Those procedures can result in lengthy discussions on whether to proceed with a decision taken by a previous Government, on the work share allocation and on differences of objective. I believe that differences of objective are the most important factor to consider in contemplating collaboration. I heartily endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) said about collaboration. I believe that the project is already slipping. British Aerospace needs to develop a new aeroplane in order to keep its design team together. The RAF needs a new aircraft to ensure that it is capable of meeting threats. If we do not take action swiftly, export markets that are currently open to us will be lost for good.

For those reasons, I urge my right hon. Friend to make a swift decision one way or the other. Some Conservative Members are outraged at the fact that the French are trying to delay this project to advantage the Mirage 2000 and to ensure that they get what they want at our expense. There is no doubt that the home solution could be remarkably cheap, and probably as cheap as a collaborative programme, especially bearing in mind that collaboration itself has costs.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will take an early decision and that he will not close the door to the possibility of a United Kingdom solution.

9.15 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I have not had the flying experience of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), although I did fly Tiger Moths in the early to mid-1950s. We had leather helmets and gloves in those days. However, I have had a little experience of procurement. As I know that other hon. Members want to speak, I shall be brief and address myself to one issue—the jet trainer replacement.

I was interested to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) describe the programme of procurement of a new aeroplane to replace the Jet Provost. I will not go into the details, but it is a remarkable process. We are now going through a rebidding operation, which is of great concern to me. I hope that the Minister will comment on that.

I understand that initially there were 20 contenders for the contract, of which four were short listed. After some

[Mr. McNamara]

wise and pound foolish of the Government still to put forward that idea. Many millions of pounds would be spent on an aircraft with a very short life.

There has been a remarkable agreement on both sides of the House—between Haltemprice and Hull, west and between Scunthorpe and Hull, north—about what plane the RAF should have. When the time comes for a decision, I hope that it will be made on the basis of what the RAF needs—not upon what Humberside, Belfast or Westland need. We have a duty to ensure that we provide the people whom we expect to fly the aircraft and protect the nation with the best training aircraft available. We all have our own ideas of what that is, but the consensus is that we should provide the plane that the RAF wants.

Hon. Members have expressed their concern about what will happen to the European project for the new fighter plane. All hon. Members have mirrored the fear, almost to the point of becoming paranoid, about the role of the French and their attitude to the Mirage 2000. Perhaps behind the scenes the Secretary of State is flexing his muscles rather than swinging the Mace and working hard and long. However, we have the impression that the French are making the running. It seems that the Secretary of State, in his desire to appear to be a good European and to escape from the idea that we are not really part of Europe, is submerging some of our basic national interests. The message from the House should be that we want firm assurances. The defence of our country and the maintenance of a firm industrial base upon which we can defend our country requires early decisions.

That argument from both sides of the House is that, despite what has been said today and despite what the Government are doing about collaborative projects, Westland should have an early decision on the helicopter to relace the Puma and the Wessex. That is important in industrial terms and in national strategic terms.

Sometimes we tend to be a little parochial in that we concentrate on our own industries and interests. My hon. Friend the Member for Shieffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) and the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) reminded us of the importance of the RAF plane in its NATO role and some of the problems involved in the need for a stand-off ability in our airfield destruction weapons. That is important.

Repeatedly our attention is drawn to the United Kingdom's vulnerability and the problem posed by the disaster, for which we all share responsibility, of the Nimrod early warning system. We are right to be concerned about that. We must consider the importance of an early warning system. If the Shackleton cannot provide it, we must wait a long time for Nimrod. We should consider whether we can afford to gamble for another three or four years. As the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said, the possibility of leasing AWACS until we reach decisions would not meet some of the proper anxieties of the House.

Different people have different attitudes about the campaign that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has waged concerning the Falklands. I have not always agreed with him, but it is right and proper that he should have raised his anxieties in his role as a Member of Parliament. The Opposition supported the Falklands campaign as we have no time for invasion and the resolution of international differences by unprovoked aggression. However, the Government and the Conservative party are out of touch with the country in that, having successfully conducted that campaign, they do not realise that we should turn our attention to resolving the fortress Falklands issue to get away from the great drain that the Falklands will be on our defence capability.

A great responsibility lies on the Government in initiating such procedures. It is a case of being magnanimous in victory. There should also be a note of caution as we know what has been supplied to and obtained by the Argentine Government since their defeat in the Malvinas. Our international relations and Britain's primary defensive role are not helped by our having a festering sore in the South Atlantic. It is also no help to us for a large part of our Air Force effort to be concentrated there. The Opposition's policy has been to try to find some proper accommodation with Argentina. We must not drop our guard or be prepared to be rolled on again, but we must be prepared to talk.

There has been a sense of unreality about the debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) said, it is taking place under the shadow of Trident. We do not know what it will cost. With the pound going up and down against the dollar like a yo-yo, expenditure on what we regard as a superfluous system will be increased. The Trident expenditure will impinge ever more on our ability to pay for the defence of our country by proper conventional methods.

We want a proper conventional defence—a strong Air Force and a strong industrial base. All that is being put at risk. The Government said that they will not introduce another White Paper. They will have to introduce another White Paper and another defence review or they will introduce no programmes but try to pretend that everything is fine. If that happens, the Secretary of State will build up problem after problem for his successors. That is not the proper role of the Secretary of State. He must meet the new challenges within the limitations that his budget puts on him. If he does not do that, we shall end up with structural disarmament, That would be a tragedy for Britain and the free world.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): It gives me great pleasure to close this year's Royal Air Force debate. This Government can be justifiably proud of their record of spending and support for the RAF. Since we came to power, expenditure on air systems, most of which goes to the RAF, has risen over 40 per cent. in real terms, as was mentioned earlier by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. Expenditure on RAF equipment for 1985-86 is estimated to be £3,506 million and a total RAF complement of around 93,000 represents expenditure approaching £38,000 per person.

As an article in the *Financial Times* said on Tuesday of this week:

"The RAF is in the throes of its biggest re-equipment programme since the Korean war."

This continuing programme is reaching its peak and will mean that by 1989 over half of our aircraft will have been recently replaced. This compares with five years ago when half our front line was over 20 years old. With the greatest respect to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones), I do not see the picture that he painted of the RAF. Inevitably, though, with 1985-86 bringing an end to the

3 per cent. expenditure increases, our budget is increasingly tight, given the costs and sophistication of modern aircraft, weaponry and software. That is why we are striving for greater efficiency, competition and international collaboration on defence spending, with emphasis upon improving the teeth-to-tail ratio and upon increasingly involving the private sector in support tasks and by putting schemes out to contract.

Mr. Carter-Jones: If the hon. Gentleman is so convinced that we are on target, will he tell us what aircraft we shall have in 1995 to defend us in a fighting capacity, given that more than 10 years are needed to develop such an aircraft?

Mr. Lee: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and give him a list of the aircraft which we expect to have in operation in 1995.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Can the hon. Gentleman not give those details now?

Mr. Lee: No, I cannot do so now because I have very many points to deal with.

I was not surprised to hear mention of the competition to provide a new trainer for the RAF to replace the aging Jet Provost. There were speeches from hon. Members which supported each of the individual contenders. On the PC9, there was the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). His broad approach is that what is good for Brough is good for Britain. While one understands his constituency interests, I believe that the hon. Gentleman was unfair in being so disparaging about a number of the other contenders when he does not have all the facts and figures in front of him, in particular the financial aspects. Support for the PC9 was also given by my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall), the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for my hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). Support for the A20 came from my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). The case for the Shorts Tucano was made by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and the Hunting Firecracker was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), who also had an Adjournment debate on that topic.

We currently have about 160 Jet Provosts in service but they have outdated avionics, high fuel consumption, side by side seating and a poor ratio of support man hours to flying hours. They would need major refurbishments to meet the pilot training need beyond the end of the decade, but I have to say that we have not yet ruled out the refurbishment option. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"] Despite the obvious groans, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) pointed out earlier that if that refurbishment option did go ahead it would give him and his constituency some work and that that was his reserve option.

Quite naturally, attention has focussed on the requirements of ASR 412 and the evaluation of a new trainer aircraft. We are looking at an order for some 130 aircraft with an option for a further 15. It would be a turbo prop with jet-like handling, tandem seating, good climbing power and full aerobatic performance. Obviously we also want it to be reliable and economical to operate.

My experience of the past 16 months or so is that competitions of this sort generate a good deal of powerful lobbying and this certainly has been no exception, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare. The competition has provided excellent business for the restaurants and hostelries around Westminster. It has benefited considerably the stationery industry. The post office has also done extremely well.

No-one will be surprised if I say that we listen very carefully to all the points that are made to us and that we take into account in coming to a decision a very wide range of relevant factors.

It will be even more unsurprising if I say that our evaluations are impartial, and that the relevant factors include broader industrial and economic issues. That is the background against which most of the lobbying takes place. For our part, however, we must restate that the main consideration is to provide the Royal Air Force with a suitable aircraft to fulfil its training requirements.

We asked for best and final offers from two manufacturers — from Shorts, with their Tucano, and from British Aerospace, with the PC9. In the event, we also received best and final offers on the Hunting Firecracker and the Westlands A20.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement earlier indicated to Hunting and to Westlands that they really were not in the competition at that stage but that nevertheless, if they wanted to submit ultimately, at their expense, best and final offers, they would be considered. They were told at that stage that they were not likely to be considered, in order to save them further money. I suggest that the competition has been handled extremely fairly by the Ministry and that ultimately the RAF will get a very good buy, assuming that it goes ahead with a new trainer.

Mr. McNamara: Can the hon. Gentleman say when?

Mr. Lee: The decision will be taken in the spring. [HON. MEMBERS: "Which spring?"] Spring 1985.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the European fighter aircraft, commonly known as EFA — perhaps some day I shall be able to say "affectionately known as EFA". We are still at a complex and difficult stage of studies and negotiations.

The hon. Member for Kingston Upon Hull, North dealt with the whole matter of EFA, as did the hon. Member for Eccles, and my hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh, West, for Cannock and Burntwood and for Arundel (Mr. Marshall).

A particularly strong plea that I shall not forget was made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble, who spoke most passionately and most eloquently, as he always does in matters affecting British Aerospace and his constituents who work at Warton in the South Ribble constituency. I fully understand his sentiments. As a Lancashire MP, I know the importance of Warton and have a number of sub-contracting companies to British Aerospace in my constituency.

In the mid-1990s we shall need to replace our current force of Jaguars and Phantoms. So far, we and four other countries — France, Germany, Italy and Spain — have agreed on a European staff target that specifies a single seat, twinengined, agile, short-take-off-and-landing fighter. This will be primarily an air defence aircraft but with good ground-attack capability. We shall need about 250 such aircraft.

[Mr. Stuart Randall]

considerable time, there was a further shortlisting—a short shortlist—of two, the manufacturers of the PC9 and the Tucano. They were then—and this is quite remarkable—asked to submit another bid, the effect of which was to open up the whole position. The manufacturers which were knocked out in the short short-listing procedure asked their parliamentary representatives to lobby the MoD and all and sundry to be put back on the list. The consequence is that there are now at least four contenders. From what the Minister said in his opening remarks, I understand that a refurbished Jet Provost is back on the list, but I am not sure whether that is an additional contender, making five in all. The asking for subsequent bids is inept because of the pressure to get companies that were knocked out back on the list. That has shown that there is uncertainty and confusion.

An article in *Flight International* on 2 February entitled "Modus Operandi" is worth reading. It describes in detail some of the disadvantages of that approach. Once we go back to having four companies submitting additional bids, that means additional development work for them and the expenditure of extra money, which is a waste of the nation's resources. It is not the way to go about these matters.

The problem has emerged mainly from the fact that none of the turbo trainers was really suitable apart from the PC9, although that has had to have larger power units and, because of the specification produced by the RAF, the company is trying to re-engine the plane. This waste of resources could have been avoided had another process taken place. As a result, we are putting in larger engines, and the relationship between airframe life, range, fuel consumption, capacity, weight and so on will be upset. If the PC9 is not selected, it could result in a risky project —and we have already heard about Nimrod.

If we attempt to doctor these things, will we end up with another delayed project and perhaps even with an aeroplane with which the RAF would be dissatisfied? A more straightforward process could be achieved if we first selected the type of aircraft which is best for the job. We could then have a competitive tender on that, followed by a second stage when there would be further competitive bids from the manufacturers and the various consortia which were prepared to provide the aircraft that best fitted the bill.

The advantage would be that the RAF would end up with the aeroplane that it wants, and the Treasury would be able to get the plane that it wants at the price that it wishes to pay. Consequently, everyone would win. In addition, this more logical approach to procurement would create more jobs and a stronger industry. We would be able to buy more aircraft and would have a better defence for Britain.

This venture into competitive tendering is a worthwhile approach, but I wonder whether there is a lack of direction in carrying out the procurement process. My strong opinion is that jobs should be taken into account. There is no doubt in my mind that we must have the best aircraft for the RAF, but we should create as many jobs as possible.

Many of my constituents work at Brough. It has been suggested that, with the PC9, 85 per cent. of the airframe work for the RAF planes would in man hours be carried out in Britain, and that 15 per cent. would be carried out by the Swiss Pilatus company.

The hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) referred to further orders. British Aerospace is optimistic about further sales if we choose the PC9. I understand that about 24 planes are required in Switzerland and that the 160 Swiss Hunters require replacement. There is optimism that these could be replaced by the single-seat Hawk 200.

Humberside is a region of high unemployment, and in my constituency male unemployment is now 20·5 per cent. This project would be important, given that there is a lack of high technology industry in the area. Much of our industry is primary. As well as fishing, there is steel making on the south bank. Consequently, the PC9 project, which I hope the RAF will be supplied with, would stimulate technology and the economy in the area. Trade unions have contributed magnificently in the campaign, and we should recognise that men have spent hour upon hour on it. Some people may say that that is not what they should be doing. Nevertheless, we must recognise that they have made every effort to ensure that the PC9 gets work.

The PC9 is the best aircraft. If we opt for one of the botched-up versions of it, several hon. Members will be interested to monitor the project to see whether we have another potential Nimrod on our hands.

9.25 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I declare an interest as a parliamentary adviser to British Aerospace, Space and Communications Division. My specialist interest in space allows me to withhold any comment about the RAF trainer, and I am sure that the Minister will be glad to have one less voice lobbying him tonight. The matter has been well aired.

In the short time available to me I shall concentrate on a matter raised by my hon. Friends the Members for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and that is the fallback position if we cannot get a collaborative venture on the European fighter aircraft. I agree with my right hon. Friends and Opposition Members who said that there must be worries about the slippage in the project.

Anyone who looks at the history of other collaborative projects must recognise that the French national interest has always fought extremely hard. I am worried that the enthusiasm of the French for the Mirage 2000 and their ideas about a new engine for it do not sit happily with our interests. Indeed, their current interest for a light aircraft goes against our perceived views, and adds to the problem. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement will assure us that the Government are already considering the fallback position.

If one takes a dispassionate view, the fallback position could relate to the option of buying American. I hope that my hon. Friend will take the opportunity tonight to make it plain that the Government would think long and hard before they decimated the defence airframe industry in the United Kingdom and removed the avionics capacity, which has been a key element in successful developments, such as Tornado and Jaguar. When he deals with the alternatives, I hope that he will say something about the experimental aircraft programme. Substantial resources have been committed to it. I applaud the Government's

willingness to do that and to act quickly. I look forward, as many hon. Members do, to seeing that aircraft fly at Farnborough next year. I hope that by then we shall have in our minds and in the planning of Government a better feel for what the British national solution may be.

From the briefings I have had, I understand that there is a possibility of a British national programme that would not be out of line financially compared with the likely cost of a collaborative programme. That is especially true if one takes out, as one should, the question of the development of a new aircraft engine because that raises wider issues, other possibilities in the export market and so on.

The interest in the EAP can lead to a realistic view of the threat. I am a member of the Select Committee on Defence and think that we should constantly remind ourselves that we are dealing with the threat in the 1990s and, to be more specific, the MIG 90. If we are not careful, in the long-drawn-out processes of Government—this has been one of our failings in the past, as has been getting industrial collaboration moving quickly—we could have slippage, both in time and in meeting that genuine threat.

Before concluding my speech, I cannot help but say a word or two about the Falklands. I went down there about two years ago and, like the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I should like to pay tribute to the remarkable efforts of the air crews. They manage to get not only people like me but far more essential traffic to and from the Falklands. But, unlike the hon. Gentleman, I look forward to the day when the airfield is completed, as that will make life that much more bearable and will enable us to look at the whole question of the Falklands in a better and more productive way.

My text on the Falklands was given to me by a very senior retired RAF officer, a constituent of mine, who said to me when the task force sailed, "Right. You have all joined hands and the will of Parliament is to support this great venture. All I ask is that you make sure that the politicians do not seek to interfere with operational matters thereafter and when the battle is over, I pray you don't spend the next few years trying to suggest where we went wrong."

The hon. Member for Linlithgow has done nothing but that. It grieves me to say to a colleague for whom I have had respect for many years in other matters that he is totally out of touch with the country on this issue, as was his contribution in this debate tonight.

9.30 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for having given me a few minutes in which to make my speech. I represent a constituency that designs and builds aeroplanes, but which does not seem to benefit from them. The PC9 was, I believe, mostly designed at Bembridge. I am a former non-executive director, of Pilatus Brittan Norman. I had to resign two years ago, and I miss the £2,000 a year that I used to earn. But Firecracker was originally put together by Desmond Norman in an outbuilding at Whitwell on the Isle of Wight and was finally completed at Sandown. There is also Westlands, with its subsidiary the British Hovercraft Corporation, which has the A20 with the Australians, and Shorts, which subcontracts much of its work to Cowes. For example, the wings of the 330 and the 360 are built there.

I was told today by Westlands that if it failed with the A20 it would benefit most with the Tucano. Our Northern Ireland colleagues are not in the Chamber now, but they rightly want most of the work involved. At Christmas I wrote to Sir Phillip Forman congratulating him on his publicity, and pleaded with him that, should he be successful, he should subcontract some of the work to the Isle of Wight.

But the real reason for my intervention is that I am scared stiff of what will happen to the British Hovercraft Corporation. Some very able people down there designed and built the hovercraft. The 188 was very successful, but unfortunately the Navy does not seem to want hovercraft. Nevertheless, I am sure that its role in mine countermeasures operations is outstanding and that is an area of defence that we ignore at our peril. That is the sort of role that that hovercraft should be playing. However, that does not seem to be on, and I believe that the old BH7 is now to be sold. The whole future of the British Hovercraft Corporation is tied up with Westlands, so serious consideration should be given to Westlands' plea, which has been echoed in several parts of the House, that the ST404, and particularly the W30, should be brought forward. That would obviously help enormously.

There are 1,500 skilled people working on the Isle of Wight with the British Hovercraft Corporation. That company is our biggest employer. It used to employ more than 2,000 people, but there have been substantial redundancies. The Isle of Wight's unemployment rate is now 17·1 per cent., which, with 300 or more redundancies, would quickly go above 20 per cent. We would then, surely, qualify for assisted area status, but that is not a situation we seek.

The Isle of Wight would be helped if the Castor programme was brought forward. It is a very cheap programme, which uses the Islander aircraft. It does not use a Nimrod, so the Government should ignore any pleas from the RAF to use Nimrod in that role. I believe that the PC9 is the aircraft that the RAF wants. If that is agreed, it will encourage Dr. Buhle—who owns 70 per cent. of Oerlikon Buhle with his sister—to continue investing in the Isle of Wight. It will also help to bring back to Bembridge production of the Islander aircraft. That aircraft is at present produced in Romania. That would create more jobs.

That is my plea, and I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North for allowing me to make it.

9.35 pm

Mr. McNamara: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

We have had a very interesting and full debate, despite the shortage of time. Due to the arrangements that usually exist between the Under-Secretary and myself, I think that all those who wanted to speak in the debate have managed to do so. That is good, because every hon. Member should have the opportunity to air his constituency interests and, more importantly, to look at the issue in the round, together with all the problems facing the RAF and our defence industries.

I should like to make a point that I believe has the full support of every hon. Member. We regard it as absolute nonsense to go for the refurbishment of the Jet Provost. That is a relatively uncontroversial statement. It is penny

[Mr. Lee]

Feasibility studies are in hand and the industrial element of those, including participation by British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce, has recently been completed. Those industrial reports were delivered to officials last week and are now being studied in detail in each capital. It would be wrong of me to anticipate the outcome of the national and international assessments but we are proceeding with all speed, and it is intended that the five Defence Ministers should meet in the spring to take stock of the position and decide how best to proceed.

The House will be aware that our starting point is our concern to maximise co-operation and collaboration in Europe while seeking to meet the equipment requirements of the RAF. EFA should become a positive manifestation of that goal. Our work over the coming weeks will be to establish whether that claim can be met while simultaneously ensuring that the legitimate aspirations of the five nations' taxpayers, air forces and industries are properly safeguarded. There is a strong political will in Europe that an EFA programme should be launched and that it should proceed. We shall continue to play our full part in the process of striving for a cost-effective collaboration programme based on fair and equitable terms for all partners.

If we succeed, we shall be launching more than a procurement programme. Therefore, we shall be setting the seal on a new and exciting phase of European co-operation, the political, economic, industrial and defence implications of which could be profound.

While I fully understand some of the anti-French sentiment that has been expressed in the Chamber this evening, it has not, in my view, been over-helpful. Surely we should be trying to bring our nations together in terms of collaboration.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks about me, and I know his understanding of the subject, but will he please recognise that, with the pressure on MPs with constituents working in British Aerospace, they need to have more that fine words; they positively want something to happen.

Mr. Lee: I fully understand the comments of my hon. Friend and he does not need to over-egg the pudding; I get the message.

I turn now to Westlands, of particular interest to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), and to my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare. Westlands is and will remain a vitally important defence contractor. The services depend on Westlands for support of in-service helicopters and the production of new aircraft. Ministers of a number of Departments are closely in touch with Westlands. We are fully cognisant of their problems and are working closely with the company.

None the less, the Ministry of Defence supports the company's efforts, encouraged by Government launch aid, to diversify into civil markets. Civil prospects with EH101 and W30 look most encouraging from 1990 onwards. The company will nevertheless continue to need military orders from both the United Kingdom and export markets. We recognise that the company is currently short of orders for production aircraft in the late 1980s. We are therefore considering with them what help the Government can give in generating additional orders in the medium term. I note all that has been said in the debate by a number of hon. Members on the W30.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister has said that he would like to help the company. Does he realise that the greatest help that he can give to the company is a decision one way or the other, in principle and not necessarily tied to a time, on the AST 404? Can he give any indication of the time when such a decision might be forthcoming?

Mr. Lee: I could not give a comment on the precise timing, but I repeat that we are fully aware of the situation at Westlands. I note the hon. Gentleman's constituency interest and his own interest as a small shareholder. On a personal note, when we privatise the Royal Ordnance I hope that he will indicate his support. We will send him a pink form in the hope that he will buy £20 worth of shares in that.

On the question of Nimrod AEW, several hon. Members expressed concern about the delay and cost overruns in this project. Let me say immediately that I share their concern. It is not a procurement exercise of which either the Ministry or industry can be particularly proud.

In the interest of saving time, I will move fairly fast to cover a number of other topics.

The hon. Member for Eccles mentioned British Aerospace, Woodford. We fully appreciate the loading problems faced by British Aerospace in Manchester. We have been considering a number of possible programmes which could be undertaken in the industry and the transfer of Nimrod major servicings is one of these. It is hoped to make an announcement shortly. The future of Woodford must, of course, be primarily a matter for the British Aerospace management to determine but we are aware of the situation there.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West mentioned the subject of reintroducing a flying role for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force when resources permit. I share his wish to improve the role of the Auxiliary Air Force and would draw his attention to our decision to set up a new auxiliary RAF Regiment squadron to provide anti-aircraft defence at RAF Waddington.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) asked whether we were planning to update the Phantom F2 avionics in the same way as we are updating the Buccaneer. In fact, the avionics in the Phantom were fitted much more recently than those in the Buccaneer. This, together with the fact that the Phantom will be largely replaced by the Tornado F2, means that such an update is neither necessary nor cost-effective.

We are also very conscious of the need to update our IFF capability. This was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley and others. We are developing with our NATO partners a NATO identification system. This system will incorporate new technology to meet the threat in the electronic environment in the 1990s and beyond.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) and my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley both raised the subject of the long-range stand-off missile. In partnership with the United States and West Germany we have agreed to undertake a feasibility study into options for introducing such a weapon in the 1990s. This study should be completed in November 1986.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked a whole range of questions on his particular topic. I will discuss those questions with my ministerial colleagues and we certainly will take note of them.

On the question of Tornado, which was mentioned by a number of hon. Members and is of specific interest to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble, we are currently considering with the RAF whether we should buy a quantity of Attrition aircraft, but as yet no decision has been taken.

On the whole question of defence sales, there are prospects in a number of countries. I cannot comment on them in detail but in fact — a number of my hon. Friends will bear me out—British Aerospace and British industry have given the Ministry of Defence and its sales team considerable credit for the efforts we have put into the sales effort.

My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare asked about the Meteorological Office and the cost of the service. I visited the office recently and I can testify that it provides a valuable service in many areas. It was the subject of a resource control review and in implementing the recommendations that flowed from that review the office is actively seeking new ways of exploiting its services in the commercial sector.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and negatived.*

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Terrorism

10 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I beg to move,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.

It is only 12 months since the present Prevention of Terrorism Act completed its passage through the House after the most careful study and detailed debate of its provisions. Year by year the Act it replaced had been scrutinised and reviewed, and that scrutiny was entirely right and proper as is ours now because the powers that have been given to the police and to Ministers since the first Act was passed in 1974 are wholly exceptional and represent a very considerable infringement of the civil liberties normally enjoyed by individuals in this country. This has been said many times over the past 10 years by successive Ministers. It remains true: but sadly it also remains true that terrorism is a menace to our society and the need for legislation is as great as ever.

It has become the practice in these debates to survey the incidence of terrorism in the previous 12 months and draw attention to the worst and most bloody examples. This year it is hardly necessary to do so. The bombing of the Grand hotel, Brighton on 12 October filled us all with a particular horror and outrage. That outrage was shared by the country as a whole because the Brighton bomb was intended to strike a grievous blow at the very heart of our constitution and our democratic system. My right hon. Friend has already informed the House of the results of Mr. John Hoddinott's inquiry into the security arrangements at Brighton and of the measures we are taking to look closely and urgently at the security requirements of similar events in future. But while all sensible safeguards will be applied we can say to the terrorists now that whatever foul deeds they perpetrate, however vile their acts, we shall not play into their hands by changing the way in which government is carried on in this country, with Ministers not only accountable to Parliament but accessible to the public.

There have, of course, been other terrorist incidents in the past year. Despite the successes of the security forces, the terrorist groups concerned with Northern Irish affairs have remained active, particularly in the Province itself. Over Christmas and the new year a series of arrests on Merseyside and elsewhere attracted considerable attention from a number of hon. Members and from the press. The House will be aware that six people are now awaiting trial for conspiracy to cause an explosion; and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on their cases further.

A significant change in the 1984 Act was the explicit extension of the powers of arrest and extended detention to those involved in international terrorism. It was very soon made clear how necessary that extension was and how truly international the threat from terrorism has now become. Within weeks of the passage of the Act, WPC Yvonne Fletcher was shot down in St. James's Square, in an appalling instance of brutal and futile violence.

When the 1984 Bill was going through Parliament Members of this House and another place were rightly concerned about the enlargement of the scope of section 12. The House will recall that my right hon. Friend gave a firm assurance that chief officers of police would be advised that the powers in respect of international terrorism should be used only where there was a prospect of a criminal charge in this country or of action under the Immigration Act 1971. I hope right hon. and hon. Members will have been reassured by the statistics that have been published on the use of this new power. In the period from 22 March to 31 December 1984, there were a total of 44 detentions in connection with international terrorism. In 18 of these cases my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary authorised extensions of detention beyond 48 hours; 13 persons were subsequently deported or removed from the United Kingdom under the Immigration Act and eight others were charged with criminal offences. In only one case in which an extension of detention was granted was the person released without charge and not excluded from this country. I hope the House will agree that those figures suggest a restrained and controlled use of an important power in response to a significant problem.

It would clearly not be in the national interest for me to disclose what it was that each of the 44 persons detained was suspected of doing or planning, or to discuss general trends or patterns of behaviour. But I am absolutely convinced that acts of international terrorism have been prevented from taking place in this country during the past year by police use of the new powers given to them last March, and that it was only by the use of those powers that those acts of terrorism could have been so prevented. Two cliches that are often heard are that we live in a dangerous world and that it is a small world. In the field of terrorism both are very true: violence or political tension in one apparently isolated area can so often explode in murder and destruction on the other side of the globe, in a country wholly uninvolved in the original dispute. We must continue to make it unmistakably clear that we are not prepared for this country to be turned into a battleground for foreign feuds and alien causes.

When the 1984 Act was going through Parliament, we gave a commitment to appoint a person to look each year at the working of the legislation and to produce a report to assist Parliament in the consideration of any order providing for the continuation of the Act. Sir Cyril Philips agreed to undertake that task, and copies of his first report were placed in the Library of the House earlier this week. We would like to record our gratitude to Sir Cyril for the work he has done and for producing, with commendable speed, a report which is both clear and helful.

There is entirely legitimate interest and concern in what is an exceptional piece of legislation; and we hope that this independent view of an area in which security considerations seldom allow the full facts of individual cases to be disclosed will go some way towards allaying that concern. I am, of course, pleased that Sir Cyril is broadly satisfied that the Act is being used properly and I hope that others will draw reassurance from his conclusions. He has also raised a number of more detailed points to which it clearly would not be possible for me to give definitive answers at this stage, but I would assure the House, as my right hon. and learned Friend has told Sir Cyril Philips, that we shall give all his comments the closest consideration.

My right hon. and learned Friend has received a report from Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary on the work of the police operating the port controls provided for under the Act. The report deals with security arrangements and is therefore not suitable for publication, butt the

detailed recommendations are receiving careful consideration, and I can take this opportunity to say a word or two about the inspectors' reaction to Lord Jellicoe's recommendation that all passengers on commercial flights and sailings between Great Britain and Ireland should complete landing and embarkation cards. The inspectors were asked to assess the resource implications of that recommendation, and in the light of their conclusions and the views that have been expressed on the security and other considerations, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided that it would not be appropriate to implement Lord Jellicoe's recommendation, and that in general a more selective use of those cards is to be much preferred. I am sure the House will welcome that because the present system whereby so-called "carding" takes place at Heathrow only in emergencies, but at Gatwick and most other airports the whole time, and at seaports on a selective basis, is a source of considerable irritation and annoyance to travellers.

The draft order that is before the House seeks to continue the Act in exactly its present form for the next 12 months. There is provision in the Act for certain sections only to be renewed and for parts of the Act to be allowed to lapse: and I have no doubt that we shall hear later this evening not only criticism of the Act as a whole and opposition to its continuation, but criticism of particular powers in the Act. I emphasise once again that we draw no satisfaction from the continuance in force, over 10 years after its original introduction, of this emergency legislation. But only 12 months have elapsed since there was the fullest debate and the most painstaking consideration of every line of the legislation. And it is simply too soon, after St. James's square and Brighton, too soon, after a year of tension and terrorism in so many countries of the world, to contemplate any change that might dangerously diminish the ability of the forces of law and order to protect us all against the terrorist menace. We have consulted the police in England and Wales, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland: they are unanimous in their response that the Prevention of Terrorism Act is an essential weapon in their constant struggle against terrorism. The Government are determined to give them the support they need.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): Does my hon. and learned Friend feel that the new initiative in the Council of Europe on terrorism is helpful, and will improve co-operation in the different countries of the Council of Europe?

Mr. Waddington: Of course, it must be helpful for countries to get together and to face together the terrorist threat. There can be no doubt about that.

I ask the House for its support for the renewal of the Act. It is support that I know will not be given lightly and will not be given by any of us without regrets. But it is support that I believe must be given as an unequivocal demonstration of our commitment to this long, thankless, but vital struggle against terrorism.

10.14 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): In this debate, as in previous debates on Northern Ireland when I was a spokesman on Northern Ireland for the Labour party, our hearts and thoughts go out to those whose lives have been lost or torn apart by acts of violence. I therefore gladly associate myself with the Minister's remarks about the Brighton bombing and other acts of terrorism that have been carried out primarily by para-military groups in Northern Ireland but also by other groups around the world. There is universal agreement in the House on that point.

I have a minor gripe, although it has major implications for the way in which we conduct these debates. Last year in the other place, Lord Elton gave the commitment that the report by Sir Cyril Philips would be available early enough to enable the House of Lords to consider amendments. We presumed that that commitment extended to this House. The letter sent to the Minister by Sir Cyril Philips shows that that was the intention. We have had too short a time to enable hon. Members to consider the details of Sir Cyril Philips' report and to propose amendments. We have had only two days to look at the report, and I hope that the Minister will take that point on board in relation to next year.

I shall put some questions to the Minister arising out of Lord Jellicoe's review in 1983 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976. The Minister may not be able to give the answers tonight, but if he can, well and good. If he cannot, I look forward to receiving the answers later.

Lord Jellicoe recommended that section 11, which deals with the withholding of information, should be used only when it was suspected that information was being withheld which could, if revealed, prevent acts of terrorism or lead to the apprehension of terrorist offenders. I understand that that is not mentioned in Home Office circular 26/84, but I should like the Minister to give his opinion.

The powers under section 13 apply to immigration and Customs officers. It is not clear whether that main circular has been sent to those officers. I have the impression that that has not happened, although the document provides guidance on the use of the general powers.

Lord Jellicoe recommended that Ministers should take an active part in ascertaining how far the specific purposes for which an extension was granted have been achieved and should satisfy themselves that people are not detained under the Act for longer than is necessary. To what extent has that recommendation been implemented?

I draw the Minister's attention to the case that went before the European Commission on Human Rights. The commission rejected the Government's argument that the men had not exhausted domestic remedies and accepted the claimants' contention that there is no domestic remedy for violations of the European Convention on Human Rights arising from Prevention of Terrorism Act offences. This is a serious matter with legal implications.

The House should take this Act extremely seriously. I always regret the fact that it comes on for consideration late at night and for a relatively short debate. I shall attempt to take up as little time as possible, but I wish to reiterate some important items.

We all understand the circumstances in which the Act was originally passed. The 1974 pub bombings provided an emotive backdrop.

We must address ourselves to four primary questions. First, does the Act, on the best judgment available, prevent terrorism? Secondly, are the acknowledged — everyone acknowledges them — infringements of civil liberty too great to justify the continuation of this Act in a democracy? Thirdly, is the Act in danger of becoming

[Mr. Clive Soley]

permanent? Fourthly — this question is extremely important—does the Act seriously alienate sections of the community so as to make it counter-productive?

Having lived with the Act for 10 years, and having examined in considerable detail and depth the figures available to us, the Labour party's answer is, first, that there is little, if any, evidence to suggest that it prevents terrorism. The Minister said that many people think that the Act is necessary. Sadly, no one has spelt out why he thinks it is necessary. Secondly, the infringement of civil liberties—especially in view of what I said a moment ago—is too great for a democracy to accept. Thirdly, the Act is in danger of becoming permanent. Fourthly, it is a serious alienation of many people in Britain and Northern Ireland and is, therefore, counter-productive.

I acknowledge, as I know the Minister acknowledges, that whether the Act prevents terrorism is a matter of judgment—we cannot know. What we do know is that the convictions under the Act for terrorism are few in number, and many of them are not serious enough to attract long prison sentences. Indeed, only a few people receive long prison sentences. We must balance the advantage of putting away people who may be a danger with the disadvantage of the alienation that it causes.

The figures that I shall use are up to and including 1984, and have been drawn from both Home Office figures and figures supplied by the Irish Information Partnership, to which I am indebted for the detailed analysis that it has carried out over a long period. In Britain 5,949 people have been detained; for the United Kingdom as a whole — including Northern Ireland — the figure is 10,309. People charged under the Act in Britain number 152, with 22 in Northern Ireland, bringing the total to 174. Convictions in Britain—not only of offences under the Act, but resulting from people being held and then charged either under the Act or under other Acts—total 348.

From those figures it is hard to argue that the Act is preventing terrorism. Of the convictions in Britain—the United Kingdom figures are not available—42 per cent. were charged under the Act for failure to co-operate. I emphasise that because, if it were not for the Act, that would not be an offence in Britain. Every lawyer of any standing acknowledges that failure to co-operate is anathema to anyone who believes in the democratic system and the rule of law. It has always been something that British lawyers have resisted mightily, as have lawyers in other democratic countries.

Does the Act prevent by deterrence? That is the other argument that must be addressed by the Government and others.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Tebbit): Is the hon. Gentleman for or against the Act?

Mr. Soley: I am making it clear that the Opposition are against the Act. We have consistently voted against it and will continue to do so.

Mr. Tebbit: Shame.

Mr. Soley: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman takes that view. I understand his feelings and those of many other people. However, I would not have taken the interest that I have taken over the years in Northern Ireland affairs if it was not for my horror at the violence resulting from the problems there. No one — but no one — will take away from me the right not only to feel deeply about that, but to follow through those feelings into rational, political arguments that are designed to clear up the problems which are causing us so many nightmares, and which in particular have caused so many nightmares for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Renewing the Act tonight will save lives.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman mutters and shakes his head, but there are many problems because of this Act. It has added to the number of people who are prepared to support the primary para-military groups in Northern Ireland. I shall give the hon. Gentleman evidence to back that if he will only contain himself and listen to the argument instead of flying off the handle and assuming that he knows the answer to these difficult problems when, in fact, he has only attended the House for occasional aspects of the debates on Northern Ireland and terrorism.

The other argument is that of deterrence. There is very little evidence that the Act works as a deterrent. The sentences which follow a normal conviction for murder, attempted murder and conspiracy to cause explosions would continue to exist without this Act. If those sentences do not deter, there is overwhelming evidence that the convictions and sentences arising from this Act would be no greater a deterrent than the one which already exists — unless we are arguing that random arrest and detention is itself a primary deterrent.

If that is what we are saying, two things follow. First, we must recognise that we are using random arrest, detention and questioning as a way of obtaining information. Secondly, we must recognise that this method of doing so alienates so many people that it acts as a recruiting sergeant major for the para-military groups in Ireland.

Mr. Waddington: It is quite obvious what the feeling is on the Conservative Benches. It is quite outrageous to talk about random arrests. The hon. Gentleman served on the Committee which studied this Bill, and he knows perfectly well that there is no question of random arrests.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is correct. It drives innocent people into para-military organisations. Over the Christmas holiday, two seamen sailing from Dublin to Liverpool, who had obviously had a drink too many, gave false names. In fact, one said that he was Mickey Mouse. The police detained them throughout the Christmas holiday, and the Home Secretary allowed these innocent people to be detained for seven days. The Government are driving such people into para-military organisations.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is right, and I intend to give further evidence.

Before I do, I should like to make my position clear. I have been involved in these debates since about 1980 when I first began to get involved. This is the first time that we have had such outbursts from Conservative Members. I understand their strength of feeling following Brighton, but I ask them to understand the strength of feeling which got me involved in the politics of Northern Ireland because of the violence and what it was doing to

our democracy. If Conservative Members do not understand that, I am sorry. If they are now behaving in this way because of Brighton, whereas previously they did not—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) would keep quiet and think for a moment, he would not get into such a state. If Conservative Members are doing so, the para-military organisations in Northern Ireland which conduct these atrocious acts will gain courage and advantage from it.

We have a duty to everyone—to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and to the many people in Britain and Ireland who have lost their lives and who have had their families torn apart. We owe it to them to engage in a rational, careful and caring analysis. If Conservative Members do not think I am doing so, that is fine, but they should listen to the arguments and put forward the alternatives. They should not take off and get agitated, as if emotion alone will solve this problem. If emotion could solve the problems of Northern Ireland, we would have solved them years ago.

Are civil liberties being infringed too much? I am troubled about the wording of the Act. As I said time and again in Committee, the exclusion order is, in fact, internal exile. We must acknowledge that. The purpose of the Act is the collection of information. We should also acknowledge that. It enables the authorities to pick up people whom they have reason to believe have Irish connections. It allows the authorities to question them, particularly those who have had contacts with other people known to the security services. By doing so, it allows the authorities to paint a picture of the lifestyle of the people in whom they are interested, not of the ones whom they have picked up.

I shall return to the alienation involved in that, as it is an important part of the argument. In normal circumstances we would be appalled by the power to detain a person for up to seven days, in many cases without contact. Regarding abuse, I ask the Minister to read the article by Joe Sim in the *New Statesman* of 22 February 1985, to cut down my remarks and save time. I could give many examples and the Minister also knows of many, otherwise he would not have made his comments about the infringement of civil liberties. He must take that on board.

We are arguing that the ordinary law should be and is sufficient. It is in danger of becoming permanent. Although it is written into the Act that it will expire after five years—that was a good inovation—in Committee the word "temporary" was to be dropped. Only the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and supported by the Labour party reinserted "temporary". The Act has been on the statute book for 10 years. The level of violence in Northern Ireland is the lowest for 14 years—we take pleasure in any small mercy. How much longer will we keep the Act on the statute book? From the Minister's remarks about overseas terrorism, it sounds as though he thinks that the Act must become permanent to deal with overseas groups. Until the last two years, no one ever said that the Act was necessary for that. We have always accepted that the conventional law combined with the powers of immigration officers through the Minister were sufficient to deal with overseas terrorism. No one who considers the matter could come to a different conclusion.

The alienation factor is crucial, and I wish to address my remarks to it carefully. The philosophy of terrorism is to try to force Governments to take extreme action which alienates those groups which the para-militaries seek to represent. R. Moss in "Urban Guerilla Warfare" said:

> "From its original role of keeping the peace between the Catholic and Protestant communities, the British Army moved over to an offensive intended to root out the IRA as a fighting force. Although the new tactics produced military results, they helped to polarize opinion in Ulster and enabled Catholic critics to represent the army as a repressive force. In this sense, IRA terrorism succeeded. It led to a situation where the British Army, which began as the referee between the two communities in Ulster, appeared as a party to the quarrel. The chaos it engendered helped to postpone the application of social reforms designed to get to the root of the problem and thus eroded Catholic faith in solutions within the existing framework."

Many people are unaware of a booklet which has filtered through the para-military groups throughout the world, including the Provisional IRA. It is Carlos Marighella's "Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla." In many ways it is a shocking document, but Conservative Members should read it. He states that a Government have no alternative except to intensify repression because of a para-military group. He states:

> "The police networks, house searches, arrests of innocent people and of suspects, closing off streets, make life in the city unbearable . . . The people refuse to collaborate with the authorities, and the general sentiment is that the government is unjust, incapable of solving problems".

Those thoughts are not academic, but real. They have been a strand of para-military thinking for hundreds of years, but have been more explicitly put during the past 30 years.

Sir Cyril Philips, among many others, recognises the problem when in his report he says:

> "There is too the practical consideration that in containing terrorism the police need is not only special powers but also the support of the public. It is therefore vital that the use of such powers should not alienate any section of the law-abiding population in Great Britain or Northern Ireland."

I shall give an example of the way in which that can work. Incidentally, I welcome the Minister's comments on the carding system. To demonstrate what has been going wrong, I shall quote paragraph 37, which states:

> "In one police force area where total carding is undertaken it is also the practice to follow up the information contained on each card by visiting persons with an apparent Irish connection, and asking them to complete a form containing full details of families and friends. The purpose is apparently to obviate the need for further checks when anyone so listed travels. In the force area in question the total number of people affected is small. This practice seems to me objectionable because it uses controls as a matter of routine surveillance which are intended principally to assist in identifying suspected terrorists who are entering or leaving the country."

That is an example of the way in which the Act goes badly wrong and alientates many people whose co-operation and support we seek. The Federation of Irish Societies, which speaks for many Irish people and people of Irish descent in this country, says that a lot of people see it as discriminatory against Irish citizens, and as divisive and threatening with respect to the Irish community. But, above all, in Britain, 5,482 people were released without charge out of a total detained of 5,949. That represents 92 per cent. of those detained. Conservative Members should bear in mind that it is not just those who are released and who are acknowledged to be innocent who are alienated, but above all their families and friends. Hon. Members should also bear in mind that alientation can take several forms. First, as I know from the evidence, it can lead people to tolerate or to give passive support to the para-militaries. People are also frightened to co-operate with the police.

[Mr. Soley]

When I first became involved in Ireland, people said that it was because there were many Irish voters in my constituency. I am sure that many of my constituents have Irish links, but it is a singularly unpopular issue to be involved in generally, because many Irish people say, "Whatever you do, don't bring the problem over here." When I question them further as to their worries, I find that they are worried either about the para-militaries or about being picked up and questioned by the security forces. They frequently quote the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. Although one may need to ask the right questions to discover that anxiety and fear, it becomes clear very quickly. Alienation can also lead to covering-up for para-militaries. I know that that has been happening in Northern Ireland. Most importantly, some people become willing to join, and actively support para-military groups.

It is our contention that that judgment outweighs any other judgment on the other side, that the Act's existence prevents terrorism. Thus, on rational grounds, and on an analysis of the facts available, we say that the Act has not succeeded in its primary purpose, and that there is overwhelming evidence to support that view. There is little evidence to support the opposite view, but I should be happy to hear it. This Act, along with the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act — where we do not recommend immediate repeal, as that is not possible, although we recommend major changes to it—form the pinnacle of the anti civil rights legislation that we have allowed to creep on to the statute book over the years.

We must all bear our responsibilities in that regard. We have allowed that to happen, not least because we have failed to respond properly to the problems of Ireland, and to British-Irish relationships during the past 50 or 60 years. We have a great duty in that regard, and our failing has been visited upon the lives of many people outside the House. That is another reason for saying with absolute conviction that my feelings about this issue are as deep and honourable as those of any Conservative Member who so foolishly and, I believe, wrongly thinks that to vote against the Act is in some way to vote for terrorism.

Old-established democracies are rarely lost overnight. There is a slow erosion of civil rights and then comes a crisis, whether economic, military, mass unemployment or hyperinflation, and people wake up to find that the civil rights that defended them no longer exist. This House, more than any other parliamentary assembly in the world, has that reputation to live up to. We have not lived up to it. Britain is an old-established democracy which has gone dangerously far down the road that I have described. It is not too late to turn back, and in doing that we should not be putting lives at risk. Indeed, we might be beginning to grasp the political problems that we have failed to address in the past.

10.40 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The Minister said that the events of the past year have illustrated the value of the Act, especially section 12, which the Home Secretary introduced to deal with international terrorism. The Home Secretary accepted the advice of Lord Jellicoe, who wisely concluded that the relationships between various terrorist organisations required action to provide counter-terrorist forces with sufficiently flexible powers to eradicate terrorism and terrorist criminality from the United Kingdom and to enable the United Kingdom to play a significant part in what the Home Secretary called "close co-operation" with other countries. That close co-operation has varied from country to country, and there is considerable room for improvement.

Section 10 gives the Government powers to cope with the vast sums of money at the disposal of terrorist organisations and mentions

"acts of terrorism connected with Northern Irish affairs".

I am struck by the role of the individual in section 10. The onus seems to be put on the bank manager of a comparatively small country branch of a bank. I wonder whether international financing of international terrorism and of Irish terrorism are different and whether section 10 needs to be strengthened to prevent the transfer of large sums from country to country and from one major bank to another within the United Kingdom.

I am sure that, in the aftermath of the Brighton bombing, even the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) agrees that we need the Act. In justification of the original Act, which the Labour Government introduced in 1976, he said—I hope that the right hon. Gentleman agrees that his words are relevant today:

"the necessity of protecting the law-abiding majority of Irish citizens living here by demonstrating that the tiny minority of terrorists who lived amongst them would be weeded out and treated with no mercy."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 61.]

On that occasion the right hon. Gentleman referred to the origins of the Act which was introduced by a Labour Government of which he was a member and said that it seemed right at the time, and perhaps it was right at the time. We do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman still holds that view.

Mr. Soley: My right hon. Friend adopts a very fair position upon it. He voted against it last time and he will do so again tonight. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) must recognise that this argument is about learning from the experience of the last 10 years. The problem is that the right hon. Gentleman does not want to learn.

Mr. Molyneaux: It would be interesting to know whether the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook wishes to repudiate his own words. What should have led him to believe that terrorists should not be weeded out and treated with no mercy? What has happened in the intervening 10 years to persuade the right hon. Gentleman otherwise?

Mr. Soley: Unusually for the right hon. Gentleman, he is being grossly unfair. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has made his view absolutely clear. He believes, as I do, that acts of terrorism are to be condemned. We should like to catch and lock up those who commit acts of terrorism, but it does not mean that my right hon. Friend has got to vote for this Act, for all the reasons I have given. If my right hon. Friend did not share this view with me, he would not have asked me to be the spokesman against it.

Mr. Molyneaux: The absence of the right hon. Gentleman may be significant, but it is not for me to interpret his absence. I am sure that the law-abiding Irish community who were referred to in the speech of the right hon. Gentleman felt in no less need of reassurance in the

days immediately following the Brighton bombing. We on these Benches are filled with admiration for the two Front Bench colleagues of the Minister who have not permitted their injuries and their grief and suffering to stand in the way of their duties to this House. Equally I am sure that the thousands of Roman Catholics in the City of Armagh this very week accept the necessity to weed out terrorists and to treat them without mercy when they re-live the horror of last Sunday when one of their own faith was gunned down on the steps of their cathedral — and perhaps also the horror of today when a community policeman in the same county was gunned down by the IRA.

It is in the intervals of comparative and relative calm between such atrocities that society is at its most vulnerable. It is then that the resolve that terrorists should be weeded out and treated with no mercy is weakened. I know that in the House tonight there are hon. Members who would object to the words "treated with no mercy", but, given the vile nature of terrorists, who would say that every attempt should not be made to ensure that at least they are weeded out?

The Act which we are renewing tonight is the weeder. In agriculture, as in horticulture, a careful weeder will always do his best to ensure that the minimum degree of disturbance is caused to fruitful plants. So this Act, in its modified form, has proved its effectiveness in weeding out. Any slight disturbance or irritation caused to law-abiding people either on this side of the Irish Sea or on the other is very small indeed compared to the horrific death and suffering which the weeds would cause if they were left to sprawl unchecked over the entire community. I know that some will demand proof that murder and mutilation have been prevented by the workings of the Act, but as one who has himself been frequently inconvenienced and seriously delayed by the exercise of the provisions of this Act I can only say that I shall willingly tolerate all of that if there is even the possibility that one human body will not end up as bloody pulp in a plastic bag.

Successive Governments over the past nine years have taken the view that the retention of the legislation is necessary as long as a substantial terrorist threat remains, to use the words of Lord Jellicoe. For those who take a different view, and who mistakenly believe that the legislation feeds terrorism, I have some words of encouragement.

In September 1983 I said that the security situation could look very different in 12 months' time, provided that terrorists were deprived of the hope of attainment of their objective of a united Ireland. For years, terrorists were not deprived of that hope, because successive Governments kept repeating the declaration that a united Ireland would not be achieved by violence. That suited the terrorists very well. for as long as people in Northern Ireland were to be deprived of the right of self-determination decades in advance of the time when they might willingly consent to a change, there was every incentive for the IRA to secure for itself a dominant place in the new order. I had to wait more than 12 months for terrorists to be deprived of that hope, for it took 15 months for the Prime Minister to transmit the signal for which we had hoped and which the IRA dreaded.

When the Prime Minister, on 19 November 1984, rejected the three options designed to override the free choice of the people of Northern Ireland, she made it very clear that the principle of self-determination would prevail over both murder and political intrigue alike. In plain terms, the shared objective would not be achieved by either method.

On 19 November and on subsequent days we were warned and we were told that Republicans would be outraged, that alienation would be increased, and that Ireland North and South, would be convulsed in a blood-bath the like of which had not been predicted since the then hon. Member for Belfast, West — now Lord Fitt — warned us that when the Labour Government decided to provide Northern Ireland with equal and fair representation in this House, there would be a similar outbreak of violence. But in both cases the opposite occurred.

In the recent case, after about 10 days of ritual huffing and puffing, until about the beginning of last December, a surprising calm set in in Northern Ireland. Far from being apart, the two sides of the Northern Ireland community began to come together and to co-operate in all sorts of ways. I know that I am excluding the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), because he has clearly decided to go on an alternative course. Bearing in mind the company that he is proposing to keep, I can only say "Good luck" to him.

The general attitude was and still is, "Well, now we know. There is not going to be a change so we might as well get down to making the best of it together." One can imagine the impact of that grass roots philosophy on the self-styled army council of the Provisional IRA. Now it, too, knows that the objective is not going to be achieved by anybody.

No one in his right mind would venture to predict when murderers will stop murdering, in this nation or in any other land, but of one thing we can be certain. The stability created by the Prime Minister's unambiguous declaration makes life very hard indeed for thugs, for normality is their greatest obstacle, and it is slowly dawning on them and on their fellow travellers that although they can kill and be killed, that which they regard as the prize is now set far beyond their reach. Provided that this time they are deprived of a rescue brigade in the form of a weakening of Parliament's resolve, or a let-up in the pressure upon the terrorist organisations, I think that all of us on each side of the House can look forward to the time when this now essential legislation can be set aside.

10.55 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Sir Winston Churchill described this as the terrible 20th century, and as far as the closing years of the century is concerned it seems to be a terrorist century. The debate has been dominated by Irish terrorism, but of course the IRA and the INLA are part of an international mafia of terror. Groups in different countries have widely varying ideologies but they do jobs for each other and they minister to each other's needs in terms of arms, explosives and training.

So I was very glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow (Sir J. Page) intervened in the Minister's speech to emphasise the need for closer European and wider international co-operation. This order is concerned with the situation in the United Kingdom, and we need this order. We need, unfortunately, in this exceptional situation, exceptional methods and measures.

I was very glad to hear the opening words of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), expressing his abhorrence of terrorism. If we will the end of safety of life

[Sir John Biggs-Davison]

and limb and property, we must be prepared to will the means. I cannot share the sympathy that has been expressed tonight—not for the first time—with one who ended up in confinement, having given a false name and failed to give any co-operation to the police. I am very sorry that he missed his Christmas, but other people died at Christmas.

Of course, this kind of legislation is repugnant, and I assure the hon. Member for Hammersmith that it is repugnant to Government Members too. Nor does the House in general deal with this kind of legislation lightly. It seems that we are constantly reviewing and renewing this legislation. We are jealous of civil liberties, but without life what is liberty?

This Prevention of Terrorism Act, as the Minister said, has been scrutinised and reviewed. I only regret that I have not yet had the time or opportunity to study fully the report of Sir Cyril Philips. It has been well pointed out by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) that this legislation is not the product of a Conservative Administration.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): It is Jenkins' legislation.

Sir J. Biggs-Davison: Exactly—I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. It is the product of a Labour Home Secretary, and the fact that he is now a member of the Social Democratic party is beside the point. This is a measure that then carried the support of all sides of the House. It was introduced by a Labour Home Secretary. His judgment then was sound. The views of chief officers of police were then taken, and those views have not changed. We would be very foolish indeed to disregard those opinions.

The question of carding has been mentioned in this debate by more than one hon. Member. It was the only part of the speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith with which I agree. This does arouse resentment among the Irish and other people. It is important not to alienate those whose support, sympathy and co-operation is needed. But all Irishmen are not as he describes them. Unfortunately the IRA is organised in this island. I have been in pubs where there have been collections for the IRA. It is against the law. Therefore it is necessary sometimes for some Irish people to be troubled.

The great thing is that relations between Irish people and British people in this island are so good. Despite the atrocities that occur, there is no revulsion against Irish people as a whole. But there are some Irishmen who, unfortunately, must receive the attention of the police. My answer to the resentment that is caused by carding is that there should be identity cards for all, without discrimination. Some of us raised this issue when we were debating personation in Northern Ireland elections. We took the view that it was a way of dealing with that problem. This is the way to deal with so many problems. I should be grateful if Home Office and Northern Ireland Ministers would give some consideration to our suggestions from time to time.

I shall draw my remarks to an end, as time is short. I thought that the hon. Member for Hammersmith was not as charming this evening as he usually is. He seemed to be reading us a sermon. He was a bit patronising and prissy this evening. Some of us have been studying Northern Ireland affairs for some years. Some of us have even studied the sacred books on guerrilla warfare which he mentioned, such as the works of Marighella, Che Guevara, Mao and the rest. Some of us have engaged in a little study of these matters.

The speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith and the decision of the Opposition to divide the House on the motion cause me much regret. I believe in constitutional government and a responsible, loyal Opposition. That is the basis of our democracy. What the hon. Gentleman has said and what the Opposition propose this evening are further proof that the Labour party has abandoned the path of responsible opposition and the role of alternative government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The debate must end at half-past eleven and many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in it. I ask the House to follow the excellent example of the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison).

11.3 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Despite the brief speech of the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), I am sure that we have all noted that once again the serious problem that is before us is being debated late at night. The debate is too brief and too late. We are not able to deal adequately with the issue. It is clear that there are profound differences between us, and that is why there will be a Division. Those who are new to these debates will, I am sure, agree with me that it is easy in this place to air our prejudices. I hope that they will appreciate that to do so has an impact in Northern Ireland. Therefore, we should be careful about what we say.

The renewal of the 1984 Act was not expected until March, and it is unfortunate that the debate is taking place today, 21 February. Many Irish associations, individuals and organisations had decided to lobby the House in March but — *[Interruption.]* It is obvious that Conservative Members think that it is wrong to lobby the House. They do not really understand the serious problem that we are facing. They should appreciate that people have a right to come to this place to talk to Members about their feelings and about what is happening. The Irish community on the mainland has about 750,000 members. It includes those whose connections with Ireland are not those of individuals such as myself, whose families have been here for over 100 years. It includes those who have come hear from Ireland in recent years. The Federation of Irish Societies has profound feelings against the Act and Conservative Members should understand that. It feels that it bears down on them in a terrible way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said that none of us wants anyone to be terrorised and hurt. At the same time, we want it to be understood that there are two sides to the debate. There are honourable differences and it does not pay anyone to laugh as though such feelings did not exist and the subject was not serious. We believe that the Act is misplaced and that the ordinary criminal law could deal with the problems that face us.

I understand that the Philips report is now available. I did not know that, and it appeared that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) did not either.

Many of us would have appreciated the chance to read the report prior to the debate. That was one of the reasons that caused me to think that it should have taken place at the normal time.

It is less than a year since the new Act came into force. The Federation of Irish Societies has sent documentation to all my hon. Friends and to me; I do not know whether it sent any to Conservative Members. It is the largest and most representative Irish organisation in Britain. It feels deeply about the legislation. It is worth considering why; it gives us some insight into what the Irish people here think about the Act.

We all deplore the killing and bombing that have gone on. None the less, we have to reach some kind of unity to try to solve this terrible problem. The Federation of Irish Societies believes that the Act is unnecessary and discriminatory, is divisive and threatening towards the Irish community and Irish citizens in this country, curtails civil liberties and is a constraint on legitimate political expression and activity. If the Act remains on the statute book, the federation would like some changes in it. Its requests embody its fears about what it thinks is wrong with the Act. It requests:

"That detainees be given immediate access to legal advice."

They do not have that. The federation also says that the Irish embassy should be notified when one of its citizens is arrested. It requests:

"That relatives of detainees be immediately informed of arrest and location of the detainee.

That detainees should not be held for more than 48 hours without being brought before a Court or a Justice of the Peace sitting in camera."

Another request which most of us should agree with is:

"That detainees not charged be compensated for 'social injury' defined as loss of reputation, loss of occupation/employment, domestic disturbance and community stigma . . .

That detained persons should have all rights and privileges generally afforded to unconvicted persons who are detained under the normal law."

The federation wants the ordinary judges rules to apply, and the withdrawal of the power to stop travellers at random without reasonable suspicion. All those requests are reasonable. They come from people who are fearful. They feel that they have been driven into an impasse because of this Act.

Mr. Canavan: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the most damning statistics in the Philips report is that more than 70 per cent. of the people who were arrested and detained under the Act were never charged? In other words, the Act is being used as a system of repression against innocent people.

Mr. Parry: I fully agree with the points that my hon. Friend has made on behalf of the Federation of Irish Societies. Does he also agree that when innocent people have been detained and then released without charges being made any fingerprints that have been taken by the police should be destroyed?

Mr. Flannery: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend. By the way, my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) says that the percentage he gave should have been 80, not 70.

The present Act has so consolidated the provisions of the previous legislation that it seems that we accept that the position will remain the same for ever. Effectively this exceptional law enlarges the circle of people whose civil liberties and legitimate political activities are constrained and threatened.

I was a member of the Committee which considered the 1984 Act. Labour Members fought strenously not only against the whole Bill but against the widening of the provisions. Arrest and detention powers were extended to cover international terrorism. I do not believe in the links that have been mentioned in the debate. When people are giving bombs to other people, they do not necessarily share the same ideals. Often they are opposed. There are no direct organisational links; there may be sporadic links.

The draconian powers of the Act hang like the sword of Damocles over the Irish community in this country. We, like Conservative Members, will fight tooth and nail to prevent bombs from exploding in the community because they harm all of us.

However, at any fixed moment, those of us in the Labour party who are deeply involved—and have been for years—are always trying to handle cases of people suddenly arrested without charge. My hon. Friends, wherever they may be, know about names such as Maire O'Shea, about all sorts of people who are being arrested and whose relatives get in contact with us asking us to do something. When we are in the process of doing it, those people are released, probably with a stigma. New names then come to us. That is going on all the time, as my hon. Friends would tell the House. People are taken from their homes and letters from relatives arrive asking us to deal with that. We hear of cases in Northern Ireland when people are killed by plastic bullets. All come to us to ask us to try to do something about it as best we can.

Innocent and orderly people are treated as criminals and then released without charge, with no compensation, but with a lingering stigma. They are shocked and terrorised and wonder what in heaven's name is happening to them in what must appear to them to be a nightmare of 1984 proportions.

One could develop that theme, but I should like to conclude by talking a little politics because there is an idea that the whole thing is hopeless. Most of us in the Chamber have debated the Act and its draconian sister, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act, until a curious bond seems to exist between us. It is a strange thing, and I have tried to analyse it, and failed. I have often tried. But one thing is sure. We are permeated by its main components of intractability and sheer hopelessness. I have said over and over again that the sense of hopelessness proceeds from the fact that all that we talk about is security, and we never discuss what is the cause of the terrible problem that we all face together. That is why the Emergency Provisions Act and this Act will go on for ever if we do not discuss the root cause of why that is happening.

There is among us a dangerous acceptance of the permanency of the situation. We accept one another's position, and the two sides never discuss the politics of the situation except separately. The words "political initiative" have become dirty words instead of something that we want to do. There seems to be no meeting point at all. I cannot accept that, as I cannot accept this unjust Act. The emergency has gone on longer, much longer than both world wars put together, and the Boer war thrown in. Are we so powerless that we are all accepting defeat? I do not accept defeat, and meanwhile the situation that we have created between us inevitably spawns more violence.

I believe that ultimately the Unionists will have to accept their essential Irishness and be part of a united Ireland. The only way that the Emergency Provisions and the Prevention of Terrorism Acts will be unnecessary will

[Mr. Flannery]

be in a democratic and united Ireland living in peace and friendship with its neighbour, Britain. Some time, some day, we shall have to sit down and talk together. The British and Irish people are tired of an enduring slaughter that appears to be endless. They will ultimately demand that we do something. Our prejudicies are too luxurious and expensive. We shall have to act in unison for peace, and we shall not do so by passing the extension of the Act every year, as well as of the Acts kindred to it.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I am as concerned about and as interested in the interests of individuals and their civil rights as anybody else in the House. I spend part of my time, or much of my life, as a barrister in the criminal courts, defending various people. But I equally believe that internaional terrorism is one of the major concerns that this country faces today, whether it comes from the acts in Northern Ireland or acts in the middle east.

I should like to make it clear what the order which the Opposition announced they propose to oppose again today, does. It does three things. It proscribes certain organisations, gives power to exclude people whom the Home Secretary has reason to believe are involved in terrorist offences and gives power to arrest and to question people whom the police have reason to believe are involved in the commission of criminal offences. Those are minimum powers, which we are justified in taking in defence of our nation and the people of this nation.

As has been said, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill was introduced 10 years ago by a Labour Home Secretary. I do not believe that there have been any changes since then which mean that this legislation is less necessary today than it was 10 years ago. I should have thought that what happened in Brighton and in other parts of the world—with international terrorists wishing to make the streets and cities places to use their bombs to promote their causes—has made it clear to every hon. Member that the Act's limited powers are still necessary. I am satisfied by the assurance of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State that the police have made it clear throughout that they believe that these powers assist them in their fight against terrorism. I am sad that, yet again, the Opposition are choosing to oppose this measure.

11.16 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): I do not intend to discuss the atmosphere that has given rise to terrorism and violence. If I were to do so, I would have harsh things to say about the House and its neglect over a long period in upholding democratic principles in Northern Ireland.

The Minister rightly said that the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976 represents a considerable infringement of civil liberties, and I welcome his recognition of that fact. The Home Secretary who introduced this measure described it as draconian. In that case one would expect that the Government would welcome serious questioning of the Act and that we would have had more time to debate it and more notice of when the debate would take place. What we have been given as a review of the Act during the past 12 months is an insult to the intelligence of the House. The person who carried out the review did so in only three weeks, according to his letter to the Home Secretary. He started his examination on 7 February and finished it on 15 February. How could a review of what is described as a considerable infringement of civil liberties be conducted in such a short period? The man who conducted the review did not consult, nor did he invite consultation, with, the responsible organisations which represent the Irish community and which are at the receiving end of this legislation.

The Minister questioned my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) when he talked about random arrests. About 84 per cent. of the people arrested under the Act are not charged with any crime. That is surely evidence that some random arrests are carried out. If people are arrested, that fact becomes publically known. If they are innocent, serious damage is done, even to the point of being made targets for an assassin's bullet. That is why we should seriously consider the operations of the Act.

No notice is required to be given to the relatives of any person arrested under the Act. A person could disappear off the face of the earth for seven days, and no one would know where he was. Under this Act, no one has any responsibility to tell his relatives about his arrest. That is a serious infringement of civil liberties. The simple answer is to create machinery to enable relatives to be informed of where their relations have been detained and to give the arrested person immediate access to a solicitor or other legal advice. What is the objection to doing that?

Frequent complaints have been made about the conditions in which many of these people—the vast majority of them innocent—have been held in custody. The Jellicoe review recommended that because of the Act's "draconian"—I use the review's word—native citizens detained under it should be, and should be seen to be, well treated. Will the Minister examine the conditions under which people have been held?

11.20 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): This debate has become predictable. All too often, I recall the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) lecturing hon. Members—especially those on the Government Benches—on approaching the matter with a cool mind. On a day when a Roman Catholic policeman has been butchered in Northern Ireland, following a weekend when a Roman Catholic prison officer was butchered coming from Mass, it is hard to isolate oneself from the emotions naturally provoked when we discuss terrorism.

As a constituency representative in Northern Ireland, I have lost too many friends and buried too many constituents to be removed from the emotional aspects of the Act. The hon. Gentleman has no difficulty about being passionate about housing, poverty or economics, so it ill becomes him to tell us that we should not be passionate when talking about the lives and deaths of people in this country. It is, rightly, an emotional matter. It is of prime importance to every citizen in this country. I have no doubt where my loyalties should lie—it is with those who could be done to death by acts of terrorism if it were not for the security forces being strengthened by the provisions contained in the Act.

It is the same sort of logic adopted by the party of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), which says that the RUC and the UDR should be disbanded, to leave the field free for the IRA all the easier to carry out its acts of murder

and mayhem. It is the IRA which is most vociferous in its opposition to the Act. Does it not say something about the nature of the Act when the terrorist organisation wants it done away with?

The hon. Member for Hammersmith might say that the Act alienates some sections of the community. The Act does inconvenience many people — it inconveniences me. But, as a citizen who believes that terrorism must be put down, I am prepared to put up with that inconvenience if it helps some to live who might otherwise not live.

It is essential to put on the record the fact that the Minister has made it clear, and the security forces have made it clear, that the need for this legislation is as great as it ever was. When Labour Governments are prepared to take that advice from the security forces, it is strange that this Labour Opposition are not prepared to take that same advice from the same security forces.

There has been a significant act by the Government of the Republic of Ireland, and it should be taken into consideration. Any assistance that we can obtain from that Government in the fight against terrorism is to be welcomed. They took speedy action to seize funds that would have been used to buy guns, bullets and bombs in Northern Ireland. It is a step in the right direction, and we obviously look for more from that Government. While the Act is required, it must be supported by all right-thinking people.

11.23 pm

Mr. Waddington: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker. I hope that hon. Members will acquit me of discourtesy if I do not deal with too many of the detailed points raised in the few minutes remaining to me.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) raised some important points. The Home Office circular to the police includes a careful explanation of the provisions of section 11. There have been no charges under that section since the Act came into force. On section 13, the circular does not go to immigration officers. Although it is rare for them to act as examining officers, nevertheless separate guidance is being prepared for them.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) mentioned the recent events in Ireland and questioned the adequacy of powers to control the movement of terrorist funds. The Government are certainly conscious that events in the Republic earlier this week make it necessary for us to consider our own powers. Section 10 has a far more limited purpose, and is not adequate to deal with the sort of situation which the Government of the Republic dealt with.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) mentioned identity cards. This has been debated on numerous occasions. I can see the force of what he said, but our advice is that it would not be very useful. When identity cards were abolished in 1952, the view of the police then was that they were no longer helpful, and I gather that the view of the police today is no different.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) said that there should be immediate access to legal advice for those detained under these powers. Under the present arrangements, access to a solicitor in England and Wales is governed by the provisions of the judges' rules and administrative directions to the police. These apply to those detained under the prevention of terrorism legislation in exactly the same way as to people in custody under other powers.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) highlighted the fact that the police want these powers. That is indeed true.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford) *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I am sorry, but I must continue as only four minutes remain.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith asked whether the Act prevented terrorism. Clearly, we cannot prove that five more hotels would have been blown up had this Act not been on the statute book during the last year. We cannot prove that more of our colleagues would have been blown up had this legislation not been in force over the years since 1974. But we can exercise some common sense, as can the vast majority of people in this country.

Mr. Lloyd: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Waddington: The vast majority recognise that the detention of people, in respect of whom there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that they are involved in terrorism, and the exclusion of such people is much more likely to protect the community than harm us.

I was also asked whether the Act annoyed and alienated people in Northern Ireland and the Irish community here. Again, let us keep a sense of proportion. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley was right. How can we equate the inconvenience suffered by someone held up at a port, or the hardship of being detained for two or even seven days, with the sufferings of the families of those who have been murdered or the sufferings of two of our right hon. Friends? What would people think if this order was not carried tonight? What sort of message would go out from this House? They would think that we had all taken leave of our senses.

I suspect that the Labour party, by opposing the order, has already taken leave of its senses. This Act's predecessor was passed not just by a former Home Secretary who has since left the Labour party, but by a Labour Government. Until only two or three years ago, the Labour party was content to vote for the continuation of these powers year after year. The powers have not changed, and neither has the need for them. The only thing that has changed is the Labour party. It is now demonstrably composed of people, and is represented on the Opposition Front Bench by people, who are simply not fitted to exercise the power necessary for the protection of the people of this country.

11.30 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister's ridicule of the Labour Oppositon is wholly justified. The powers contained in this order are necessary and should be renewed. Regrettably, the Minister did not rely on the report of Sir Cyril Philips, which gave much greater support to the continuation of the powers than he allowed. All that needs to be said about this is what Sir Cyril Philips said: that the conviction of:

> "A large number of persons guilty of very serious criminal offences connected with terrorism which in many cases would not and could not have resulted from arrest under other powers"

has taken place as a result of the enactment of this Bill last year. The Government must be supported, and in this year of all years, the alliance offers its support to the Government.

Question put:—

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. Tony Lloyd *(seated and covered.)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the Minister's reply he referred to the judge's rules and, I am sure, unintentionally, claimed in a way which misleads the House that there was no difference between the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 and those of normal criminal law. I understand that under the Prevention of Terrorism Act a period of 48 hours elapses before a suspect is given access to a solicitor, and that the interview between the solicitor and the suspect can, at the insistence of the police, be conducted in their presence. That is different from what applies under the ordinary criminal law. If I am correct, can the Minister take steps to advise the House what the exact position is?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter which I can answer. I am sure that the Minister heard what the hon. Member said. If the hon. Member is correct, I am sure that the Minister will communicate with him.

The House having divided: Ayes 145, Noes 35.

Division No. 123] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Heddle, John
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Kennedy, Charles
Knox, David
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
Major, John
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hume, John
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McNamara, Kevin
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Nellist, David
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 12th February, be approved.

PETITIONS

Torture

11.41 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I wish to present a petition to Parliament that supports Amnesty International's Campaign Against Torture. It contains 1,300 signatures, which were collected by Amnesty International's Epping Forest adoption group. It has handed similar petitions to all Members of Parliament in the locality.

The petition states:

To the Honourable The Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament Assembled The Humble Petition of the People of the United Kingdom showeth:

1) That we wish to register strong support for Amnesty International's Campaign Against Torture and declare our wish to see torture totally eradicated from the world.
2) That we believe that this end would be significantly advanced if all Governments implemented Amnesty International's 12-point programme for the prevention of torture.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House urges Her Majesty's Government

1) To support an effective United Nations Convention Against Torture and in particular compensation for torture victims to include anyone who has been the victim of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
2) To support proposals both at the United Nations and at the Council of Europe to create an international commission to make unannounced visits to any place of detention.
3) To intercede whenever and wherever possible on behalf of prisoners being tortured.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

I share the views expressed in the petition and commend it to Parliament.

To lie upon the Table.

Human Embryos

11.43 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I wish to present a petition to Parliament on behalf of approximately 250 of my constituents in the Division of Teignbridge. The first signature on the petition is that of the organiser, Mr. Richard Wills, of 18 Gloucester Road, Newton Abbot, Devon.

The petitioners aver that the newly-fertilised human embryo is a real living individual human being, and they therefore welcome the statement in the Warnock report that

"the status of the embryo is a matter of fundamental principle which should be enshrined in legislation".

They therefore oppose all such practices that are recommended in the report which discriminate against the embryo or violate its human dignity and right to life. They therefore urge the House to

take immediate steps to enact legislation which forbids any procedure that involves purchase or sale of human embryos, the discarding of human embryos, their use as sources of transplant tissue or as subjects for research or experiment (unless this is done solely for the benefit of the embryo concerned).

Hon. Members present many petitions. Sometimes we agree with them and sometimes we do not. I support wholeheartedly the sentiments that have motivated the petitioners in this case. They conclude:

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Liverpool

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

11.45 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): The purpose of this debate is to cut through the smokescreen of distortions that give the impression that Liverpool city council is responsible for present circumstances in Liverpool. We must consider the background.

I was born in a dock area before the war. My father was a docker, so I feel qualified to speak on some of the matters on which I hope to enlarge. I remember, as a young person, seeing around the pier head, the goree piazza and the Strand, shackled to the wall, bolts where slaves were tied up in the lucrative trade in human misery. The docks epitomise what is wrong in Liverpool — lack of investment of the profits created by Liverpool people. It is all very well for the Secretary of State for the Environment to talk about us whingeing and whining about our lot, but we are hard working people.

During the war and the national dock labour scheme from 1947 to 1964, my father used to stand in the pen with other dockers like a choice animal, waiting to be picked out for work. My father was proud, and characteristic of the spirit of people in Liverpool. We had dignity and got through decades of struggle. I have never known anything other than bad housing, high unemployment and lack of opportunity for Liverpool people. However, we have learnt lessons. One is that the ravages of the system to which we belong bleeds working people. Indeed, it is responsible for their death.

In 1965, the docks employed 13,589 people. That industry today employs 2,086 — a reduction of more than 80 per cent. There have been corresponding job losses in associated industries and services. There has been no let-up in the de-industrialisation of Liverpool. Between 1971 and 1981 the city lost 90,000, or one quarter, of its jobs. Manufacturing jobs have declined by nearly 40 per cent. and blue collar jobs by 30 per cent. Between 1979 and July 1983, 33,220 redundancies were notified by firms in Liverpool. The catalogue of job losses is endless.

Since 1979, the city has lost one third of its manufacturing jobs and half of the jobs in the city's largest industries—food, drink and tobacco. Between 1975 and 1982, the city council shed 4,400 jobs through natural wastage. The council is now the largest employer on Merseyside, providing socially useful jobs for 31,000 people. It employs one third of all public sector workers in the city. I have a list of 23 industries in which jobs have been lost. They include vehicles, metal goods, coal and petroleum, chemicals, electrical goods, leather goods, clothing and timber.

The latest figure of unemployment on Merseyside—100,000 — is an obscenity when it represents decent people who are eager to work. When they are provided with jobs by the council, they show that they can work.

Housing in Liverpool is believed to be among the worst and yet the most expensive in Europe. There are 22,000 people on the council's waiting list for houses. Urgent repairs are needed to 20,000 council houses. Liverpool has the highest percentage of old, privately rented houses in the country, with the exception of London. Its housing investment allocation has declined, in real terms, from £47 million in 1980 to £28 million in 1984-85. But the real decline in its housing investment allocation is highlighted by the fact that the city's allocation in 1980 was half that which it received in 1974. Since 1980 Liverpool has lost £63 million in housing subsidy. In 1980 the Government contributed £20 million to the city's housing services. In 1984 if fell to £5·5 million. The catalogue of crimes against the people of Liverpool goes on and on.

When the Labour party took control in Liverpool in 1983 we found that it was not only the public sector that had been decimated. The 10 years of decline in Liverpool under the Tories and the Liberals resulted in the axing of 1,000 local authority jobs, with vacancies in the council's establishment being left unfilled, the abolition of the direct labour organisation and the privatisation of certain services which resulted in job losses. This happened at a time when more, not fewer, jobs were needed in Liverpool. The rates increases since 1979 were used to compensate for Tory cuts in grants. None of that money was used for improvements in Liverpool. Liverpool city council could provide no cushion.

We have come a long way during the 20 months that the Labour party has been in power in Liverpool. We are proud of our achievements. At a time when unemployment is rising nationally, this is no mean feat. The 1983 general election which brought so many Conservative Members to this House has to be set against the Labour victory in Liverpool. It was the Labour party's first victory in Liverpool for 10 or 15 years. That landslide victory was continued in the local authority elections in 1984. Five out of the six Members of Parliament for Liverpool represent the Labour party. For the first time in 120 years there is not one Tory Member of Parliament for Liverpool. It indicates the trust of the people of Liverpool in the Labour party, both nationally and locally. It is proof that a socialist programme is not a liability at either national or local elections, as our opponents would have us believe.

What is even more important is that it has highlighted the political awareness of the people of Liverpool as a result of the experience of having the city run by Liberals and Tories, of having a Tory Government in power and the defections to the Social Democratic party. The turnround in the fortunes of the Labour party has been an inspiration to the city council and to workers in the Labour movement, both nationally and internationally. An opinion poll commissioned by Liverpool University showed that 73 per cent. of Labour voters, 62 per cent. of Liberal voters and even 48 per cent. of Conservative voters felt that the Government were largely to blame for Liverpool's problems.

During the last 20 months Liverpool city council has created 1,000 jobs. It has also prevented 1,000 job losses which had been inherited. It has also boosted employment in the private sector. By 1988, 17,000 jobs will have been created by the council's house-building programme and by its provision of sports facilities. There are 136 apprentices, and 100 sixteen-year-olds are on YTS schemes. Their wages have been topped up to £52 a week and they are guaranteed a job at the end of their training. We are introducing a minimum wage of £100 for local authority workers and a 35 hour week. During the last year 1,057 new houses have been built, and a further 1,211 are to be built in 1984-85. We have provided additional nursery accommodation and reorganised education in order to ensure that every child in Liverpool is provided with the best education that is available.

What is surprising is that with only 30,000 council houses estimated to be built in England and Wales in 1985, over 2,000 of these will be built in Liverpool—that is, one in 15. It is a testimony to the work that the Liverpool city council is doing and will continue to do, despite the opposition of the Government.

We are in a crisis in Liverpool at the moment; we face a financial crisis that is worse than last year's crisis. To balance the books we would require 6,000 redundancies or 220 per cent. rate rises. That is because of the 10 years of Tory and Liberal rule. The Government target of spending is totally unrealistic. The Government impose penalties for spending on essential services, and there is a totally inadequate rate support grant. The Government have reneged on their agreements of last July, when the Secretary of State, having toured the city's black spots, said:

"I have never seen housing conditions the like of those I have seen today."

Yet our resources for housing have been cut by 34 per cent.

This year the Tories have set us an arbitrary spending target of £220 million, yet we need to spend £270 million just to defend existing jobs and services. There will have to be a 220 per cent. rate rise or 6,000 jobs will go. Last year the Secretary of State said that it would be impossible to run the city with less than £245 million. With inflation, that would give us this year £255 million. But to maintain that we would have to put up the rates and every time the rates go up money goes off the rate support grant, creating an impossible gap for us to fill.

Since 1979 the Government have withdrawn £320 million from the city in rate support grant, housing improvement programme allocation, housing subsidy, and education grant. What we are saying in Liverpool is that we want that money back; it is as simple as that.

We have shown that our policies are working. Continually the Government chide the Labour Opposition with the question, "What did you do when you were in power?" In Liverpool we are creating jobs, we are building houses, we are building schools, and we are giving a high quality of education to people. In all those respects the Government are doing the opposite. We ask the Government to give us credit for having achieved success in creating jobs and for our services in housing and education. The cost of sacking 6,000 men would be felt by the Government in unemployment pay and lost taxes.

In the Liverpool city centre, 170 of the 680 stores have already shut, more "Closed" signs are going up and, with the rate increases forecast by the Government, more jobs will go in the Liverpool area. In addition to that, we are being threatened by the Government.

The Secretary of State visited Liverpool in 1984. He gave pledges. In a letter to the leader of the Liverpool city council he said:

"I can give you an assurance that I will do my very best to ensure your allocations in Liverpool next year under the housing investment programme and the urban programme. Taken together, they will enable the council to make positive progress in dealing with the city's severe needs."

He said that in Liverpool. He came down to London, reneged on his commitment and denied that he had ever made those statements, and he accuses us in Liverpool of violence. In Liverpool there is a concerted campaign, which includes violence to undermine the council. We say to the Liberals that they must share the responsibility, because they have not been prepared to denounce the violence or to dissociate themselves from those who are perpetrating it.

Having spoken about what he was going to do in Liverpool, the Secretary of State's latest pronouncement, reported in *The Times* of 19 February, is an indication that he has firm backing from the Cabinet to take direct action if the Liverpool administration is breaking down. We are well used to threats from the Minister, but this is the second time that the Cabinet have discussed the situation in Liverpool. The first time was in 1981, after the Toxteth riots, when the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), said that it took a riot to make the Cabinet take the problems of Liverpool seriously. Given the background and history that we have gone through in Liverpool, is that the only language that the Government understand when talking about the problems of places such as Liverpool?

Perhaps the Secretary of State is envisaging a Molesworth type raid in Liverpool. Perhaps he envisages dressing up in his predecessor's combat jacket. If he comes in the still of the night we shall be ready for him, whenever he comes. Why is he making attacks on us? Why has he launched the so-called investigation into town hall corruption and listed Liverpool as one of the places to be investigated?

Why was that announcement made? Why is he using the Local Government, Planning and Land Act, with threats of commissioners against us? We believe that this is a pre-emptive strike against the Liverpool city council and the Liverpool people. We also saw at the time he made that statement an announcement of concessions to four other local authorities which had been threatened with rate support grant cuts.

We have the support of the people of Liverpool, the trade unions and the people on the estates. We have seen the hypocrisy of this Government in this respect. But Liverpool exemplifies, perhaps in advance of other parts of the country, the processes which are taking place in this country today. The elected representatives of Liverpool will not let the people down. They have been let down too often in the past and they deserve better. We are not going to dirty our hands doing the Tories' butchery of jobs and services in an already ravaged Liverpool. As far as the Government's threats are concerned, it will not be dented shields they will have to deal with, because our shields were forged in preparation for the heat of struggle last year and those preparations are going ahead. The Government thought that we would go into battle then. To quote Mrs. Thatcher's soul mate, "You ain't seen nothing yet". Liverpool's people will not be crushed by this or any other Government.

12.1 am

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) on initiating this debate at this late hour. I have deliberately stayed behind to support him. I do not want to repeat the points he has already made because these have been put on record many times in the last couple of years. In fact, during the past six days three hon. Members from Liverpool have raised these matters. Last Friday my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) had the Adjournment debate on the future of the port of Liverpool. Then I raised the question of the Isle of Man-Liverpool crossing, and Monday of this

[Mr. Robert Parry]

week I made a Standing Order No. 10 application on the proposed loss of 300 jobs at Guinness, Liverpool. Tonight my hon. Friend has raised the general question of Liverpool.

We are fighting as Labour Members of Parliament for our constituents, our city and our area, and we shall continue to do so. The level of unemployment in Liverpool is merciless and indefensible. My hon. Friend said that more than 90,000 jobs had gone in the last few years. In fact, this Government have hit the jackpot because, with the loss of jobs in Cammell Laird and the Guinness company we have seen over 100,000 jobs go since this Government took office.

I am the Member for Riverside, which has the highest level of male unemployment in the United Kingdom—nearly 40 per cent. across the board. I warned in the late 1970s and the early 1980s about the problems arising in Toxteth and the grave danger of riots and disturbances on our streets. Unfortunately the warning was ignored and I say now that there will be trouble on our streets again unless the Government take action to reduce the massive level of unemployment. I believe that, as my hon. Friend said, this Government have seen nothing compared with what they will see if they allow mass unemployment to continue in city areas. Therefore, I hope that the Minister can give us some hope that we shall see a decrease in this terrible loss of jobs.

12.4 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): There was a rather telling slip in one of the things that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) said — that opponents regard a full-blooded Socialist programme as an election loser. His opponents on the Government Benches do not regard such a programme as an election loser; they regard it as wrong. The opponents of the hon. Member for Broadgreen are perhaps on the Front Bench on his own side of the House. It was an interesting slip because it showed how little the purpose of the hon. Member's speech was to debate with the Government.

The Government do not deny or dispute the long-term decline and the problems of Liverpool, or those of any other of the older industrial cities of this country. Those cities are no different from the older industrial cities in many other parts of Europe. I was in Bremen recently. We do not often associate declining industrial cities with Germany, but there is 20 per cent. unemployment in Bremen. There is a whole list of cities in Europe whose industries were based in the industrial past and which face the same sort of problems as Liverpool faces.

The debate between the hon. Gentleman and the Government, as opposed to that between himself and the Opposition Front Bench, is about the best response to the problems that are faced by Liverpool. Is the best approach to try to brand the city, through the city council, as one that is famous for municipal irresponsibility, for conflict and for delighting in the prospect of conflict, as we have heard from the hon. Gentleman? Is that the best way to help Liverpool in future? The answer—it comes with a resounding no from the Government—is that that is the worst way of trying to help Liverpool.

The Government have spent massive resources on Merseyside and Liverpool since they came to power. Over £1 billion a year has been spent by the Government on Merseyside since 1981-82, if all Government programmes are taken into account. If all Government programmes are considered, well over £400 million has been spent in Liverpool this year.

Let us consider housing. The very problems which are so real in Liverpool—the hon. Member has described them and no one will dispute his description — stem from the policies and mistakes, which are now being repeated. The construction of huge municipal housing estates in inhuman styles with no basis for real communities created the problems that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues draw to our attention. They go back over many years.

Mr. Parry: To pre-war years.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) says, many of the problems may stem from pre-war years. Many of them have come from the great post-war municipal housing boom. The hon. Member for Broadgreen proposes to compound the mistakes of past years by pouring more municipal money into the city in exactly the same way. Why is it that the new Labour city council, since its election, has rejected all the imaginative schemes involving private capital, co-operatives and the ingredients that we have seen so successfully applied in Stockbridge village, Minster court and elsewhere? Those are forward-looking and imaginative schemes, which hold out some hope of finding a way forward. They do not involve a programme that merely redoubles the municipal housing of the past. The policies that the hon. Gentleman is trying to repeat were those that caused many of the problems with which he is allegedly trying to deal.

The Government said last year that within the constraints that would be placed upon them—I refer to the next sentence of the letter of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, which the hon. Member for Broadgreen did not quote the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to provide a reasonable urban aid programme and a reasonable allocation for Liverpool would have to come within the general contraints on public expenditure. Within those constraints my right hon. Friend has provided an allocation for 1985-86 for the inner city partnership on Merseyside as a whole of about £24·1 million. Bids for 1985-86 are still being considered but it is likely that Liverpool city council's share will be about the same as last year, about £20 million. Giving the constraints that lie on the Government, that is not a bad record. There are many other cities that are aware of the resources that are being poured into Liverpool and they wonder whether it is worth while. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to spend not his money or Liverpool's money. It behoves him to remember that the money that he wants to spend comes from taxpayers and ratepayers elsewhere in the country.

There has been a wide range of other Government expenditures. I have mentioned some from my own Department but it is worth remembering that there is a huge range of others. The Department of Health and Social Security will spend about £127 million this year on hospital and community health services. The Department of Trade and Industry will spend about £24 million on grants and expenditure on industrial investment. The Manpower Services Commission will spend £42 million.

It is not a lack of Government resources that lies at the heart of Liverpool's problems. The difficulties go back to far deeper structural problems. A problem that has been added unnecessarily to the structural problems is the attitude of the city council. Its policies are almost designed to drive away private investment and to produce conflict and despair.

The hon. Member for Broadgreen referred wrongly to the Secretary of State making threats against Liverpool; he verged upon extraordinary language. What the Secretary of State did recently was merely to remind Liverpool city council, as it needs to be reminded from time to time, of the law on capital allocations. The city council originally spoke of extravagant proposes incapable of being financed. I have information from meetings today that it has drawn back from a programme that could not have been financed and is saying that its programme for this year will be met within the legal allocation. If that is so, it is much to be welcomed, and I hope that it will be matched by a drawing back from any illegality in regard to the setting of the budget. Nothing could be more designed to damage the provision of jobs and investment in Liverpool than the city council taking the city through a whole charade of conflict over the budget such as we had last year.

I think the House had assumed that it heard all it needed to hear on the problems of Liverpool's budget last summer. It might have been assumed that the city council would have learned a lesson from last year's experience. I hope that I am proven to be wrong but it seems that those assumptions could be wrong. We are dealing with a council that does not respect the normal traditions of responsible local government. The council persists in claiming, as the hon. Member for Broadgreen claimed, that Liverpool has lost rate support grant on the assumption that the grant should be fixed for all time at the level of 1979-80. That is plainly nonsense. The suggestion that the city council has been harshly treated is scarcely borne out by the 1985-86 rate support grant settlement. The council's target, at £222 million, is a 2·3 per cent. increase on its 1984-85 adjusted budget. Some authorities have been asked for a 1·5 per cent. cut. The council's grant-related expenditure has risen by £19 million, or 9·6 per cent., to £217 million. This is the third highest GRE for any metropolitan district. The block grant that the council would receive for spending at target has increased by £3 million, or 2·5 per cent., to £118 million. So, if the council operates responsible financial policies, it can draw very substantial support from the taxpayer.

Nevertheless, the council is again threatening not to make a proper rate. I cannot stress too strongly that the consequences for Liverpool will be far worse if the council does that rather than accepts its proper statutory responsibilities. If no rate is made, who will provide the services on which so many depend? Who will pay the council staff? Even if, as last year, the council eventually sees the folly of its threat, the people of Liverpool will have suffered further months of needless anxiety and the reputation of the city will have suffered a further knock.

Let me make the Government's position clear. We do not deny the gravity of Liverpool's problems, but these must be tackled by responsible and legal action rooted in the real world——

Mr. Parry *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not giving way. As the hon. Gentleman will see, I have very little time left.

As I was saying, the problems must be tackled by action rooted in the real world and not in some fantasy world of political rhetoric, where money is alleged to grow on trees and where the law is to be set aside if it suits the council to do so.

The hon. Member for Broadgreen referred to violence. If one wanted to use this great debating Chamber as a way of reaching people and saying a few things to damage Liverpool, one should make the predictions of violence that the hon. Gentleman made tonight. We know, and he knows, that the enormous majority of people in Liverpool would repudiate such attitudes. It is the raising of such scares and the scarcely concealed glee with which the hon. Gentleman spoke of conflict that do such damage to Liverpool.

I have every confidence that the people of Liverpool will have more sense. If they do, they will have done much more for their future than will the overheated and rather trivialising rhetoric we have heard from the hon. Member for Broadgreen.

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Thursday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fifteen minutes past midnight.

House of Commons

Friday 22 February 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

University College Hospital, London (Tinnitus Clinic)

9.35 am

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I have the honour to beg leave to present a petition concerning the tinnitus clinic at University College hospital. It is signed by Mr. Jack Shapiro and 71,025 others They express their deep anxiety about the possible closure of the clinic and the desperate need to keep it open.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the British Tinnitus Association acting under the auspices of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

Sheweth that the tinnitus clinic at University Clinic hospital, London WC1 is under threat of closure as a result of the withdrawal of funding by Bloomsbury district health authority.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that the tinnitus clinic will remain open and so continue its diagnostic treatment and research facilities which are of benefit to tinnitus sufferers throughout the United Kingdom.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.37 am

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It may be for the assistance of the House if I start by explaining what I propose to cover in my speech. First, I propose to set the Bill in the context of the computer software market in western Europe and in Britain as it is now and as all projections suggest that it will grow during the next five or six years. Secondly, I propose to analyse the development of Government and public policy over the past decade or so and to show why it is necessary to deal with this problem on its own without waiting for more general legislation, which I believe the Government contemplate at some stage. Thirdly, I propose to analyse some of the difficulties which exist under the law as it is believed currently to stand, there being considerable uncertainty among lawyers about exactly how the law stands. Thereafter, I wish to move on to the consequences for the industry of the present state of the law and the difficulties of enforcement. I shall then deal with the measures that the industry is taking to deal with some of its problems.

Whatever the industry does, it will still be faced with its first and most fundamental difficulty, which is the absence of a sure copyright law in this area. I propose to analyse how this problem is being tackled by our principal trading partners and the major countries that are involved in computer programming. I then propose to analyse the Bill, concentrating on how it is proposed to enforce it. I shall deal finally with the prospects for the industry if this measure is passed.

I begin by dealing with the size and scope of and prospects for the industry, because this sets the context in which the measure must be seen. In 1983 more than $61 billion—nearly £61 billion on the current exchange rate —was spent on data processing in western Europe. About 57 per cent. was spent on external products and services and the remainder was spent on data processing staff and overheads. The software and services segment of this market was worth more than $12 billion in 1983 and —this is the crucial point—it is expected to grow on average by no less than 22 per cent. per annum between now and 1989. By any standards, this must be one of the most dynamic sectors of our economy.

In 1983, processing vendor services had 39 per cent. of the market, but this proportion is expected to decline by 1989 to less than 25 per cent. The composition of the market is changing. There is likely to be a rapid growth in the software sector. The software sector had a 28 per cent. share of the market in 1981 and a 38 per cent. share in 1984. On current projections, its share is expected to grow to no less than 57 per cent. by 1989.

In 1981 the total value of sales of software in western Europe was $1·3 billion. By 1989 it is expected to grow to approximately $7 billion. That effectively means that sales will multiply 2·5 times between now and 1989. This

[Mr. William Powell]

market is growing at a staggering rate. In 1983 independent suppliers of package software and custom software had 27 per cent. of the market, but this share will grow by 24 per cent.—higher than the average expected rate of growth—between now and 1989. For the small houses this projected growth in the market is little short of dramatic.

We are dealing with a dynamic market. On a national basis, taking the western European market as a whole, France offers the best opportunities, with projected growth of 23 per cent. Projected growth in Germany is 18 per cent., in the United Kingdom 16 per cent. and in Italy 11 per cent. This point is important, because in the past Great Britain has always been assumed to be the world leader in software packaging. We are in a state of substantial decline compared with our major competitors. One of the main purposes of the Bill is to ensure that we return to our position as world leader.

The basic legislation governing copyright is the Copyright Act 1956. Clearly the world has changed a great deal during the past 30 years. Many products that are commonplace today were unimaginable 30 years ago. From time to time, Parliament has had to extend the conditions of the Copyright Act to cover new products. For example, two years ago the legislation was extended to cover video material. My Bill seeks to extend the cover to computer software, which was barely understood 30 years ago as having any prospects.

It was plain that the 1956 Act would have to be revised. In March 1977 the Whitford committee, led by Mr. Justice Whitford, produced a report, Cmnd. 6732, paragraph 486 of which stated:

"The demand for clear and effective protection has increased as the programming industry has grown."

The report went on to analyse how it has been long recognised that copyright is the most appropriate intellectual property right for the protection of computer programmes. Mr. Justice Whitford concluded in paragraph 489:

"Having considered the issues involved we are strongly of the opinion that there is a need for clear and effective protection. Accordingly we recommend that all computer programmes and software which have involved a sufficient degree of skill and/or labour to be considered as works in the normal copyright sense and which have been reduced to writing or other material form should be clearly and effectively protected against copying."

As a result of the report's publication, the Government started consultation on general reform of the law on copyright. I must point out that Mr. Justice Whitford's committee considered more than just the protection of computer software; it considered the updating and modernising of the law generally.

In 1981 the Government issued a Green Paper entitled "Reform of the Law relating to Copyright, Designs and Performers' Protection", Cmnd. 8302. Paragraph 2 of chapter 8 concluded:

"It may be questioned whether copyright is the right vehicle for the protection of programs. However, as Whitford remarked, it is probable that programs are already protected under the 1956 Act and the Government accepts that there is much to be said for dealing with programs under copyright law, since the essential need is for protection against copying. To remove any uncertainty that may exist it is proposed to make explicit in new legislation that computer programs attract protection under the same conditions as literary works. In these circumstances considerations such as term and ownership and, indeed, the basic question of whether a program possesses sufficient originality to attract copyright protection will apply to programs in the same way as to other copyright works."

The process of consultation continues.

The Information Technology Advisory Panel, which reported in 1983, said:

"Copyright legislation is a fundamental building block in the infrastructure of the information business. . . . We would stress the crucial importance of copyright legislation to future economic activity. it is essential that the (Copyright) Bill now being proposed should take account of the web of developments that have been described in the Report"—

that is the Green Paper—

"in order to provide a secure legal foundation for the information business to the year 2000 and beyond and we urge all interested parties to give the subject close and continuing attention."

The Government have not been able to publish a Bill on that matter. May I explain why? It is in the fundamental interest of the industry that common standards be obtained among our trading partners. In considering the modernisation of any copyright law, it is necessary to take into account not only the developments in the United Kingdom since 1965 but to secure a common approach to the problem with our major trading partners. As I understand it, the Government have not been consulting solely with interested parties in the computer software industry and other aspects of copyright law reform, but are having to consult with our European partners to obtain, as far as is possible, a common approach to the whole problem.

The House will be aware that many of the major firms involved in this industry are trading not just in the United Kingdom but throughout the Common Market and the rest of the world. Nothing could be more harmful to the development of the industry than to have different laws applied in different countries. Although reform is necessary, it is essential that that reform be not rushed if, as a consequence of taking the matter slowly, properly and sensibly, we can obtain much wider reform than would be possible if we were dealing within our own national context.

I shall deal with some of the problems caused by piracy in the software industry. It is appropriate to start this part of my speech by saying that it is impossible to state with precision and complete accuracy the extent to which piracy exists in our coutry. That it is substantial is undoubted. I shall give some evidence—there is a mass of evidence for anyone who wishes to study it — that I think accurately reflects the best judgment of the dangers and weaknesses in the present law.

The evidence begins with a survey conducted by Dr. Elsom of the University of Aston which was published in the spring of 1982. That study revealed that approximately one in four microcomputer software houses were suffering from what they regarded as a serious loss from unauthorised copying of their software by users and/or piracy by software dealers.

In 1984, a study by Newcastle polytechnic revealed that the proportion of companies conscious that their programmes had been pirated had risen to a staggering 56 per cent. It would be a bold man who would say that one year after the publication of the Newcastle polytechnic survey that proportion had declined. It is an almost inevitable inference from the evidence that is accumulating week by week that it is growing, not declining.

At my request, following publication and First Reading of this Bill, Dr. Elsom returned to the same sources to find out what had happened to the companies that he surveyed

in 1982. Whereas in 1982 25 per cent. of the microcomputer business software developers were unaware that unauthorised copying of their products was taking place, he found that 37 per cent. of the 27 companies that he had identified in his survey — 10 altogether — had gone into liquidation or were untraceable. A further company which was unable to survive on its own had been taken over. Of the remaining 16, three had become purely retailers of software and had ceased development, three companies were in the process of taking or had taken legal action against those who had been pirating their products, and another three had to confess that they were unable, although they wished to do so, to take legal action because they could not afford expensive actions in the civil courts to try to establish their title. That is a depressing follow-up from the 1982 survey.

In the past three months a whole range of companies, from the largest to the smallest, have approached me with evidence of what has been happening to their companies. As it is fundamental to my case that software piracy is occurring in all sections of the software industry, from the highest to the lowest, from commercial and business software of the £1 million-plus scale to the smallest computer game available in any house, I shall give three examples—I believe them to be representative samples of the type of evidence that has come before me —so that the House may have some idea of how the problem is affecting individual companies. I do not propose to name the companies involved. I assure the House that they have all approached me in confidence and I am prepared, in confidence, to pass on the information which has come to me.

The first of the three examples is a company with a turnover in the United Kingdom of approximately £10 million per year. Its managing director estimates that for every authorised copy of his software on the market there are two unauthorised copies. His company is owed £1 million by one software pirate who has been identified. The managing director estimates that the total loss of revenue from lost royalties and sales during the past nine years of that pirate's activities is more than £2 million. At the turn of the decade, 1979-80, that company was hoping to expand substantially into providing educational software. When I use that term, I stress that I am not talking about educational software which will teach children in schools and youngsters in colleges the technique of using a computer, but rather software that can become a substitute for and often a great improvement on the textbooks which are otherwise available for the teaching of academic subjects in schools.

That company wished to move into that area, but the managing director has found that it is impossible because of the ease with which the material can be copied. He has withdrawn, and is now concentrating all his activities on operating systems software which can be protected by post-sales maintenance. When it becomes necessary to maintain the hardware involved, he can discover what software is being used and has some idea whether it has been pirated. That is a self-protection technique which more and more companies are having to use. It is thoroughly dangerous for the development of the industry because more and more of the major houses are having to turn in on themselves and to rely not just on their own hardware but on their own software. It is the familiar argument that the House is used to hearing of free trade against protection.

My contention is that the best opportunities and the best prospects of growth for this industry will exist if there is a free interchange of trade between hard and software and not the development of software which will be exclusive to the manufacturer's hardware where it becomes impossible to use that software on another company's hardware. That would be a very dangerous development for our industry and would ensure that we missed out entirely on the international opportunities which are currently open to us if we are able to put our own house in order.

The company was employing fewer than 10 people at the start of the decade. The managing director had hoped by now, with the opportunities and plans that he had at the start of the decade, to be employing 100 or more people, but because of piracy he has had to curtail virtually all the growth that he intended and to restrict himself to a limited range of services in order to protect himself as closely as possible. If ever there was a case of lost opportunity, that is an example of it.

I have been told by a second firm — a major international software company producing business programmes — that for every authorised copy of its software available in the market there are between three and eight unauthorised copies. It is an international company trading across the world. That has resulted in lost sales and royalties of more than £600 million during the past two or three years. The company believes that piracy has affected its export markets, and it is now only distributing software containing measures designed to prevent users and dealers from copying it. Thus, in the clearest possible way, piracy has had an effect on the manner in which the company develops and distributes its software. It is an appalling tale. It is a problem that extends across the world, and I shall deal with it in a moment.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned two quite large firms, particularly the second one. Does he agree that, whereas large firms may well have the resources to police the market place, and even to change direction or to feed in certain security devices, the problem is much greater for smaller firms which have no such resources, so that in their case software theft can kill them off?

Mr. Powell: The hon. Member is correct. One of the conclusions that I ask the House to draw from my analysis is that the large firms are always able to raise the cost to the pirate of breaking the protection for the software system. Therefore, with the large firms there is an escalation of cost, between the manufacturer and the pirate, in the breaking and copying of the system. The small firms do not have the necessary resources. There has been a sharp decline in the number of houses writing their own software and commissioning software from independent agents. The evidence suggests that in 1983 there were about 500 houses dealing in that section of the market. By the end of 1984 the number had declined to about 350 as firms had gone out of business altogether and as other firms had ceased to commission outside software from independent agents. That has resulted in a decline in the number of people writing software programmes during the past 15 to 18 months. The brunt of that decline has been at the lowest end of the market. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing the matter so clearly to the attention of the House.

[Mr. Powell]

What we are doing is no more and no less than what has taken place and is and will be taking place in other countries. Therefore, although we may not take action at the same moment as other countries, we shall soon find ourselves with broadly parallel laws, which will be to Britain's immense advantage.

I have said that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire introduced a Bill under the ten minutes rule. As one would expect from its origins, that Bill was most professionally drafted. Hon. Members frequently claim that the legislation that comes before the House is indigestible and incomprehensible because it alludes to earlier statutes into which we have to substitute words which we cannot find and which, if we can, we then find are virtually incomprehensible.

I know that my hon. and learned Friend will not regard what I am about to say as disrespectful. Since his introduction of a Bill under the ten minutes rule the matter has been reconsidered. Assistance has been given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology and the Under-Secretary of State and the Bill has been drafted with the assistance of parliamentary counsel. Those gentlemen are frequently the object of substantial criticism for producing incomprehensible legislation. For once, if only for once, they have produced a triumph of clarity and brevity. Nothing could be easier than the Bill. Clause 1(1) provides:

"The Copyright Act 1956 shall apply in relation to a computer program (including one made before the commencement of this Act) as it applies in relation to a literary work and shall so apply whether or not copyright would subsist in that program apart from this Act."

I hope that for once the House will join me in praise of the parliamentary counsel who have managed to produce it.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to that point. Might it have something to do with the fact that the Statute Law Society gave a prize for the redrafting of a Bill which was won by someone who redrafted the Copyright Act 1956? If that is so, does he not welcome the beneficial results?

Mr. Powell: My hon. and learned Friend is right. If ever there were a pilot scheme which should lead to a much wider scale of opportunities and prizes, surely that was it.

Clauses 2 and 3 bring into effect the provisions of the Copyright Act 1956 for computer software programmes. It will be possible to apply to magistrates for a search warrant—a crucial power of law enforcement. In that I am following the scheme which was adopted two years ago by my noble Friend Lord Eden of Winton in his private Member's Bill which extended the law of copyright to cover video programmes.

The scheme of things under the Bill is identical to that in the legislation passed two years ago. That Act has been one of the most successful ever passed in modern times. The industry faced colossal problems and action was taken perhaps later than it should have been so that the problems were aggravated, but it is estimated that the legislation has eliminated two thirds of illicit and unlawful piracy. Given the ease of copying, much will inevitably never be stopped. The Bill is not designed to prevent copying for personal use at home, although I hope that people will be alerted to the moral implications of copying other people's property, but it is designed to make life as difficult as possible for those who pirate and copy works and then sell them at a fraction of the true cost.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): As my hon. Friend has said, technical development in the computer software industry is moving very rapidly. I understand that the Bill will cover the pirating of existing software, but will it cover developments in methods of which we are now unaware but which may occur in the technological progress of the next few years?

Mr. Powell: I am grateful for that intervention. All the advice that I have received is that the Bill will be sufficient for that purpose, but I believe that the Government will be introducing further copyright legislation in due course so that if the Bill proves inadequate in any way we shall have the opportunity to review it. At present I merely seek sufficient power to deal with the overwhelming bulk of commercial piracy in this country, and all the evidence that I have received suggests that the Bill will do that.

The video amendment to the Copyright Act has been successful because a special body of people has been established to police it. The video industry came together in the Federation Against Copyright Theft and established a small unit of highly qualified people to investigate piracy and present evidence to the police. The matter is then subject to ordinary police inquiries as in any other criminal case. That system has worked extremely well and I pay tribute to the director general of FACT, Mr. Bob Birch, a former solicitor with the Metropolitan police, and to Mr. Peter Duffy, a former commander in the Metropolitan police. They have established a first-rate unit working closely with police forces throughout the country, collecting and collating evidence of criminal activities and bringing it to the attention of the police. The police then apply for search warrants and make arrests if the evidence justifies it. The police conduct a perfectly normal criminal investigation and bring charges if there is evidence of crime. None of that is done by the special unit, which merely collates the evidence and puts it to the police. The Federation Against Software Theft would wish to act in exactly the same way, to employ people highly qualified in this kind of work and to operate in the closest possible collaboration with constabularies throughout the country to ensure that criminals are brought to justice. Evidence from police officers shows how well the system is working with FACT.

Clause 3 provides for the penalties. At the moment there are no criminal penalties, but if the Bill is passed the penalties will be the same as for any other breach of the Copyright Act—a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment on trial by indictment, and unlimited fines. That will be a substantial deterrent. The pirates will find their activities ever more closely monitored by experts, there will be a substantial risk of prosecution and the penalty will not be a £40 fine under the Trade Descriptions Act or prolonged civil proceedings at escalating cost which at present prevents so many firms from taking action.

The single most important thing that we can do to help the industry to develop and to prosper is to extend the Copyright Act. That is why I have taken so long to outline the reasons for the Bill and to lay before the House an analysis of the evidence. I am confident that if the Bill becomes law all the possibilities for the industry will be

put into forward gear, bringing growth, new jobs, new export potential and new wealth for this country. Without it, there will be increasing piracy, further bankruptcies, reduced commission and wasted prospects. I am sure that the House would not countenance such a prospect.

10.37 am

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): First, I apologise for the fact that I shall have to leave at about 12.30 and thus may not be present when the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) sums up. I congratulate him on a comprehensive speech packed with interesting information and powerful examples to show the necessity for the Bill, which I strongly welcome. I also congratulate him on coming fairly high in the ballot for private Members' Bills, which we all enter half hoping to come high and half hoping not to come high because we realise how much time it takes to handle a Bill of this kind. I entered the ballot hoping to come high specifically to introduce this type of legislation. It was thus a particular pleasure to hear the hon. Member for Corby introduce his Bill so cogently and powerfully. As the hon. Gentleman generously said, the foundations for the Bill were laid by the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), to whom I also pay tribute — indeed, it was his ten-minute Bill that encouraged me to pursue the matter myself.

If Britain is to maintain her prosperity we shall have to establish a new base for that prosperity and a new kind of industry. I believe that the whole House is aware of that. I have long believed that we shall have to move away from the old high-resource use, relatively low value-added industries and away from Britain's old traditional base towards a new sort of base, or towards what might be called a low-resource use, high value-added industry.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): That is highly original.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) wish to intervene, because I would gladly give way to him? I gather that he does not want to intervene. He just did so, as usual, from a sedentary position.

That is the economic base that we shall have to encourage. We shall have to make use of our human and intellectual property much more effectively in future if we are to develop that base and that sort of wealth for the future. The software industry is pre-eminently that sort of industry. It converts intellectual capacity, brainpower and ingenuity into wealth. It is a classic example of a low-resource use, high value-added industry that turns brainpower into money. It is also a classic example of an industry that has, and will continue to have, a thriving small firms sector that feeds into the larger software houses.

Perhaps this industry is the 20th or 21st century successor to the old cottage industry. It is conducive to being centred away from the big cities, and people can work from their own homes. It is something much to be encouraged. As the hon. Member for Corby has said, we are very good at it in Britain, or at least we were. We were once world leaders. Indeed, I still believe that in terms of ingenuity of software packaging and production we are as good, if not better than anyone else in the world. But as the hon. Member for Corby pointed out, our industry, while not perhaps in total decline, is certainly not progressing as it used to do.

One reason for that is that much of Britain's brainpower has a habit of translating itself abroad. Recently, I went round Silicon Valley in America and discovered that the highest proportion of non-Americans there is accounted for by British expatriates. There are even more British expatriates there than Hispanics and most of them are involved in the software business.

However, we are good at producing software, as we have proved in the past. We already have an industrial sector in Britain that is to be encouraged by any means that we can find. I know that the Minister, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), who is not at present in his seat, is very keen to do that. I have some doubts of a broader nature about the Government's policy for developing that sector properly. Indeed, I have some doubts about whether they are encouraging it and developing it in the way that they might do. But that is a matter for a different debate.

There are two barriers to the proper development of this most important sector of our industry. One barrier is looming and yet to come, but the other already exercises a profound and doleful influence over the industry. I hope that we shall debate the barrier yet to come in a month or so. I refer to the application of the licensing requirements for the export of software abroad under the new COCOM regulations. How they will apply, how they will affect the market, and how we are to honour the commitments apparently laid on us are matters of deep concern for the industry. But with any luck they are again a subject for a future debate. I hope that the Government will grant that debate, because the implications of that agreement are profound for that sector of the market.

The barrier that is here, and here with a vengeance—and which the Bill tackles with great effect—involves software theft. I have said that it is a barrier to the development of the industry, because it establishes a black market that unbalances the whole industry. The rewards for the production of intellectual property accrue not to those responsible for it, or to the inventor or designer, but to the pirates. It is they who get the profits. The black market is also highly developed. The hon. Member for Corby said that we had perhaps let the piracy of video tapes go on for too long, as that also involves a highly developed black market. Although I very much welcome this Bill, one could always say that one might have hoped for its introduction even sooner.

According to most reliable calculations, we are losing about £150 million a year to the software pirates. There is a fully established black market distribution system. As FAST has reminded us and as I think the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire mentioned, a person can go to Blackbushe market and find such items sold perfectly openly and in some volume. Backing up that distribution system is a sophisticated production mechanism. Again, I think that the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire mentioned that in at least one case—and no doubt in others—people have been known to have factories specifically for piracy purposes, and the reproduction of software.

Furthermore, piracy is not confined to one sector. It spans the whole industry, from the high-price, relatively low-volume software right down to the computer games area. The pirates are even sophisticated enough to make some minor changes to the product that use somebody else's intellectual property, and to add certain things to it that give it a new characteristic and perhaps appeal. In all

[Mr. Ashdown]

those senses, we are talking about tackling a highly developed black market. It is large, and growing every day. In a sense, it is perhaps a cancer that sits in the industry, preventing the proper development of the industry and robbing people of their rightful rewards.

That must be stopped to the benefit of British industry and to the benefit of the development of this country's intellectual property. But as the hon. Member for Corby has said, there are problems about stopping it. The problem about software theft is that it is easy. It does not seem like theft. To copy a programme, the person merely has to sit down at his computer, call up his copy programme, touch the button and there it is. That does not seem like theft. There is no break-in or anything clandestine. It can be done at home. I recognise, of course, that the Bill is directed not towards the casual copier at home but towards the commercial pirate, but that is how simple it is.

The problem is that, because we have ceased to treat the matter seriously, many people who would not dream of stealing a piece of hardware would nevertheless think that the copying of software is somehow not theft. But theft it assuredly is. It is the theft of somebody else's intellectual property. The Bill provides a framework enabling that point to be made.

I think that the hon. Member for Corby probably made the case more powerfully than I can, but it should not be believed that legislation will solve the problem. In itself, it will not. The hon. Gentleman used the word "policing". As he is a lawyer, I was surprised to hear him say that. He went on to say that it was the police who did the policing. But a back-up organisation is needed, as with video piracy. A back-up organisation is needed to police or scrutinise the Bill effectively so that it can be operated in the way that the hon. Gentleman intends. It must be remembered that that is what, under a similar piece of legislation, has reduced video piracy by two thirds since 1983.

I pay tribute to FAST for what it has done to bring this matter so effectively, and in a very responsible way, before the House. I also pay tribute to it for providing us with a back-up system with which to scrutinise the Bill's operation.

This is an important Bill. As the hon. Member for Corby said, it is a Bill to protect property, investment and jobs. It will help to provide a framework for creating new jobs, new wealth and prosperity. It is an important component in a new strategy for the industrial regeneration of Britain. It is a vital component since it addresses itself to a vital sector of industry. I am happy to welcome the Bill. I hope that it will progress as fast as possible and become legislation as quickly as possible.

10.50 am

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), the Minister and the House because I shall probably have to return to my constituency before the end of the debate, although I shall listen to as much of it as I can. I welcome the Bill and I intend to do everything that I can to help my hon. Friend with the Bill's further stages.

Once again we are trying to legislate in the face of a technology which leaps ahead of us all the time. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby and the hon. Member for Yeovil were right to argue that the Bill should be considered not in isolation, but within the broader context of copyright. I declare an interest as an author and playwright and one who hopes to see some of his work translated to software.

One cannot but be worried by the many copyright problems which remain. The literary copyright involved in books is pirated throughout the world. Pirated copies of paperbacks are to be found everywhere. The video piracy problem was one of enormous proportions. When we legislated it was estimated that about 70 per cent. of videos sold in Britain were pirated. We legislated just in the nick of time.

We should be able to look to a back-up organisation. I support the work done by the Federation against Software Theft and Mr. Maclean. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to explain the Government's view of the wider copyright question, how we should seek to keep in touch with technology and the difficulty of producing legislation which encompasses the leaps ahead in technology. I am thinking in particular of the role of the World Intellectual Property Organisation. That has been set up to try to deal with some of the problems. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say something about the prospects for an international convention. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby described some vivid examples of international competition.

I shall highlight some of the existing problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby spoke about legislation running parallel in other countries. I welcome that, but some anxieties remain. For example, Australia is regarded as the piracy capital for software mainly because a recent case resulted in the decision that computer software does not fall within Australian copyright law. Australia seems to have greater freedom in that respect.

Mr. William Powell: That case caused appalling problems but the Federal Parliament intervened and legislation was passed. The original decision was reversed and the law has now been straightened out in Australia.

Mr. Marshall: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. I was sure that he would be able to help. However, it is a simple matter to take software out of the country. For example, it can be put in an envelope and posted to Australia. If the software is then adapted, the law is uncertain. Software which is adapted, even marginally, can be sent back here and may not be covered by copyright law. The role of Governments in such matters is important and I hope that the Minister will say something about it.

I have declared my interest as an author. I am the co-author of a pamphlet which argues that, with the wholesale adoption of new technology, 3 million new jobs could be created by the end of the century. This assumes that the balance of traditional industry, net losses and net gains is neutral. In that argument and detailed estimates I was assisted by Philip Virgo who has done some important work at the National Computer Centre. We estimate that the creation of the new jobs turns precisely on the reform of copyright as it affects software. I shall explain why.

The way in which jobs can be created in the entertainment world through legislation to prevent video piracy has already been shown. My hon. Friend's proposal will also have its beneficial impact on computer games.

I have a particular interest in educational material. On a recent visit to a school in my constituency I saw

something which is new in my experience. I saw a class being taught by a teacher who had prepared software which simulated the production of a chemical. The software showed the way in which raw material costs and other costs are brought together. It enabled the 16-year-old pupils to work through the process by which a chemical is produced. It showed how its selling price was worked out and how resulting profit enabled new investment to be made.

To me that is a rare form of software. It was created by the enthusiasm of the teacher and because he had access to a company which helped him to put the software together. It points the way to an enourmous opportunity for more creative software with practical application in education. Such activity can create large numbers of jobs. However, such software is labour-intensive. In short, using new technology is likely to make teaching more effective and to create jobs.

We are approaching the time of shorter working lives, shorter working weeks and early retirement. The growth of adult education is therefore likely. Many of us see a role for ourselves in that area. Adult education is one of the inbuilt advantages of this place.

About 3,750,000 people are involved in further and adult education. It is estimated that if that figure were trebled—which is not unrealistic—and 12 million adults demanded 200 hours of material a year on 25,000 different topics, that would create employment for 400,000 programme preparers. Such figures are within our grasp if the fruits of this labour are not frittered away through piracy. Again, our estimates for information services show the potential for an additional 400,000 jobs during the next few years, once more based on adequate copyright reform. The United Kingdom information services industry is already employing over one million people. Prestel, which has barely begun to make its full impact, is the sort of area in which jobs will develop. It is a typical example of a product that is dependent on copyright reform. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby was modest in his remarks about job creation; I believe that there is substantial scope.

My hon. Friend also touched on the competitive position, and here there are some anxieties. Experts suggest that although we have been extremely good at producing software to make computers work, we are not as effective in producing software to help companies perform particular tasks—yet that is the area in which competition now runs most strongly. We must watch some of the opportunities being exploited by our competitors. The design of software for more effective use by manufacturing companies is an area that provides an obvious target for piracy. Industrial espionage is a highly developed form of piracy, and I can envisage piracy being directed down to a narrow point with the stealing of industrial secrets through software unless legislation is tightly drawn and applied internationally.

However, Britain has certain competitive advantages. Japanese development still has difficulties to overcome, not least the question of language. The United States, because of the pound-dollar relationship, is now expensive. The United Kingdom software industry is well placed to look for a further drive with this legislation behind it. We should look to the leading edge of technology and provide software that is more directly relevant to company needs rather than simply exploit the computer, which is no longer the area where innovation and inventive skills can best be deployed.

There is another aspect of international competition, which is the degree to which other countries, in making their parallel legislation, agree to further consultations and discussions — not only through the World Intellectual Property Organisation but on a Government-to-Government basis. I also agree with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Yeovil that the future of the COCOM export arrangement is relevant.

The Bill is admirably clear. It sets out to do something that we can all support. However, I am a little anxious about how it will be seen to be effective and whether we can be sure that it will not be overtaken by further technological development. Will my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary consider whether it might be worth while extending the process that the Government have already taken on board — to look for the establishment of a number of small bodies, possibly created through industry itself—as FAST has been—but a body that is also seen to be outside the industry. It is difficult for an industry-organised body to adjudicate between competitive claims in industry. Oftel and the proposed Space Centre have recently been created. Possibly, following that example, the Government could see a way not only to meet my point about adjudication but to see the matter in relation to the industry's international activities — for example, its relationship with WIPO and with other countries. That might be a helpful way to ensure that we keep ahead in that area.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has always shown the greatest enthusiasm in these matters. He must recognise that from time to time Ministers and civil servants move posts. It is a weakness in our system that something which has been sustained through legislation and by understandings between countries can suffer a setback through a change of personnel or a change of the driving force in certain policies, and that we can no longer continue along the road that we had begun to walk with some certainty.

I would not normally suggest that a quango is still hidden in the corner of every heart, but in such a practical area there is an opportunity to consider with clarity and purpose the ways to make this Bill more effective.

I welcome the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Corby on the way that he introduced it. I wish it every success and I will help my hon. Friend in any way that I can during the Bill's further stages.

11.7 am

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I am very glad to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) and endorse his sentiments. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) both on his good fortune in rising high in the ballot and on his supreme good sense in picking up this Bill and promoting it so efficiently and diligently to its present stage. I hope that before too long it will have a safe passage through this House and another place and on to the statute book. I thank FAST for its extremely efficient efforts to correlate the information and present it in an extremely attractive and effective form. I also thank the Ministers who have been involved—my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), my hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie), my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw) at the Home Office—which played a significant part because of the enforcement

[Mr. Nicholas Lyell]

aspects—and my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) who is with us today and who has such great knowledge of this area.

I do not want to repeat the speech that I made in July on my ten-minute rule Bill. I want to do what both my hon. Friend the Member for Corby and my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel did, which is to put the matter into the wider context of intellectual property reform, in which it has a real place. Some people are worried that this is another piece of piecemeal legislation and that we should not indulge in it. The House recognises that the need for protection against piracy is so urgent that the simple and beautifully clear Bill provided by the parliamentary draftsmen is eminently justified.

In the piracy of computer software, we are dealing not with the sophisticated plagiarist but with the outright crook. We are not dealing with someone who has his own sensible ideas and who may be overstepping the mark in drawing upon other people's ideas. We are dealing with people who have in the recent past invested money to pirate videotapes, and, having found that avenue to a quick buck closed off, have reinvested their ill-gotten gains in equipment that enables them to copy computer software.

The profits that can be made were amply set out by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby who pointed out that there can be, and has been, enormous innovation in the games market, which is at the bottom end, but that that innovation has been stolen in the most crude and callous way by the pirates so that, for the time being, innovation has largely dried up.

There is also a serious problem in business software, particularly for use on microcomputers. One can copy a floppy disc for, say, word processing software—such a disc would market at between £200 and £300—on a twin-disc drive microcomputer in perhaps 10 seconds.

That brings me to another unattractive feature of piracy that is not so much to do with the back-street manufacture and marketing through Blackbushe or the less reputable shops in the metropolis and elsewhere, but concerns the temptation offered to hardware manufacturers to encourage the sale of their hardware by supplying genuine software that is not good value but under-the-counter, swiftly pirated software, so enabling the user to get many hundred pounds more value out of his recently purchased hardware at someone else's expense—that someone else being the software house that has developed the software at substantial investment.

The industry has made great efforts to create a policing structure and I am confident that FAST and members of the industry will create a real policing structure once the Bill is on the statute book, a structure that will not put a significant extra burden on the public authorities and the police. Once we get the framework of law right, neither the policing nor the process of prosecution will be difficult. Once it is widely recognised by the pirates that they can swiftly be prosecuted, the object of the Bill—which is not to bring people to court but to dry up piracy—will be achieved.

On the wider scene, what should be our overall objective in the reform of our intellectual property system? That system covers patents, copyright, trade marks and other ancillary aspects. Hon. Members will agree that the object of our intellectual system should be to promote the technical and commercial interests of British industry in a fair and effective way.

The December 1983 Green Paper set out a framework for that, but it tried perhaps to construct an over-elaborate system that appeared to give so much protection to the owner of the intellectual property right that it could be abused to the disadvantage of certain aspects of the market. I say that not in a dogmatic way but to stimulate further consideration of the matter.

The intellectual property sub-group of the Society of Conservative Lawyers issued a paper, from which I have drawn heavily, which merits careful consideration by the Department of Trade and Industry, and I shall mention a few areas into which we should be progressing in parallel with the objectives of this measure.

People often think that intellectual property rights, patent rights and copyright are there to help the brilliant small innovator against the big man. All too often, however, patent rights and copyright can be exploited only by the large firm with substantial resources. The brilliant innovator who is seeking to do constructive work for himself and the nation can find himself enmeshed in a web of restriction and patent control, often involving trivial modifications of earlier patented or copyrighted aspects about which he cannot afford to litigate.

Lawyers who practise in this area—I am not one of them, although I have some experience of it—must time and again explain to their innovative clients that while they are almost certainly right in law, the maelstrom into which they would become involved if they embarked on litigation would bankrupt them; and they must advise them, as a matter of commercial common sense, to withdraw.

Mr. Michael Marshall: My hon. and learned Friend reminds me of a point that I intended to make but omitted to do so. I appreciate the line that he is pursuing and, like others, pay tribute to the spadework that he has done in this sphere. For the sake of simplicity and of trying to be comprehensive, will he accept that the use of the words "electronic publishing" would be better in some respects than talking about "computer software"? As we are looking for wider forms than those which relate purely to computers, he might care to join me in tabling an amendment in Committee which might be helpful in that respect.

Mr. Lyell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that interesting point. There is always difficulty in finding a more accurate phrase but we need one which bites firmly on the mind of the potential infringer. While I concede that his phrase may have certain advantages in accuracy, it might not come so swiftly to the mind of the pirate, and that is the mind we seek to impress. However, I shall give the matter further thought.

In considering how we proceed in parallel with the Bill in other aspects, we must remember that our present systems of intellectual property protection seem to give more protection to the foreigner than to the home-based innovator or producer. It is interesting to note that today the majority of patent holders in Britain are not United Kingdom-based. In 1983, the latest year for which I have statistics, 80 per cent. of all patents granted were granted to non-United Kingdom residents.

The structure of our intellectual property law is such that in wide areas the negative effects outweigh the

positive. Our restrictions bite heavily on those who seek to innovate and manufacture in our home market but are much less restrictive on those who import.

We have the ludicrous situation that manufacturers in this country can be faced with competition from abroad which our existing legislation does not prevent, while, when those same manufacturers seek to export to other countries, as they lawfully can under the laws of those other countries, they may be prevented from doing so by our own intellectual property law in Britain. I hope that the Department will give urgent attention to that state of affairs because it needs correcting.

The Green Paper seems to go back on, if not a previous commitment by the Government, then at least a strong indication by Government that it would abolish industrial design copyright.

I do not think that it is widely recognised that our system of protection of industrial design copyright arose by accident. It was unforeseen and unintended by Parliament at the time of the passing of the Copyright Act 1956 and the Design Copyright Act 1968 and has come to be established only because skilful lawyers—who could perhaps be described less attractively as clever lawyers —were able to put together section 3(1)*(a)* of the 1956 Act which defines drawings as artistic works, "irrespective of artistic quality", and section 48(1) which says that a reproduction in a case of an artistic work

"includes a version produced by converting the work into a three-dimensional form".

Thus, artistic copyright protection is given to the shape of mechanical parts. No one using the English language in its ordinary sense would have contemplated such a possibility.

Those who could produce parts for machines and functional items and could compete in this country are prevented, by a side wind, from doing so. All patent and copyright law legitimises monopoly, but monopolists are being given a far wider monopoly than was ever intended. These are sophisticated matters and I do not wish to weary the House with too much detail, but similar problems arise with parallel imports and on copyright law and piratical imports.

Case law can adversely affect practical considerations. I speak against myself as a lawyer and a practitioner in the courts, but in intellectual property law, the case of American Cyanamid v Ethicon has had an adverse effect. One of the great advantages of patent law used to be that when one went to court for an interlocutory injunction —one seldom went further because the object was to stop the infringer in his tracks—one was given a good indication of the strength of one's case because the law before American Cyanamid v Ethicon required that the court had to form a significant view, though not a final view, on the merits of the case.

The House of Lords subsequently said that that was not the correct law in the general field, which then applied to intellectual property law, and all that one now has to show is that one has a fairly arguable case, which is different from showing that, on at least an initial view, the merits are in one's favour.

We have changed that lesser requirement in industrial relations law, and everyone agrees that we were right to do so, and we should also abolish that approach in intellectual property law, so that those who go to court for swift and effective procedures get once more the swift and effective judgments that were so useful in the past.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Corby and ask that the Bill be seen not as an isolated piece of legislation, but as an important measure which will be essential to protect the industry from a serious problem and will, I hope, be part of moves by the Department of Trade and Industry towards further sensible reforms in intellectual property law.

11.23 am

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Those of us who attempt to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) face two daunting tasks. The first is to match his eloquence, which is difficult, and the second is to match the detail of his exposition, and that can be done only by indulging in a degree of repetition.

I cannot claim marks for the originality of the preface to my comments because the point has already been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) and the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), but I do claim marks for sincerity when I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Corby on taking the initiative that led to the Bill and to this debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby was the first to say that some acknowledgement must also be given to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire whose ten-minute Bill established him as the parliamentary progenitor of this Bill.

It would also be appropriate at an early stage in my speech for me to join in singing the praises of the Federation Against Software Theft, which has been the prime mover in the campaign which has resulted in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby paid tribute to the effective, reasoned and sensible way in which the federation handles its affairs. I echo that sentiment and note the sharp contrast with much of the sensationalism and bellyaching that we get from so many other lobby forces. I heard on the radio yesterday that dentists have been asked to write not only to their own hon. Member, but to all hon. Members.

May I inject an irreverent but heartfelt plea. For 13 years before becoming an hon. Member, I was a school teacher and one of the subjects that I taught was English. Perhaps I am more fussy than some other hon. Members, but I make the plea that on this side of the Atlantic we should spell the word programme with double "m" and an "e" at the end. That spelling appears in the body of the Bill, but not in the explanatory and financial memorandum. Let us have some consistency.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I support my hon. Friend's plea for consistency. One can take the view that the use of the word "programme" in relation to computers is different from any other use of the word and that therefore we should use the spelling "program". In that case, we should use that spelling throughout the Bill and not use one version of the word in one part of the Bill and duck the issue in another part. The spelling "program" is used throughout the world and I believe that it should be adopted in the Bill.

Mr. Hunter: All hon. Members can claim, to a greater or lesser extent, to represent the interests of high-tech industry. Computer business is a prominent part of that industry. High-tech industry tends to gravitate to certain

[Mr. Hunter]

parts of the country, one of which is the corridor between the M3 and the M4. Within that triangle, Basingstoke has increasing importance. I am advised that about 5,000 of my constituents are employed in the computer industry, and the number is rising rapidly as IBM and the Digital Equipment Corporation increase their presence in the town.

Thousands of my constituents therefore depend for their livelihoods on a flourishing computer industry, and the point of the Bill is precisely that: to ensure the prosperity of the computer industry. The Federation Against Software Theft does not mince its words. It says:

"Software theft is a serious and immediate problem threatening innovation, jobs and investment in the computer industry."

It is estimated that the industry is losing about £150 million a year through software theft. That is intolerable. That loss hits at the profitability of industry and, as we all know, that decreases the prospects of reinvestment, innovation and job creation.

A point which has been made frequently in the debate is that it is relatively easy to engage in software piracy. Such theft takes a variety of forms depending on the type of computer software which is involved. To the lay mind the distinction between various forms of software theft are perhaps not immediately discernible. I understand that there is replication without permission; there is counterfeiting; there is the production of look-alike copies substantially reproducing legitimate programmes; and there is the unauthorised supply and use of computer software. I have no doubt that there are many other forms of software theft.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby warned that I would concentrate on one firm if I were lucky enough to catch the eye of Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Digital Equipment Corporation has a major presence in my constituency. It is known in the trade as DEC, and from now on I shall refer to it thus. It is worth while considering the way in which that company has analysed the problem of theft and set about seeking solutions.

About two years ago DEC undertook an analysis to try to establish the loss which it was suffering from software theft. It calculated the number of computers which it was selling in the United Kingdom, presumably not an especially difficult task. It then made certain assumptions about the average number of operating systems, allied projects and application programmes that it expected to licence per computer. The calculations of the expected licence revenue were compared with actual revenue and the company made the staggering calculation that it was losing about £10 million per year: clearly a figure of great consequence and seriousness to it, notwithstanding that it has the third largest turnover in the industry in Britain.

I have already stressed the consequences for companies whose profit margins are being hit by theft. Reduced profit margins ultimately affect job creation. DEC's reaction was typical of companies in this position. First, it joined the organisation that is called the Federation against Software Theft. It was one of the founding members of FAST. Mr. Roger Tuckett of the law department of DEC in the United Kingdom became, and remains, a member of the FAST management team. DEC senior management in the United Kingdom and in Europe gives the federation full and total support. The international factor has already been introduced into the debate. DEC sees the initiative which has been taken in Britain as one that should be followed up in other European countries.

DEC's second reaction was to work through the trading association to counter the problem of software theft. DEC is represented on the intellectual property committee of Beta, which is considering the interests of companies similar to DEC.

The company's third reaction was to take legal action. In 1983 there was an out-of-court settlement following a dispute about the unauthorised copying of DEC software and the failure to pay licence fees. Nearly $5·5 million were paid to the company in settlement. Other proceedings continue. There are proceedings against another company alleging unauthorised copying and distribution of DEC software. There have been 11 court hearings to date and, apart from one minor issue, DEC has won at each hearing.

The company's attitude is typical of that which is being adopted by other comparable companies. It feels that it must protect its investment in its technology and it will not hesitate to enforce its rights in the courts if necessary.

The growing significance of software manufacture to the computer industry is not always realised. It is the largest growth area within the industry. I received a letter from DEC this morning, one paragraph of which reads:

"on the relative importance of DEC's software business, this now corresponds to about 15 per cent. of total turnover. While DEC's business overall is growing at about 30 per cent. per year in the United Kingdom, the software related part of this is growing at about 65 per cent. per year."

Those are most impressive figures.

It is clear that theft affects all parts of the software business. FAST has distinguished three major categories. First, it speaks of theft of high-cost/low-volume software. That is software that is used on large or medium-sized computers which retail at a price of £1,000 upwards. This software includes operating systems and application packages. In this area we are up against unauthorised copying and using by users, illicit copying by distributors and the production of look-alikes.

The second area which FAST identifies is the theft of medium-cost/medium-volume software. This is software that is used on microcomputers within a price range of £50 to £1,000. It includes smaller business computers and personal computers. The illegal practices include illicit copying and use and supply by users and distributers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby referred briefly to a study which was undertaken by Aston university in 1983. Among other things, those who undertook the study came to the conclusion that 25 per cent. of microcomputer software companies suffered serious losses of revenue through software theft. The more successful programmes are the most susceptible to theft. The number of illegal copies exceed legitimate copies by more than three to one.

Thirdly, FAST has drawn attention to the category of low-cost/high-volume home computer software theft. This includes computer games and education software. We are talking of software that is distributed mainly through high street outlets. There is widespread counterfeiting. Illegal copies outnumber legitimate copies by up to 12 to one.

FAST has analysed current prosecution activities. It is clear that software copyright owners are already pursuing policing and enforcement activities, including investigations, the targeting of criminals, the search and seizure of

illegal material, prosecutions, and, above all, publicity and education. These are some of the activities in which companies are already involving themselves to the full.

Major companies are conducting a growing numbr of investigations into software theft, especially in the high-cost/low-volume software league. Legal action is being taken and I have learnt of the establishment by the Guild of Software Houses of a fighting fund to help finance legal actions.

In all cases FAST stresses that prosecutions are limited to civil actions because of the unrealistic criminal penalties currently available for copyright infringement of computer software. The most significant point is that the smaller companies with slender resources, especially in the microcomputer software sector, are reluctant to take legal action because of the element of doubt that still remains about copyright protection applying to computer software. There is a residual doubt about that part of the law, and that doubt must be removed.

A paper produced earlier in the year by Mr. Roger Tuckett contains clear thoughts on this matter. The paper was entitled "Controlling Infringement of Copyright in Computer Software" and stated:

"Under Section 21 Copyright Act 1956, it is a criminal offence to manufacture or distribute articles which are known to be infringing copies of a copyright work. There is no reason why prosecutions should not be brought under the present legislation in appropriate cases for software piracy. However the police and other authorities are reluctant to investigate and institute prosecutions for two reasons. First, they believe there is still legal doubt that computer software is protected under copyright law. Secondly, they believe the present criminal penalties are derisory."

The paper continued:

"In the past, criminal prosecutions for software piracy have been rare. Today there are a handful of such criminal investigations taking place, some of which may result in appropriate prosecutions and convictions.

Prosecutions are normally brought by Police Authorities or Trading Standards Officers. These bodies are showing increasing willingness to become involved in helping to deal with this increasing area of dishonesty. They will continue to look to the computer industry for technical advice and support when bringing prosecutions. If a company which is suffering from software piracy is able to persuade these authorities to take action, it will obviously avoid the considerable expenses involved in bringing civil proceedings. It is hoped that the clear effective remedies to be provided by the new Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill will encourage these public enforcement agencies to use their resources to deal with the current and future problems."

I believe that we all share that hope.

The need for legislative changes is indisputable. There is an urgent need for clarification and strengthening of the law. This serious problem will be reduced and the effectiveness of all the remedies—civil and criminal—will be increased by these amendments to the Copyright Act 1956. That is why we need the amendments. They are straightforward and are not contentious. It is clear that they will appeal to, and be accepted by, all parties represented in the House.

The Bill will enable the industry to continue its fight against software theft within a framework of legal certainty and more effective copyright protection. As FAST concludes, for all categories of software theft, the explicit reference to computer programmes in the Copyright Act will be the cornerstone for educating everybody that software theft is not "fair game" but illegal and to the detriment of the community. I welcome the Bill, and I wish it well.

11.43 am

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I warmly welcome the initiative taken by my hon. Friend the member for Corby (Mr. Powell) in introducing the Bill and the earlier initiatives of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell). The information technology and software industry owes them a great deal for the large amount of time they have spent in pushing the Bill through.

I believe that the Bill should not be necessary. It is necessary because of a fundamental fallacy. The same fallacy gave rise to the Data Protection Act 1984 which is costing British industry several hundreds of millions of pounds. The fallacy is that data are somehow fundamentally different if stored magnetically on a floppy disc, a hard disc, a tape or by some other method of digital storage rather than stored on paper in black and white. It is ludicrous that companies can store millions of names and addresses in card index systems without falling within the jurisdiction of the Data Protection Act, but if the information is stored on a home computer or microcomputer, the companies fall within the bounds of the Act.

In the past, lawyers, in their wisdom, have decided that, because data are stored magnetically or electronically, they do not fall within the bounds of the Copyright Act 1956. The Bill is an important part of a jigsaw. If over the next few years we can find the other pieces of the jigsaw, we may reveal a picture of a healthy information technology industry. The Bill is only one piece of the jigsaw. Unfortunately, too often we in Britain put ourselves down. Company failures in the information technolgy industry cause us great concern and receive great publicity, but, for every company that fails in a blaze of publicity, there are many more healthy companies. Failures are a facet of a young and growing industry.

The NEDO report, which was published in the summer of last year, cast gloom over the information technology industry. Astonishingly, the report did not deal with microchips. British companies are rapidly becoming European leaders in microchip production, especially in certain types of chips such as Customs chips and fast Dynamic RAMs. Because the report did not mention microchips, it missed a vital component of the information technology market.

We can be proud of our achievements in information technology. Some of the best business computers are made in Britain. It is interesting to note how one relatively small Birmingham company—ACT—managed to change itself from being largely an importer of American computers into a major force in the manufacture of home computers. Although British industry is under severe pressure from foreign competition, some companies, such as PSION, are producing products that are world beaters.

Government policy has been forward looking and instrumental in encouraging the information technology sector in England. Pump-priming policies and specialist schemes have been the correct way forward. It would be wrong to go for vast, ludicrous bureaucratic and expensive projects, such as those mounted by the last Labour Government. For example, the Labour Government wasted £36 million of taxpayers' money on one project —a company called NEXOS which, apparently, Labour politicians dreamt would one day rival IBM. Two years

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

ago, predictably, that company went under because of mismanagment and the problems of setting it up. The taxpayer is £36 million poorer.

Despite the successes of the policies of the Department of Trade and Industry in encouraging the information technology sector, we need more direction. I am not talking about French-style dirigisme which has helped to plunge the French information technology sector into massive losses. I am talking about the realisation of where our national interests lie, and that means that a more aggressive attitude must be taken to trade barriers which inhibit the growth and prosperity of the information technology industry in England.

The European, Japanese, and far east telecommunications markets are far from free. Any British company wanting to export software or information technology products to American markets come up against the Buy American Act. That means that if public corporations wish to buy foreign products they must cost at least 10 per cent. less than comparative American products. I should be astonished if that could be called free trade. Yet this country freely allows in telecommunications products from Italy, Germany, Japan and Taiwan. Our schools are full of American products.

I understand that one of the major reasons for the problems of Acorn was its failure to break into the American market. One of the reasons for that failure was that it could not get into the American education system because the United States Government insisted that it brought American-made products. The company also came up against the Buy American Act. I strongly believe that free trade is the best way to further the prosperity of all nations, but it is clear that we do not have free trade in the world. When other countries refuse to take our products on a reciprocal basis, we must be far more aggressive in putting barriers in the way of their products until they open their markets to our information technology and other products.

We seem to be acting against the interests of our information technology industry over origin marking. The origin marking regulations are now hopelessly out of date. Most business equipment, including computers and software, do not have to have on them the country of final assembly or the countries where most of the components are made. We can buy a computer or software over the counter or by mail order without knowing where it was made. Most people want to buy British goods, be they computers or software, but more often than not they do not have the opportunity to know where the equipment was made.

I shall quote the example of a British company called Amstrad. It imports its own-brand computers from Taiwan. It is a successful home computer which is sold with a range of computer software and most people buying that product believe that it is British. Even the *Financial Times*, which should know better, called it a British product.

How can British consumers buy British-made computers? The structure of the industry is such that many computers contain foreign components. How can we urge our consumers to buy British when we do not, by law, insist on manufacturers, importers and distributors putting the countries of origin on computers, telecommunications equipment and software?

Another way in which we seem to be acting against the interests of our information technology sector is that we charge more duty on the import of components that go into British computers than we do on the import of fully built computers. It is a disincentive for British manufactured computers to compete if their components carry more duty than the finished, imported product which probably contains the same components.

This country has a great opportunity to win a large share of the world software markets if we can get matters right. There are many ways to get it right other than by the Bill. The structure of the information technology market is moving in such a way that it is especially easy for small companies to produce and market software to run on a range of machines, because increasingly over the past five years world computer manufacturers have a few standard processes and operating systems which they buy and assemble into their products.

The result is that computers, be they made in Taiwan, Tokyo, Frankfurt or Farnham, almost invariably run the same software. That means that a company no longer, as it did 10 years ago, has to be massive, with massive resources, to write software. Relatively small outfits can now succeed. A problem that many of those companies experience, apart from piracy, is the cost of marketing. It does not cost a vast amount to produce an excellent software package, but it costs perhaps 20 or 30 times as much to market it successfully. The Department of Trade and Industry might consider helping some of our fledgling software companies to market in the United Kingdom and overseas.

The Bill will help British information technology enormously. It is an important part in the jigsaw. If we could find the other pieces, it would lead to a vibrant prosperous industry in this country over the next 20 years. The British industry is a delicate shoot. More direction is needed, but not direction in the French sense of the all-seeing, all-powerful bureaucracy trying to control and mould every aspect of the industry. It needs a little more recognition of where our national interest lies, and a few prods in the right direction from the Department of Trade and Industry would be welcome. I recognise that it has already done a great deal to help the industry.

The Bill is a small but vital step in the right direction. I warmly welcome it, and I warmly thank my hon. Friend the Member for Corby for taking such pains and making such efforts to ensure that it came before the House.

11.56 am

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I should like to join all those who have offered their congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) on introducing the Bill. When one comes high in the ballot it is always difficult to decide which of all the subjects of merit one should pursue.

A change in copyright legislation is vital for the software industry. I should declare my past interest in the subject as, for many years before being elected to this this place, I worked for ICL in the development of computer software and advising people on the use of such software.

The nature of computer software, as has already been said, has changed significantly. In the early days of computer use there were relatively few different computers, costing substantial sums of money. A few bespoke software packages were made and there was much greater tailoring activity. Over the years the cost of

computer hardware has fallen dramatically. It is an essential requirement that package software is produced that can be matched easily with many machines. That has the advantage of spreading development costs over large numbers of copies.

As has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby and others, there is an enormous potential for growth in the production of software. A figure of 22 per cent. has been mentioned. Whether that is accurate will depend in part on the Bill's passage. There is no doubt that the development of good quality software depends upon good profits being made from it.

It is relatively easy to produce software cheaply and quickly, but if we are to produce the software that will provide effective systems for users, or good games for children and others, substantial efforts will have to be made. If there is piracy, the value of those efforts is destroyed.

Therefore, although in the short term it may appear that the passage of the Bill would aid the computer software industry, in the slightly longer term the real beneficiary would be the user. Whether the user be the child playing the fun computer games or the large company operating a major stock control system, if there is not the incentive, through good returns and good profits, to develop expensively the software that is necessary, inferior products will be the type available to all. That is the growing danger.

In the computer world there have been planted a considerable number of seeds of computer software, and we are seeing them grow. The danger is that there is also a parasite that is growing quickly. It may stunt the growth of individual items of software and damage the quality of those that are produced. I believe that the Bill will help to end that blight.

There are substantial differences in the nature of software and software sales for differenct types of machines. With home games it is ludicrously easy to copy cassettes containing such games; indeed, even where the manufacturer endeavours to protect his software when it is loaded on to the computer, it is possible to copy the software by using an audio cassette system. By that means an identical version is produced through an electronic or audio machine, thereby overcoming the efforts that the manufacturer has made to protect his investment and his users' interests.

With regard to business microcomputers, as has been said, most of the software is distributed on floppy discs, and that software can be copied from disc to disc in a matter of moments. I have seen attempts made to protect such software and there are suitable means that can be used, but sometimes those very means can be a confounded nuisance to the genuine users of software. I know of instances where a manufacturer of software has put in date locks so that, unless the user of the software returns to the manufacturer after a year or some such time and gets a special modification, the software ceases to work. It is a good way of preventing the illicit use of such software, but the confusion that can be caused to the legitimate user, if there is some failure in communication, can be enormous. Therefore, whenever a manufacturer endeavours to provide protection, he may well be making life more difficult for the valid user.

With the most expensive forms of software, distributed on large mainframes and so on, there are different realms of complication. Today most packages are built in modular form, and the manufacturer will endeavour to use some of those modules in his packages. It was said earlier that there is not too much sophisticated copying taking place. That is not so, because there is an advantage to be gained by a software thief in taking some of those modules and incorporating them into another package that the rival manufacturer may be producing, thus saving money and enabling the rival to develop a series of packages at a cheaper rate simply because he has been saved the cost of some of the essential modules. I hope and believe that the Bill will enable that sort of abuse to be dealt with. It is an essential requirement of any legislation.

There have been comments about the use of the terms "computer programme" and "computer software". I hope that the promoter of the Bill will resist any attempts to change the term "computer software". Among its other merits, the Bill has the merit of clarity. The intention of the Bill is clear in meeting a particular problem. The Copyright Act 1956 is the appropriate measure to be amended, and in extending that Act to enable it to cope with a new and developing problem we are taking the most effective legislative action that we can. I congratulate the promoter of the Bill and hope that it will have a speedy passage through the House.

12.7 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The Bill is a useful and necessary measure, and, on behalf of the official Opposition, I hope that it will complete its passage through the House at the earliest opportunity.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) on drafting and producing the Bill and on his comprehensive exposition of the industry's problems and the way that the Bill will address them. The Bill does not, of course, deal with all the problems of copyright in what is a very complex and rapidly changing technological field. Still less does it tackle all the problems of the software industry, but the hon. Gentleman did not claim that it did.

There is the converse problem of securing standardisation of software. In terms of the propagation of the use of computers and applications for computers that is extremely important, but there is no sense in which the Bill conflicts with that area. Indeed, a proper protection of copyright is a necessary part of the securing of standardisation. The necessarily complex operating systems that can be used to secure standardisation and portability themselves need to be properly protected by copyright.

The Bill cannot solve all the problems of electronic publishing—a matter that was mentioned by the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall). It cannot cover questions of copyright of data bases or data banks which, presumably, can range from the design of a jet engine to the design of a microcircuit, the on-line access to all the United Kingdom company accounts in Companies House, the complete set of laws of all industrial countries, or whatever may be the data bases that are available now or may come to be available in the future. That is the whole area of copyright and electronic publishing, and the idea of sweeping up all that in a private Member's Bill is not only impracticable but outside the long title of the Bill. Therefore, it could not be dealt with during the passage of the Bill.

The best service that the Opposition can do for the Bill and, indeed, for employment in that vital industry and its

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

future development, is to facilitate the Bill's progress both on Second Reading and in the remaining stages. Speaking personally, I should have no objection to the Bill completing its remaining stages today and would not seek to block that, if it was the wish of the hon. Member for Corby.

We have had no representations against the Bill, nor any representations seeking amendments to it. If we receive any representations or objections to it, we shall certainly see that they are pressed in another place. I believe that the Under-Secretary has had no objections to the Bill, either. If, when the industry reads the debate and realises the progress that has been made, it were to raise any questions or propose any amendments from outside the House, I hope that the Under-Secretary would consider them carefully before the Bill went to another place.

Out of consideration for the progress of other private Member's Bills—we understand the natural pressure of time—and as the Bill is supported on both sides of the House and no objections have been raised, my best service is simply to commend it to the House and sit down in the hope that it will secure a speedy passage.

12.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank all hon. Members on both sides of the House for the contributions that have been made in an excellent and informed debate. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will join me in noting the unanimity in the House. I think that it is no exaggeration to say that in the House the Bill has no enemies. Suffice it to say that outside the House we cannot detect a lobby that has attempted to counter the arguments put forward by the Federation Against Software Theft and, in fairness, by several companies and individual associations that wish to protest and do something about software theft, which is what we are discussing today.

I do not think that "theft" is too strong a word. We are talking of the theft of intellectual property, the loss of revenue to those who rightfully can expect to accrue benefit from their intellectual effort. Therefore, I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), who set the scene for today's events.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby reminded us of the $61 billion turnover of the industry. He talked about the $12 billion turnover in western Europe, which illustrated vividly the burgeoning growth of and significant contribution made by information technology, particularly the software industry. I shall refer later to some other figures that illustrate the point that my hon. Friend made, but in a particularly British context. Those figures come from the Computing Services Association and prove yet again that the industry is growing at geometric rates and seems to be immune from the problems which, tragically, affect other industries in terms of recession and recovery. Worldwide, we are looking at a growth of about 20 per cent. per annum, consistently, remorselessly, and with great effect.

My hon. Friend reminded us of a significant report published by the Information Technology Advisory Panel. I remember that report with considerable affection. There were times when I felt that there should have been a slightly more vigorous response to its recommendations. It stated that information and the information industry are of great significance, and that of itself information is a product. It can be assembled, bought and sold; one can add value to it, and one can import and export it. It is one of my objectives, and indeed one of the objectives of my Department to ensure that all the measures and policies required to make London the international exchange for information in this respect, as it is currently the international exchange for financial services, should be invoked and encouraged by hon. Members. It is the new entrepot trade of the final years of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st century. We in the United Kingdom are particularly equipped with the talents to make a major contribution and, indeed, to earn major revenues on the international market in information trade.

Therefore, as my hon. Friend and others have reminded us, the Bill is a legitimate measure to underpin, with an appropriate protective mechanism, the continued growth of the information trade, and the interests of the United Kingdom information and software providers in particular. Not only do we want London to become the world's information exchange; we should also like to see the rapidly growing business in value-added network services continue to grow at that rate. The business is still in its infancy, but I believe that it will be a major provider of wealth and, indeed, jobs. However, again those people need the protection that is contained in this measure.

I welcome the support and contribution of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). I know that he is pressed for time today, so I appreciate his courtesy in returning to the Chamber and participating in the latter stages of our debate. I have already endorsed his observation that copying is theft. It is the stealing of intellectual property.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire reminded us of the path that he trod in earlier months and the intellectual wrestling that he had to undertake to establish that the House would welcome a measure under the ten-minute Bill procedure to protect our software authors and houses. I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in commending that trail-blazing work of my hon. and learned Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) raised several points that I should like to deal with later in the debate. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Corby, he rightly said that there has to be an international dimension to the debate. Of course, we wish to consider how we monitor and assess the progress of our industry and the pressures that may damage it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel said, we are aware that the industry still could do several things to help itself. However, as a result of the activities of FAST, the Federation Against Copyright Theft and other organisations that have fought this battle, we see the trade associations in the industrial sectors coming together to counteract the increasing, but—I hope soon—decreasing threat of theft.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) forcefully fought on behalf of the interests of the industry and his constituents. That is the happiest combination of circumstances to which an hon. Member can hope to be beholden. I take his point that in one company alone that is strongly represented in his

constituency there is concern about the £10 million loss per annum through software theft. That supports the view that there is a significant problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) made one of his coded speeches which was based on remarks, which are as perceptive today as they have been on previous occasions, concerning the international trade barriers against telecommunications products. I assure my hon. Friend that the Department of Trade and Industry is aware of the problem. No doubt my hon. Friend will continue to pursue his campaign through questions, and I hope that I shall be able to allay his anxieties. We are anxious to see a free and fair market in telecommunications products. That is not the subject of today's debate but may I, en passant, mention that I have endorsed my hon. Friend's line, not least in Dusseldorf when I pointed out in a recent speech that it was easier to sell telecommunications products in Detroit than in Dusseldorf. We need to see a true common market in those products as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend made an excellent point about the need for help with marketing. The Department of Trade and Industry has a legitimate role here. As I have said before, I should be delighted if the information technology industry, particularly the smaller companies and the software houses, were to take greater advantage of the market entry guarantee scheme which can provide up to £350,000 worth of help in meeting the costs of gaining access to a market which are crucial for a new small growing company that has to go through the pain barrier of gaining access to such markets. I have put that on the record again. I cannot make the invitation more vividly than I have today. No doubt my hon. Friends will draw that to the attention of companies in their constituencies whose interests we seek to support.

The hon. Member for Yeovil said that he hoped that the House would have an opportunity shortly to discuss the licensing of software items for export. That is a matter for the Leader of the House, and I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade told the House on 8 February. In the meantime, I commend to the hon. Gentleman, who is, shall we say, worldly in matters of security and strategic considerations, an excellent book about the KGB which contains a magnificent chapter on the huge resources that the KGB deploys internationally through front and other organisations to obtain software and hardware which Russia can make use of in its armaments and industrial programmes. It makes for stimulating, if not terrifying, reading.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Minister referring to that seminal work "Techno-Bandits"?

Mr. Butcher: No; I am referring to another book which I bought at York station only two days ago. I am desperately trying to remember the name of the author. I think that it is a chap called Baron. It certainly gives an interesting insight into the efforts made by the KGB to obtain information in this area.

Mr. Ashdown: I must obviously buy that book as I pass through Waterloo in 20 minutes. "Techno-Bandits" is another excellent book which deals with the same subject. One of the points that is most powerfully made in it is that it is the nature of the attempt to apply licensing provision universally which makes the system so leaky that the KGB can get in and lift out all the secrets that it wants. A more appropriate licensing system which would be easier to police would be tighter in its definitions that that which is now proposed.

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. As I said earlier, that is not the subject of today's debate, but I should like to take this opportunity to join the hon. Gentleman in that objective. It may be that in the detail of our wish to achieve it we differ tactically, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be embarrassed on a future occasion if I were to remind him of his words today.

We share a mutual anxiety that behind the whole COCOM debate and the rather hysterical observations that have been made there is a serious problem. But we must look after United Kingdom interests, both industrial and commercial. I hope that that will not be done in an atmosphere of naivety on the part of some our domestic companies. Perhaps today we can exhort them to read that same section, if not the whole book, in "Techno-Bandits". No doubt we shall return to this matter on another occasion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel asked for a comment on a possible international convention on software protection. He may know that a joint study is proceeding in the World Intellectual Property Organisation and UNESCO on the legal protection of computer software. I believe that as part of that study there is to be a meeting next week in Geneva. Although the possibility of a new international convention has been considered in that study, I understand that that is not the direction in which it is currently moving. There is a wide international consensus that copyright is the right vehicle for protecting software, and there is a widely held view, which I share, that the existing international conventions on copyright — the Berne convention and the universal copyright convention — are the appropriate international vehicles for protection.

There is a need for further study internationally and that is proceeding. No doubt my hon. Friend's observations will be noted in the appropriate quarters. Through my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and others we shall consider whether our input into that process should be a little more pointed.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire suggested that the Bill might be amended to deal with the broader questions of electronic publishing. Reference has already been made to the comprehensive review of copyright currently being undertaken by the Government. An important consideration that arises in that context is the need to introduce a modern law of copyright that is capable of dealing with the present and future state of technology. The impact of electronic publishing is clearly an important element in that. I can assure my hon. and learned Friend that when the Government introduce their plans for a coprehensive copyright reform great care will be taken to ensure that they are appropriate to deal with advances in technology.

Mr. Michael Marshall: My hon. Friend is answering questions that I put to him, but my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) made the same points. I am obliged to my hon. Friend for what he has just said. In the light of that assurance, I make it plain that I certainly would not wish to delay the passage of the Bill. Any suggestion that I may have made about an

[Mr. Powell]

My final example concerns another multinational software house supplying business software on microcomputers. It estimates that between 10 and 20 per cent. of its users are unauthorised. That is resulting in a loss of revenue of between 10 and 20 per cent. The company is having to invest more than £1 million per annum in alternative technological methods of protection. All of them are necessarily — at a price — vulnerable to penetration and to copying. Money is having to be spent to protect the software but no final protection is possible. All that is necessary is for the pirate to invest more to break the protection.

A pirate is able to sell the pirated product for as little as one tenth of what the market price would be to the author of the software product, so that it becomes impossible for legitimate businesses to make any worthwhile return on their efforts. That has dampened all prospect for successful development of the market.

One of the world's largest computer software houses, Digital Equipment Corporation — my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) hopes to say something about it in due course—has estimated that in 1983 in the United Kingdom it lost £10 million in revenue from unauthorised copying of its software through piracy. The best estimate for 1984 is that lost sales and royalties amounted to no less than £150 million. As the total size of the market for 1984 is just over £1 billion, the £150 million is consistent with my examples of between 10 and 20 per cent. loss of revenue.

All the companies which have approached me about the problem, and also approached the organisation — the Federation Against Software Theft—which has been set up by the industry itself to tackle some of the fundamental problems of the law and organisation, have stressed the fundamental importance of copyright law in the protection of computer programmes, and the need to remove remaining uncertainty about their copyright position. There is not the slightest doubt that, even though there are many actions that the industry itself can take, none will be successful unless the law of copyright is extended so that it without doubt covers computer software.

That is the one safeguard which, more than anything else, Parliament can give to the industry. That is why I put such importance in my analysis on the taking of that one step. If we give the software houses that opportunity, it will be in their hands to take all the other necessary steps to guarantee their survival, growth prosperity, and contribution to the national economy in the future. Then, if they fail, it will not be because we have let them down but because they have been unable to rise to the challenge of the enormous growth to which I referred at the beginning of my speech.

The consequences flowing from the situation that I have described are lost investment and lost opportunities. At the bottom end of the market, a computer game of any merit may cost between £50,000 and £100,000 of investment to bring to the market and to sell. A computer game can be copied in 40 seconds on to a floppy disc. To get that pirated floppy disc to produce a sufficient quantity of the computer game and get it on to the market can take three to four weeks, so the manufacturer of a software game may have as short a time as three weeks in which to make a return on his investment.

In those circumstances, it is not surprising that very few new worthwhile games are being commissioned at present. There is no hope that any company can get a worthwhile return against such a background. I know that the House will be fully aware that only good software is copied. Nobody bothers to pirate a thoroughly inferior and worthless product that nobody would buy. It is the quality material that is most vulnerable, and inevitably it involves more investment.

Let us suppose that any hon. Member or any member of the public listening to the debate decided that he could develop a software programme, and he went to his bank manager and said that he would have four weeks, and no more, to get a return on the investment. Is there the slightest prospect that the bank manager would be prepared to lend the money necessary for that investment? Of course not. Therefore, investment for the development of computer software programmes is drying up. That is part of the overall tragedy, with declining numbers of firms, declining outside commission with declining jobs in the industry. That is why the industry itself feels uncertain about its propects. As it stands, the law is pathetically inadequate to cope with the situation.

Lawyers will argue among themselves whether copyright covers software. Some will say that it does, and some will say that it does not. Some will say that it might, although something else might be the case, and each case has to be dealt with on its individual merits. Prosecutions in the criminal courts are extremely rare. It has been necessary to resort to the most undesirable developments and extensions of the law to try to catch the pirates.

In July last year, in the county of Devon, a youngster from west Yorkshire was accused of hiring out a copy of a software tape and photocopies of the manual that went with it. He was summoned before the Teignmouth magistrates' court in Devon under the Trade Descriptions Act. It had been necessary to resort to that Act to try to bring any sort of case at all against the youngster, effectively to accuse him of selling something that was not what it described itself to be because it was pirated. He was fined £40 with £50 costs.

In no way can the Trade Descriptions Act be an effective vehicle in the criminal courts for stopping piracy. Therefore, the industry has had to resort more and more to expensive, time-consuming and often rather uncertain civil actions. The House will be aware that when a company feels that its commercial position is being undermined by piracy it is possible to apply to the court for an Anton Piller order, which will effectively stop it, pending the outcome of proceedings in the civil courts. It is fundamental to the procedure of obtaining an Anton Piller order that one moves immediately it becomes plain that one is in trouble. However, because of the difficulty for the person to prove, so accurate are the copies that are made in pirated programmes, that it is his own programme and he had the copyright to it, there is delay. Thus there are substantial risks that the court will not come to someone's assistance because he has delayed much longer than was necessary.

However, equally, no lawyer could advise his client to proceed by the civil law unless he had 100 per cent. proof of his claim. The risk of failure is too great and the prospect of being undermined if there is a failure is so overwhelming that lawyers have had to be extremely cautious. Substantial sums of money are now being spent essentially on lawyers. I declare an interest. I am a lawyer.

The Bill that I am promoting is definitely against my interest as a lawyer—and so it should be. It is a scandal that money that should be used to develop the industry is being used to cushion some of the uncomfortable facts of life for lawyers in the Temple and elsewhere.

Therefore, the prospects of successfully protecting software programmes under existing law are uncertain at best and hostile at worst. As the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) stressed, many of the smaller firms simply do not have the resources to do anything. They concede defeat even before they start because they do not have the resources. I am certain that the House will be anxious to end that situation as soon as possible.

However, the industry is taking several important steps to protect itself, through technical protection. It is possible to build into a programme means of technical protection. It is expensive to do so and increases the cost of the product, but it raises the stakes in the battle between software houses and pirates. Certain pirates might be deterred from piracy because of the additional cost involved in breaking that protection. As I have said, the simple fact is that the large houses can raise the stakes, but that still does not represent a satisfactory administration of our law.

Because of all those difficulties, in the summer of last year the industry came together to form its own body, the Federation Against Software Theft, with the avowed purpose of focusing on the inadequacy of the law, particularly the copyright law, and to bring to the public's attention what was happening and to try to sway public opinion so that people began to realise that piracy was theft and was doing considerable damage to industry, employment, investment and jobs for the future.

I should like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to the way in which FAST has carried out its activities in the past year. We in the House are all used to lobbyists. We are all used to mail and literature raining upon us, which is unwelcome. We need large wastepaper baskets to accommodate all that descends upon us. If ever there was an example of a successful, persuasive body carrying out its duties and objectives in the most professional and successful way, FAST is it. I pay particular tribute to the chairman of FAST, Mr. Donald Maclean, who has done so much to bring us to the point of discussing this subject almost at the first reasonable opportunity that the House could have had.

Very early on Mr. Maclean was able to persuade my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) to introduce a Bill under the ten minutes rule on 25 July last year, which for the first time in the House focused on the industry's problem. That Bill was not consigned, like so many such Bills, to the wastepaper basket after a short airing of the grievance that it raised but became the springboard of a sustained campaign, within the House and without, for a change of the law. I am delighted to say that, before my hon. and learned Friend introduced his Bill, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), then the Minister for Information Technology, had written to Mr. Maclean of FAST, saying:

"I warmly welcome the setting up of the Federation Against Software Theft. The software industry is a very important, and quickly growing sector of the British economy. It is already a major contributor to national wealth and employment in this country, and it is essential that it should be in a position to protect itself unlawful copying. I am very pleased to see that the industry is organising itself to counter in a concerted way the threat of software theft, and I would like to assure the new Federation Against Software Theft of my support and encouragement for their valuable efforts in this area."

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley was as good as his word and so has been his successor. My hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology and the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry have been of invaluable and fundamental assistance to our efforts to secure a change in the law. Without their help none of this would have been possible. Equally, it would not have been possible if both sides of the House were not convinced that a change in the law is necessary.

I am delighted to be able to pay the most fulsome tribute possible to the hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and for Yeovil who are here today, and for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), all of whom represent parties different from my own. Without their assistance and advice, none of this would have been possible. All are entitled to their share of the thanks which I know the industry would wish to extend for the assistance which it has received.

It is interesting that what is occurring in Britain has been occurring in other countries. We are not alone. We are not acting in isolation in seeking a reform of the copyright law. We are parallel with some countries, and slightly behind or slightly ahead of others. The United States, through federal legislation in 1980, extended the copyright law to cover computer software. Various state legislatures in the United States are considering specific anti-piracy laws for their jurisdictions. Louisiana was the first state to pass a distinctive anti-piracy measure for computer software.

In 1984 the Australian Parliament passed what is virtually emergency legislation because a judgment given at first instance appeared to suggest that copyright did not subsist in computer software and it was necessary to reverse that. The Canadian Parliament is considering a change in the law almost identical to the one which we are now considering.

The House will be alert to the fact that the examples that I have given so far have been common law jurisdictions. In Europe the Roman-Dutch law jurisdictions of the Common Market do not think of copyright in the same way as we do. They do not have such a sophisticated view of copyright. To them, copyright must be seen as part of a wider legal pattern involving concepts of unfair trading, which we do not have as finely developed as they do. Their legal analysis is frequently different from our own, which creates some of the difficulties to which I alluded earlier in my call for a common response throughout the Community to these problems. It is no good wishing that they were not there because they are.

Throughout the Community, it has been necessary for courts of first and sometimes appellate status to extend copyright by case law to cover computer software. In country after country, bodies such as FAST have been formed in order to try to protect the industry and to seek a change in the law. Only last week such a body was set up in Italy. There is already such a body in Holland, and moves are afoot in France, Germany and throughout the Community parallel to those here. Not only in North America, the Commonwealth and the Common Market, but in countries of the orient, courts of first jurisdiction are beginning to extend the law of copyright so that it covers their particular problem.

[Mr. William Powell]

past three hours many generous tributes have been paid to me. I thank the House for its courtesy in listening to my very long opening speech and I thank hon. Members for the generosity of their remarks about me—which were largely undeserved. It was my good fortune to emerge towards the top of the ballot, and to be given the opportunity to introduce this Bill.

The last two or three months have been very rewarding while I have tried to get myself into a position to present the Bill with some degree of confidence. It is not an exaggeration to say that the day before the ballot was held I was aware of the word "computer" and had heard people talking about software, but about either or both of them I knew little else. I am privileged to introduce this Bill and I am grateful to everyone both within and without the House who has helped me. Without the efforts of so many people it would have been impossible to have reached this stage today. I know that that point will be recognised in the industry.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was right to refer to piracy as a cancer. That is as good a description as any of what has been going wrong in the software industry during the past two years. I hope that when people outside the House debate the implications of the Bill and the future of the industry they will bear in mind the essential truth of the hon. Gentleman's description of this pernicious disease that has been eating away at the prosperity of the industry of the future. No better description has been given. It is a cancer that we must do everything possible to eradicate, and the first step is the passage of this measure.

I thank hon. Members for the manner and style in which they have welcomed the Bill. We listened with care to the remarks of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), and I am sure that his comments will be reflected in the future passage of the Bill.

I am grateful for the generous welcome that the measure received from the official Opposition and from the spokesman for the alliance, the hon. Member for Yeovil, and for the manner in which my hon. Friends—many of whom know much more about the subject, from years of experience, than I do—welcomed it and wished it speed through Parliament. I am sure that their words will have been noted carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) was right to emphasise that the greatest advantage of the measure will be to the consumer. The weakness in the market today is that, because there is no reliable protection against piracy, the consumer, the user, is getting a substandard product. It is not substandard in the sense that video material used to be substandard. In that case the sharks and criminals made appalling copies and sold them at rip-off prices, so that the consumers bought a product that was inferior in quality.

In this case the consumer gets a first-class product in terms of quality of reproduction, but an inferior work. Instead of using software—my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) spoke of how this particularly applies in education — to produce, say, a first-class textbook, which provides an excellent means of using computer software to develop the mind and open up educational advantage and so on, the consumer gets a product which is beautifully produced, with, no doubt, excellent reproduction, but which is, in its intrinsic material, thoroughly substandard and second-rate. If we can reverse that process, the consumer will be the first to gain.

Mr. Wood: I emphasise the point that my hon. Friend has just made. I disagreed with the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) that the development of software was a relatively cheap operation. Some packages can cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, and some can even cost well over £1 million, to develop. What incentive is there for developing such software if, within a few months or even weeks, it can be reproduced for a few pennies?

Mr. Powell: My hon. Friend is right and I cannot emphasise the point with greater clarity and force.

I warmly welcomed the Minister's remarks and I will comment on only two aspects of law enforcement. First, it is the intention that in future the law should primarily be enforced through civil remedies. There is no intention on the part of the industry to use the magistrates courts as a first strike weapon to enforce the law against commercial piracy. However, this law will make it much easier to go to the civil courts for civil remedies.

Secondly, because it is uncertain whether copyright law applies to a software product, enforcement of the civil law is chancy and colossally expensive. We should not tolerate that situation any longer and the Minister was right to emphasise that civil remedies will be much more effective as a consequence of the Bill.

The back-up power will be the availability of the criminal courts to deal with outrageous criminal cases. Those powers have been necessary in the video market. I hope that we are acting with sufficient speed to ensure that the criminal network that undermined the video market will not have penetrated computer software as deeply.

The Federation Against Software Theft will set up a unit to monitor what is happening. It will collect evidence of criminal conduct, including offences against the copyright laws, the conspiracy and forgery laws and the Theft Act — for handling and receiving stolen goods. That unit will hand over the evidence to the police who will decide whether the case merits further investigation.

There is no intention that a substitute police force should be established. Nothing could be more damaging to this country's long-term interests than to allow rival police organisations to be set up. The monitoring unit will do no more than present evidence to the police, who will allocate their resources in the proper way, as they do in the ordinary course of their work. I have put that on the record so that everyone knows how it is intended to proceed in that matter.

I am grateful for the kind comments of hon. Members and for the welcome given to the Bill. I am also grateful for the assurance that it will be given a fair wind through the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

12.52 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill springs directly from my own experience in hospital since I was taken seriously ill in January last year with kidney failure. From the months of hospitalisation that followed came the patients' charter which I published in September and from that has come the Bill, which seeks to implement one of the charter's main proposals.

The charter's object was to enhance the status of the hospital patient and to encourage the medical staff—doctors and nurses—to recognise the individual needs of patients and the fact that each patient is a unique human being.

Sometimes during those long days in hospital I felt more like a case history than a person. The doctors had diagnosed my illness; they reckoned that they knew how to treat it, what drugs I required and so on. Every day, they took blood tests and no doubt everything was despatched to the laboratory for analysis and computer readouts.

But what of me, the individual, lying in the hospital bed? I was like every patient who has just found himself in hospital, uncertain and anxious, worried about what is really wrong with him and worried about the future the treatment that he might have to endure. The patient will probably be worried about the support that his wife and family may get at home and uncertain as to whom he should turn to for help and advice. Perhaps one would expect that beside every hospital bed there might be a leaflet to allay some of those fears. I never found such a leaflet beside any of the beds in which I lay in no fewer than three different hospitals during the course of my illness.

Information about the hospital services that are available — times of meals, visiting hours and church services — should be available to any new patient, especially to one as anxious as I was. There should be guidance on how to make a complaint if such a necessity arises. There should be something about sickness benefits, benefits to which one's family is eligible, the library service and on all areas of service in a hospital that impinge directly upon the patient and about which he or she should know. The fact that no such leaflet existed in the three hospitals in which I was a patient—one was a large London general hospital and the others were in Reading and Oxford — shows that hospitals are not thinking as carefully as they might about their patients. It is for that reason that I am introducing the Bill.

It is true that a piece of paper with details about services is not all that a hospital patient requires. I was treated wonderfully by both doctors and nurses over the many months that I was a patient. Of course, the patient who is lying in a hospital bed is anxious about his condition. He will wonder about the future and be concerned about the treatment that he will receive. Patients are lying in alien surroundings and they have probably never met those who are to look after them. They will have no contact with them, at least initially, and, alas, perhaps no sense of trust and confidence.

Nurses still remain the gentle and kind angels that we want them to be, or at least that can be said of 99·9 per cent. of those who treated me. Nurses still know how to give patients assistance at moments of stress. If a nurse holds the patient's hand at that moment, it is worth more than its weight in gold.

Doctors, by necessity, are more awesome characters. If I had not been fortunate enough to be the son of a doctor I think that I would have been more browbeaten by them. I had the advantage over many patients lying in hospital because I knew something of the medical profession whereas they did not.

I have detailed patients' anxiety and sense of concern about the future and I have discovered that these feelings are not peculiar to me. After I published the patients' charter I received a vast amount of mail from all over the country. I received letters from ordinary people who found in my words an expression of their feelings. It is because I believed that I had struck a raw nerve, or a real issue, that I considered it worth while pursuing the charter into legislative form, if that was possible. Therefore, I count myself fortunate to have been drawn No. 12 in the ballot. I have been even more fortunate to find that the Department of Health and Social Security realised that there was something wrong and offered me its services in framing the Bill.

Some will suggest that contact between doctors, nurses and their patients is not all that it might be because the NHS is now treating more patients than ever before and that patients are in hospital for shorter periods than ever before. The time span is so limited that the opportunity for nurses and doctors to get to know their patients is much more limited than it was. Perhaps the amount of work done by doctors and nurses precludes their developing an effective bedside manner. Some of the doctors told me that if they did not have so much paperwork to do they could spend more time on the wards. We should take their point on board. Sometimes I wonder why a secretary is not available to help doctors get through work that could as easily be done for them as by them. Some of the older doctors were much more willing to stop and talk and to answer questions and allay fears.

Although most nurses brought that sympathetic touch of caring and gentleness that we expect of them, some bustled past, apparently bitten by the concept of patients as case histories who had to be fed drugs and not much else.

Lying in my hospital bed, I wondered whether something could be done to improve matters. I shall refer to my experiences, not to impress the House with the fact that I have had a fairly rough time but to show the type of mistakes that can be made in dealing with anyone lying in hospital. I am grateful for the fact that, throughout my period in hospital, no one said, "He is a Member of Parliament. We must give him gold-plated treatment." I never asked for, and I believe that I never received, such treatment. I hope that the fact that I speak as highly as I do of the NHS speaks volumes.

I remember a bad moment after an early dialysis treatment, which is not the easiest treatment to get used to. I felt pretty ghastly after the treatment and hoped that I was being taken back from the dialysis ward to my bed by means of one of those archaic wheelchairs that are still so common in hospitals. I was told that I was required in the X-ray department. I said, "I really feel very ill. May I just get my strength back before I go for an X-ray?" I was told, "Oh no, it is just on the way." I was taken into the X-ray department and I continued to complain about feeling ill. I was helped out of the wheelchair to stand

[Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson]

against the screen, and I promptly fainted. I woke up to see many faces looking down on me more or less saying, "What on earth happened to you? How could this possibly be the result of our just wheeling you to the X-ray department?" When I was back in my hospital bed, I wondered how that could have happened. Surely someone somewhere should have said, "If he is not feeling well, it would be better to help him to get better and then X-ray him." To whom does one complain? Who comes to the patient and says, "We have made a mistake."? Does anyone really care, or is this just one more of the hazards of being in a hospital?

The same question arose after I was asked whether I was sensitive to penicillin. I replied that I was and that my GP did not usually give it to me. At that time I had an infection, and I was given a pill, which turned out to be penicillin-based. I suffered the mother and father of a drug rash which, on its own, kept me in hospital for five weeks. When I went home I was in such a poor state that I needed a district nurse to come in every day to dress my feet. Afterwards, I asked, "I said that I was sensitive to penicillin; why did you give it to me?" The answer was, "Oh well, old boy, it was the best antibiotic for your particular infection and we thought that we could take the chance." Whose chance? Whose life? Whose body? Who is the sufferer? What is the compensation? What is the complaints procedure? There appears to be no such procedure. The patient is just the fall guy who is in the hands of doctors who think that they know better than the patient. The doctors did not feel that it was worth while picking up a telephone to ring my GP and ask, "He has told us that he does not get on well with penicillin. Is that really the case?"

In another instance, someone left a stitch in my leg while removing something that was necessary for dialysis. The stitch went septic and I got septicaemia. I still have a wound in my chest as a result of that mistake. Again, to whom do I complain? Who will offer me compensation? Who will listen to my problem? Sadly, no one seems to want to take the blame.

I do not believe that that is good enough. Those experiences of mine can be duplicated, triplicated and quadrupled throughout the country. Too many people who have written to me about my patients' charter have told me about the same type of mistakes and the problems that they too have suffered in hospital. No one comes forward to suggest that something could be done to alleviate those difficulties.

In listing those experiences and the failure to find a complaints procedure that was adequate to meet them, I thought a great deal about how a patient's rightful needs should be met and what type of complaints procedure a hospital should have to deal with them. In my list of complaints I should probably include awkward relationships with the staff. Sometimes those will be inevitable because human beings clash with one another but sometimes there is a failure by the staff to recognise that a patient is the anxious human being that he or she is. There is bad food, mislaid property, dirty washing and lavatory facilities, poor communications between doctors and nurses and their patients, failure by the medical staff to advise and consult relations, a lack of communication between departments in the same hospital, causing unnecessary distress to the patients, and mistakes causing distress and suffering to patients. On the last point, there is a powerful case for some form of automatic compensation — a system of insurance for hospital patients to cover them against time off work, minor disfigurements through unexpected surgery, drug rashes and other minor errors. I know that someone will say, "What is a minor error, and what is a major or more serious error?"

I do not believe that it is impossible for the Health Service to devise some form of limiting factor. I know that in a case such as mine, I have cause for compensation, but I also know that if I were to go through the present procedures not only would they be unbelievably drawn-out — probably covering years — they would cost me a fortune and I should probably obtain minor damages. I should have been able to take out an insurance policy when I first went into hospital. It could be devised in such a way that something would be available.

Before we worry about compensation any further, and we should worry about it because the present system is extremely inefficient and long-winded, we should return to my first suggestion of a leaflet beside each hospital bed for every new inpatient—a short statement of what is available to him or her and how, if they wish to make a complaint, they can do so. I believe that that is a first step in an effective hospital complaints procedure. What is more, hospital complaints generally should be handled by a senior member of the hospital staff and not treated solely at ward level. That member of the senior hospital staff should be on a par with the consultant, the surgeon and the senior nursing officer. He should, in effect, be the hospital's ombudsman. To my mind, the unit administrator would seem a natural choice for that appointment. All complaints should be directed to that person. There are some who believe that complaints should not just be directed to a person in the hospital but should be reported to the district health authority.

A member of the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health authority wrote to me about my Bill and said:

"It must be a fundamental obligation of District Health Authorities and they should be required to receive regular reports on the response given by patients, both during their period of treatment and also after their discharge. This need not be an enormous bureaucratic exercise, but could be done on a sample basis. Quite frankly I would not be happy at simply relying on doctors and nurses to necessarily report the views of patients accurately. If I can quote one small example, recently in one of our district general hospitals in Portsmouth, we undertook a patient satisfaction survey of the catering services. Questionnaires were designed for patients to complete and the questionnaires were delivered to each ward with an explanation given by a member of the Catering Manager's staff to each Ward Sister on how and when the form should be completed. Several Ward Sisters were extremely diffident about the exercise and said that they would complete the forms on the patients' behalf because the patients were not capable of completing the forms properly. Fortunately the Assistant Catering Manager assisted and ensured that the forms were completed by the patients. Discussions with clinical staff are frequently as disappointing. All too often one meets the comment 'We really know what is best for the patient'."

The person who sent me that letter goes on to say:

"The sad thing is that the NHS is a marvellous institution and in terms of the commitment from the general public, it is extremely fortunate. It has got some fantastic staff who work for the real sense of commitment and dedication, and I think many of them who inadvertently fail to recognise patients' real feelings would be concerned and upset if they were really aware of the sorrow and anxiety that patients do suffer."

It may be argued that some complaints of a very minor nature need not go through the complaints procedure that

I have suggested. I am not sure about that. Perhaps if somebody wants to complain about the lunch today or the supper tonight, that really is not a matter for the hospital ombudsman. But, generally speaking, I believe that complaints should go to that person in the hospital who is detailed to look after them. The consultant in the case of medical complaints, the senior surgeon in the case of surgery, and the senior nursing officer in the case of nurses, should be informed about whatever complaints have been made. I stress that I am talking about minor complaints.

I return to the point that I have made several times before—that we must recognise that a patient lying ill in bed in hospital is an anxious person. That person will be nervous of making a serious complaint against a nurse or a member of the medical staff because of a fear of reprisals or that someone may be vindictive. That is why I believe that a third party is so crucial.

I repeat that what is wanted is a member of the hospital staff whose responsibility is to follow up complaints for and on behalf of the complainant, and someone who is not frightened of running up against a senior member of the staff, doctor or nurse to ensure that the inquiries are completed satisfactorily — in effect, a hospital troubleshooter. To some extent I find myself in that extraordinary position.

I have received letters from other patients in the hospital that I am currently attending for dialysis treatment. People that I have not seen before are bringing me their complaints and saying, "Since you are a Member of Parliament, will you do something for me?" I do what I can. It seems extraordinary to me that such people who are not my constituents feel that because I have the magic initials after my name, I can do something. In so far as I can, I do. If I tell my hon. Friend the Minister that members of the nursing staff have also asked me whether I can do something, particularly about the supply of laundry to the wards, he might realise that there is quite a task to be done to ensure that the complaints not only of patients but even of the nursing staff are properly handled.

Of course, it may be said that while I am talking about patients complaining, there is no particular reason why the hospital staff itself should not go out of their way to discover whether there are complaints. I suggest that it would be no bad thing if doctors and senior nurses asked patients whether everything was all right, if they consulted relatives of patients to find out whether the patient had told them something that he had been nervous of telling nurses or doctors. Sometimes it is undoubtedly true that patients will tell their wives and those close to them about their worries, while they will hide those same worries from those who are looking after them. My correspondent from the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health authority told me in his letter that the Harrow health care centre,

"a small private Health Centre in Harrow",

in his words,

"hands out on a routine basis questionnaires to patients asking them fundamental questions like 'Did you like your doctor?', 'Did you have confidence in him?', 'Did you feel that he told you all you needed and wished to know?'"

If the Harrow health care centre can take that attitude towards its patients, I do not see why large general hospitals could not do something similar.

From what I have said, I wish to underline that I am in no way trying to suggest that going to hospital is a terrifying experience or that one will be badly treated or have endless grounds for complaint—in fact, quite the contrary. However, that mistakes are made I hope I have illustrated, and that patients have cause for concern is undoubted. If anyone wants to see the correspondence that I have received about my patients' charter, he is welcome to do so.

I repeat that all of us can have the greatest respect for the doctors, nurses and domestic staff in our National Health Service hospitals. We can be satisfied, by and large, that they treat those in their care as well as they can. I suppose that what I am really complaining about is a lack of communication. I am also complaining about the fact that those who look after patients do not attempt enough to discover what the patient is feeling and so build up his or her confidence and help the patient to get better.

However, as we all know, all human institutions have shortcomings and failings. I believe that a practical and easily understood complaints procedure common to all hospitals is badly needed. I am aware that some hospitals have already introduced a complaints procedure. I am particularly delighted to say that my own Newbury district hospital has produced an authoritative document. However, I have not been an inpatient in that hospital, so have not had the chance to try out its procedure. Nevertheless, I know that it exists, and that shows that some hospital authorities have thought about the subject and felt that something should be done.

I believe that something on a nationwide basis is needed. Because it does not exist now, it is a serious omission from the effectiveness of the Health Service when it is applied to hospitals. Because I believe that the omission can be put right by the Bill, I commend it to the House.

1.24 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): It is a privilege to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), who after a period of suffering, which we recognise was real, is sitting here at least substantially restored to health as a result of the efforts of the NHS. He warmly expressed his gratitude to that service, yet in his duty as a Member of the House, having recognised that there are real shortcomings, has not been shy in bringing them forward to the House and the public.

I endorse what my hon. Friend has said because many years ago I too had great reason to be grateful to the NHS when it repaired my detached retinas with great skill. I was off work for only two months and I suffered none of the difficulties that my hon. Friend suffered. But, having practised in the courts for 20 years and having done a significant amount of practice of a medical nature, I know only too well of the problems which he describes. I also know them only too well from, in a sense, the inside, because my father-in-law, Professor Charles Fletcher, has made a particular study of communications in medicine. Although he has now retired, he continues to lecture and he has published works on the enormous importance of those in the medical profession being able to communicate.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will accept that, despite his father-in-law's retirement, we remain grateful for the advice that we have had from Professor Fletcher and for the continuing advice that we receive from him.

Mr. Lyell: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend.

The medical profession is understanding more and more the importance of communication, but there is still a long way to go. It should be a requirement is every medical school that there is at least a significant period of formal training for young doctors as to how they should approach the patient. They should realise just how vulnerable a patient is, even if everything is done with the best of intentions.

On a lighter note, but with a serious undertone, let me tell the House of a story told to me by my general practitioner about my former general practitioner who is no longer alive. He was the very best of doctors and would undoubtedly have done everything that he could to communicate. But when his successor took over a patient told him that she had finished the course of pills which had been given to her by the doctor's predecessor but that they did not seem to be working. She said, "I have been taking them exactly as he told me every 46 hours." A moment's reflection will show how that misunderstanding occurred and yet nobody would put it down to the fault of the doctor. Happily, the pills were taken every four to six hours for the following three weeks and began to have a rapid and beneficial effect!

The undertone of that is that people are extremely lost and vulnerable when they enter a strange world. I remember feeling exactly the same when I entered hospital, although it turned out to be for only a comparatively short period. I remember having something explained to me and I was told that I had some "D" mark in my eye. I kept asked what "D" mark was. I thought that I was moderately well educated but I was not familiar with the medical expression "oedema". I was continually told that there was oedema which I picked up as "D" mark. That was a small hospital with the highest standards of treatment and the kindest communication. In enormous general hospitals, and in any hospital, there is tremendous pressure. People can feel much more lost and worried than many practitioners realise.

I re-emphasise that my gratitude to the Health Service is colossal. The dedication of the staff—doctors, nurses, administrators and ancillary staff—in the face of all sorts of difficulties is real and noticeable. Against that background of appreciation, and drawing on my experience in the courts, I want to make another serious point to the medical profession which I hope will be noted, considered and acted upon. It relates to circumstances in which it is necessary to pursue and investigate a serious complaint which may lead to a claim for compensation.

As the House knows, all doctors are required to be insured and I do not think that any doctor practising in the medical profession would be uninsured. The Medical Protection Society and the Medical Defence Union, for which I have had the privilege of acting on a number of occasions, exist to look after doctors' interests. The patient, however, is not insured and finds himself in an alien world. In theory, much has been done to improve the ease with which patients can get hold of their notes to pursue an investigation, but in practice it is still extremely difficult. Objections are raised to the patient seeing the notes, to more than one doctor seeing them or to their being passed to lawyers, as is essential if a case is to be properly regarded. It is said that the patient may suffer if he sees the notes, or that doctors will be less open if the notes are not completey protected, but I believe that such anxieties are exaggerated in the minds of those who express them. The risk to the patient is very small. Advisers, whether they be medical or legal or simply friends, will take care of the notes and not allow worries to be exaggerated. The notes should therefore be far more easily available.

My second serious comment is that members of the medical profession are far too reluctant to come forward and give evidence when it is justified in negligence cases. It is extraordinarily difficult to persuade experts to give an independent opinion and, if necessary, to support it in the courts. Here I declare an interest as to some extent it is my pleasure and profit to act in such cases, although I have not done so for some time and it is no significant part of my current activities.

It is wrong that a great and rightly privileged profession should not be prepared to see justice done in cases involving its own members. Such cases are often very complex and involve questions of judgment. Consultants and other specialists should not stand back from giving an honest and open opinion, if necessary backed in the courts, if that is the only way in which justice can be achieved.

It is sometimes argued that the British Medical Association or the General Medical Council is reluctant to keep lists of specialits as that might constitute the advertisement of skills, but I do not believe that there is any merit in that argument, if indeed it is still around. I appreciate that it might be embarrassing for one practitioner to have to give evidence against another, especially in a narrow field in which they might be friends or colleagues, but the same problems arise for lawyers, architects, accountants, chartered surveyors, and so on, and in all my long experience I have not found members of those professions unwilling to come forward in an open and responsible way. In this respect, the medical profession falls short of what the public are entitled to expect and I hope that it will take serious note of my comments, which are made in a spirit of kindliness and great support for its members' professional judgment and skill and the benefits that they provide for the community.

I turn to consider some of the specific points raised in the Bill. There is enormous merit in the setting up of a formal complaints procedure of exactly the type envisaged in the Bill. The fact that such a procedure exists and that it is open will help to overcome some of the problems, at a graver level, that might sometimes lead to litigation. I emphasise that I have no wish to see us follow the Americans into endless claims. Indeed, I know very well that my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury has no wish to see that.

However, anxious patients who believe that they have a genuine complaint should have the opportunity to air it. In a high proportion of cases—I suspect in the majority of them—it will lead to the rapid reassurance that the profession would have wished to give if it had only known about the complaint. In the small minority of cases where the matter is more serious, justice can only enhance the profession's prestige.

I warmly welcome and strongly support the Bill, and I hope that it will find a rapid route to the statute book.

1.35 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On behalf of the Labour party I warmly welcome the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson). Although we have jousted almost personally on one or two issues in the past, I was delighted to be sitting on the Front Bench last year when he returned

to the House. I think that we all welcomed his return, particularly as we had heard such horrifying stories about the nature of the things that had been wrong with him, and about the accidents that had happened to him while in hospital. I hope that it will not sound at all patronising if I say that it is inestimably to his credit that, on coming out of hospital and returning to work, he paid great tribute to the NHS and to those who had helped him. Unlike most of us, he was capable of distinguishing between what people had been trying to do and what had gone wrong.

There can be no greater justification for private Member's Bills than that a Member of Parliament who has had painful and distasteful experiences should try to help others by changing the law. That is one of the perfect justifications for a freely elected Parliament. However, I hope that I am not being too party political if I say that when arguing against private medicine and in favour of the NHS, I always stress that one of the virtues of having everyone reliant on the NHS is that people in influential positions can get corrected something that has gone wrong. Conversely, if people in influential positions opt out of the NHS, things can go wrong without them even knowing about it.

It is extremely commendable that the hon. Member for Newbury should have introduced this Bill. We shall seek to ensure that it gets through all its stages as quickly as possible, as we should like to see it enshrined in law. It is sometimes not recognised by those who theorise that patients in hospital are ill. That is why they are there. Those who feel ill are not usually feeling their best. If one is down, in pain, confused and vulnerable, when something goes wrong one is more disturbed than one might be at home, or even in the House of Commons.

People in hospital are ill and vulnerable. Many patients are in awe of doctors and nurses and many are also affected by a sense of gratitude to all the people who are trying to make them well. As a result legitimate complaints are not voiced by patients because they feel that they would appear ungrateful or that they would be regarded as trouble makers if they drew attention to things that were not going right for them.

We must make it easier for hospital patients to have their complaints dealt with properly. The exceptionally well informed hon. Member for Newbury found it difficult to put messages across when he was receiving treatment in hospital. Many patients are not as well informed and confident and are not the offspring of a doctor. They have enormous difficulties making their views known. We must ensure that there is a complaints system about which everybody knows and of which everybody can make use.

I have something of an obsession about complaints procedures because before I came to the House I worked for the local government ombudsman and dealt with complaints all the time.

People working in hospitals might be perturbed that Parliament should require a complaints procedure. There is no better way of describing the procedure than John Milton's immortal words:

"when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered, and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained".

A good effective complaints procedure would be of advantage, not only to patients, but to people working in hospitals.

It is probably best for people with a complaint to turn first to the person about whom they are complaining or the person who is responsible for that aspect of the hospital service. However, a procedure to log complaints is still necessary. I am not talking about the need for a formal procedure to roll into operation, but logging complaints is important.

It is often difficult to complain to the person about whom one is complaining. It can be difficult if one is having a rough time with a nurse or doctor to say that one does not like what is going on. It might be easier to complain to someone else about the person who is causing the upset.

A formal complaints procedure would be to the advantage of the people working in the hospitals. We should all learn from our mistakes. If a hospital is properly organised and logs all complaints, the complaints can be used as a tool of management to identify people who are square pegs in round holes, or procedures that lead to complaints. Improvements could be made, as a result of a complaint, to the physical layout of a ward or clinic. If the hospital management makes proper use of the complaints procedure, not only will that benefit the individual making the complaint, it will enable the hospital to provide a better service by identifying what is going wrong and putting it right.

One thing that distinguishes our system of health care from that in the United States—to the inestimable credit of our system—is the absence of the massive amount of legal activity and litigation that prevails in the American system. Operations carried out by surgeons in the United States are described in some circumstances as defensive surgery — to defend surgeons against possible legal action if something has gone wrong. That is medical madness, and must be avoided.

Mr. John Patten: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman—who for the purposes of this debate is my hon. Friend—for giving way. Is he aware that in some American hospitals the staff includes moral philosophers, who are employed by the hospitals to advise surgeons on the moral choices that they face before taking decisions?

Mr. Dobson: They may be moral philosophers, but in line with everything else in the United States I suspect that they are concerned more with money than with morality. They are probably advising the surgeon that he will be safer in court rather than in the eyes of his fellow human beings or of whichever God he may subscribe to. It is more likely to be legal than moral advice.

I firmly believe that the stronger and more effective the sytem of complaints procedures in our National Health Service—both in general practice and in hospitals—the less likely we are to get into the mad position of having lawyers shuffling all over the place. Lawyers are a desperate necessity and their services should be avoided almost at all costs. We do not want the position that prevails in the United States, where if someone wants to complain about a hospital he has to do it via a writ or a claim for damages. Such a system is to the advantage only of the legal profession, and certainly not to the advantage of the patient or the medical profession.

As my constituency includes Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn, I may be risking a few votes at the next general election. However, I believe that the only proper place for a lawyer in a hospital is as a patient and not as a participant.

I welcome the Bill because it will be to the advantage of patients and the majority of people who are working in

[Mr. Dobson]

the hospital service who want only to improve the services to patients. It will help those responsible for managing the hospital service to manage it better and will help keep the lawyers out of our system of health care.

I hope that the Bill will go through all its stages today, get to the House of Lords and become law as quickly as possible. That will be a great tribute to the way that the hon. Member for Newbury has turned his experiences to the advantage of everyone else. We envy him that.

1.50 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I fear that I must speak as a desperate necessity who is to be avoided at all costs and as one who should be in hospital as a patient. In the face of such an attack on myself and many others, I have a rare opportunity to speak about the Bill.

Having nailed my colours firmly to the mast, I join in the congratulations that have been offered to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson). Hon. Members will wish him and his Bill every success. No hon. Member is better qualified to introduce such a measure, and he did so with experience, aplomb and true knowledge of the subject, having been through the system in the way he described. My hon. Friend deserves as well with his measure as any hon. Member ever has with a private Member's Bill. I say that in the knowledge that I have wished him even greater success than I would have wished on myself in the preceding debate, when I introduced my private Member's Bill.

All hon. Members have experienced, through our constituents, circumstances which have made us wish that a satisfactory and reliable complaints procedure existed for hospitals. Constituents come to us with complaints about the way in which they, their families or friends have been treated in hospital. Sometimes those complaints are not justified; they are the product of a chemistry between two persons who have not been able to hit it off, with one side not having been able to accept the good will and status of the other.

Sometimes, however, not just personal relations but the system fails. It is to remedy that defect that the Bill is designed, and for that purpose it proposes an important and necessary change. I have no doubt that it will not be necessary to resort to its procedures often, because the overwhelming majority of those who go to hospital—as patients or when visiting families or friends who are ill—have nothing but the highest praise for the nursing, consideration, courtesy and good will that the staff show to patients.

Notwithstanding the desire of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to send me to hospital as quickly as he can—though I must remind him that, having been called to the Bar by Lincoln's Inn in his constituency, I am affronted by his suggestion that I should be in hospital——

Mr. Dobson: I interrupt the hon. Gentleman because he may have misheard me. I said that the only proper role for a lawyer in hospital was as a patient. I did not say that all lawyers should be hospital patients.

Mr. Powell: I am grateful for that intervention. In view of the hon. Gentleman's good will towards the Bill, it would be churlish of me to insist on an interpretation of his words, which seemed to me to be consistent with his general drift. Therefore, I do not do so.

This is a first-class Bill, introduced by an outstanding Member in the best possible cause. No Bill could be more warmly welcomed by the House. I welcome it unreservedly.

1.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): The Government welcome the Bill, and I welcome the chance to speak briefly about our support for it.

I pay tribute to the commitment and energy of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), who has displayed his customary concern for others, in circumstances in which many others would have been concerned only with their own problems. The whole House admires his attitude. Everyone who has taken part in the debate has paid tribute to my hon. Friend, and I found his speech intensely moving and interesting.

I echo the handsome compliments paid by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury, who has demonstrated his concern to maintain and improve the quality of services offered by the NHS. We all share that concern and all hon. Members who have taken part in the debate have paid tribute to the skill and dedication of those who work in the NHS. The Government applaud those sentiments.

We have heard about the work of doctors and nurses, but we should not forget the ancillary and paramedical staff, who play an integral part in good hospital care. The involvement of ancillary staff can be critical in creating the atmosphere of contentment in our great NHS hospitals, whether large or small. We have benefited from the valuable perspective of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury as a recent recipient of health services. That perspective has prompted him to bring forward the Bill, which is designed to ensure that the NHS deals more effectively, according to his lights, with complaints.

We have had some interesting reflections on the nature of the NHS complaints procedure from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and, particularly, from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), whose 20 years of practice in the courts, sometimes involved with these issues, has given him the knowledge and experience with which to speak freely and in detail.

We also heard interesting views from my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), whose own Bill moved forward one stage earlier today. It is characteristic of his assiduity as an hon. Member and of his interest in the welfare of his constituents that he should have stayed on to speak in yet another debate; some hon. Members might have given in to the temptation to repair to a place of refreshment to celebrate the progress of a Bill of their own.

The basis of everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury is intent on doing finds its source in his view that the National Health Service needs a patients' charter. That is a great issue. My hon. Friend first wrote to the Department in September 1984 to put forward his 10-point patients' charter. I think that he realises that

these are complicated issues that require perhaps step-by-step movement and much detailed consultation with all those involved in our hospitals.

The concept of the charter and the themes raised in it are far-reaching. For example, point No. 2 is:

"No patient shall be prescribed powerful drugs until the hospital concerned has been in touch with the patient's general practitioner."

My hon. Friend was too modest to refer to the matters set out in the charter, so I shall do it for him. The third point is that new patients must be covered by an insurance policy when they enter hospital.

These matters and the range of others are most thought-provoking. I am not saying that the Government support them or oppose them. I am merely saying that they are thought-provoking for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health and myself in our continuing review of NHS policy. I hope that they are thought-provoking for the medical community at large.

Apart from beginning to pilot the Bill through the House, my hon. Friend has begun to promote perhaps a slightly overdue debate in the NHS and medical circles about the nature of the complaints procedure and the responsiveness of the NHS to those we collectively hope to serve. I pay tribute to him for getting the debate going.

Nothing could have shown more clearly the need for the debate than my hon. Friend's reference to the lack of information that he experienced, at least on one occasion, while he was in hospital. There was no leaflet next to his bed, and he was given no information about church services and other forms of help which so many patients entering a hospital would seek. We expect those who run our hospitals to provide that sort of information and to make it freely available. It is wrong that that information has not been given. I am sure that that view is shared by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Building on his experience, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury has decided to initiate a debate on the nature of the responsiveness of the NHS to its consumers and the nature of the complaints procedure which, alas and alack, we must have. He has done that and has introduced an important hospital complaints procedure with, I think, the support of the whole House.

The Government are concerned to increase the consumer responsiveness of the NHS. It must be more sensitive to the needs and wishes of patients. One of the key components of the recent NHS management inquiry report produced for us by Roy Griffiths and his colleagues was the importance of assessing and ensuring consumer satisfaction. In the talks about management changes that have flowed from our acceptance of the results of the inquiry as set out in the report, what Roy Griffiths and his colleagues had to say about the importance of listening to the consumer—the patient—has been rather overlooked. That is another reason for our being grateful to my hon. Friend for introducing the Bill.

The improvements that I hope the Government are introducing into the management of the NHS are designed, among other things, to bring decision making closer to the patient and to begin to try to pinpoint exactly who is responsible for doing what at all stages in our hospitals. The introduction of general managers is providing an opportunity to stimulate initiative, energy and vitality in the management function. One necessary element in achieving this is the need to give proper attention to the needs of patients, or consumers. It is essential that NHS managers should know how well services are being delivered. The patients must be a valuable source of information. One should not simply ask the politicians, doctors, nurses, paramedicals, ancillaries, trade unionists and everyone else involved in the delivery of the service how the NHS is run. One should also ask the patients. That must be one of the touchstones of good, hard, hands-on management in the NHS. Managers should be seen to be taking account of what patients say about the NHS.

The NHS already has a quite well-established complaints procedure in hospitals on the basis of guidance that we issue to the NHS, most recently in 1981. That advice emphasises a speedy, thorough and open response at the local level as the best approach to a complaint by a patient or relative. We expect health authorities to deal firmly and fully with complaints and to ensure that complainants receive informative and frank explanation. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury that it is possible to sort out these problems quickly by immediate intervention by management, consultants, or nurse managers. I appreciate the point made by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras about the difficulty of complaining to a person about whom one has a complaint. There are intrinsic difficulties in that process.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied, there are established procedures for a further review of the case at a higher level in the service by officers or, perhaps, by members of the authority. Those procedures are laid down in health notice HC(81)5 which was circulated in April 1981. Every Health Service manager has a copy of "Health Services Management: Health Service Complaints Procedure". There is much good basic guidance in that document.

In addition to the NHS complaints procedure, the independent office of the Health Service Commissioner can investigate patients' grievances. He has the power to investigate complaints about the actions of a health authority involving an alleged failure in service, or failure in service provision or maladministration. About 120 cases a year are investigated by the Health Service Commissioner.

It may be of interest for the House to know how the present complaints procedure works. Each year in England there are about 6 million inpatient admissions and almost 50 million episodes of outpatient treatment or treatment in accident and emergency departments. In 1983, 19,000 written complaints were received, or about one for every 3,000 episodes of treatment. Although it is a comparatively small figure given the overall volume of NHS activity, which is prodigiously large, 19,000 written complaints represent a considerable body of patients with grievances so great that they decided to write about them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury has received letters from not only fellow patients in the hospital which is treating him so well but—I was slightly grieved to hear this—from nursing staff in hospitals. The number of complaints has been growing in recent years. It is generally accepted that most complaints are made not to obtain financial compensation or to give a useful indoor relief to the lawyers — this point worried the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras—but to obtain an adequate explanation as to why an action took place in a particular way. The lessons learnt from the volume of complaints can be valuable.

[Mr. John Patten]

The Bill is in line with the Government's aims for a more responsible NHS. It would be one step further—should it pass into law—towards achieving a better Health Service. In many ways, the duty that the Bill would lay on the Secretary of State is already fulfilled. The legislation would also provide a vehicle for the improvement of current procedures, to which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire referred in his eloquent remarks. It will also give a valuable impetus to the drive for better services.

My hon. Friend's Bill furnishes an opportunity for us to re-examine our complaints procedure. We should of course do that in full consultation with the medical and other health professions and with patients. We would determine with them the precise shape of the complaints procedure that the NHS needs to hear the patients' voice, to examine, critically perhaps, its own actions, and, most importantly, to act on the findings of those discussions. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving us that opportunity and impetus.

The Bill will also provide us with a valuable opportunity to consider the available publicity material. A complaints procedure about which no one knows is of no use to anyone. We must do better. If my hon. Friend was let down and was not given the information that he felt he needed, we must do better and ensure that our hospitals give that information. That is not to say that people should be encouraged to complain unreasonably about the superb service which the NHS generally provides. My hon. Friend and my hon. and learned Friend paid tribute to that.

We must be satisfied that we are not discouraging patients from voicing their legitimate anxieties. That is most important not just for patients but for the parents and relatives of those who are in hospital. They should feel much freer than hitherto they have felt to talk to staff about services and any queries that they may have. Staff should not feel inhibited from discussing such matters with complainants.

Many complaints arise out of a sense of frustration—the feeling that people do not want to talk and give information. It is difficult to legislate about that. It requires major changes in the training regime for young doctors, nurses, paramedicals, and ancillaries who do such an important job in our hospitals. It is as true now as it ever has been that good communications between staff and patients will go a long way to reducing the number of complaints and the need for action which will undoubtedly flow from my hon. Friend's Bill.

The Bill will provide my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State with an opportunity to consider afresh all the elements on which I have touched briefly, and perhaps to introduce a statutory complaints procedure which commands the confidence of patients and staff. It should make a real contribution towards the provision of a more consumer-responsive NHS. It is a duty which, as I said at the outset of my remarks, the Government welcome. We are most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving us the opportunity to welcome it.

2.13 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: I must first thank all those hon. Members who have so kindly spoken about my Bill in such complimentary terms. May I take up, especially, the kind words of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and follow one thing that he said which is accurate and to the point—that when complaints are aired things are put right which are then not wrong for someone who comes afterwards. Complaints help to improve services generally for today and the future. We should see the complaints procedure in that light.

The second point I should like to make is to remind the House that there are between 1,100 and 1,200 complaints to each local health authority each year. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, that is a large number. That may be the tip of the iceberg or it may be the iceberg itself; I do not think that any of us are sure. But the more we can let patients air their views, the better Health Service we shall have.

I remind the House that Professor Andrew Matthews of St. George's hospital in London told the British Association for the Advancement of Science that, in his experience, the better a patient was informed about his treatment and about the way that he was being looked after in hospital, the less was his reliance on pain-killing drugs and the quicker was his cure. That again underlines the need for communications between the medical staff and patients.

I thank the Minister for his very kind words about my Bill and about myself. I thank him also for the many things that he has told us about how sensitive the Government are to the need to improve the consumer protection side of the Health Service—for that, after all, is what I am talking about. We all recognise that there is a shortcoming in terms of a complaints procedure, and I hope that the Bill will make good that omission.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Companies (Political Donations) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.18 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

When I was fortunate enough —if that is the right term —to draw No. 18 in the ballot for private Members' Bills, I was offered different types of advice. Some hon. Members said to me, "Introduce a Bill that is non-contentious and that will gain support from all parts of the House. Then you can get a piece of legislation through and it will be remembered as the Fatchett Act. Alternatively, you can go down in a blaze of glory that will make a major political propaganda point and be forgotten by lunchtime." I decided to adopt the former course and to introduce a measure that is clearly non-contentious, that is designed to extend democracy in our society, and that should therefore gain the support of all sections of the House. It may well be that the spirit that has pervaded the House today, with two Bills making rapid progress, will also affect this Bill. It is a measure about extending democracy to shareholders in companies. It is about extending rights. Therefore, I should have thought that it was an important part of the political process in society.

I should like to deal with one or two criticisms that might be made of the Bill. Some Conservative Members might suggest that the Bill is an attack upon the funds of the Conservative party. They will call in aid evidence that in 1983-84 the Conservative party received £2,780,000 worth of donations from private companies. They will say that what I am trying to do is stop companies donating to the Conservative party. That is not my intention, but if Conservative Members feel guilty about company donations, they may come to that conclusion.

My intention is to give shareholders the right to have a say in those decisions. Surely no Conservative Member could object to that. It would simply be a case of company shareholders saying that they agreed that their company should have a political fund and be able to make donations. If we go through that democratic process, shareholders might agree to continue to donate funds to the Conservative party, although that would be surprising, judging by the value that they get for that money. In view of the way in which the country's economy has been managed over the past few years, I should have thought that it was not necessarily the best investment to make on behalf of shareholders. However, after a ballot and through the processes that my Bill sets out, the company shareholders might decide that it would be in their interests to vote the moneys to the Labour party. That would probably be a much better investment because they would have a much more sensible management of the economy, and they could look forward to their company growing and perhaps to greater dividends being paid on higher profits.

Therefore, the Bill is not an attack on funds given to the Conservative party, nor is it an attack upon companies with directors who have received honours from the Prime Minister in the new year's or birthday honours lists. One or two of my right hon. and hon. Friends have referred to the relationship between company donations and mentions in the honours list, but it would be scurrilous to suggest that directors donate to the Conservative party simply to get a mention in the honours list. There must be a much better reason for donating to the Conservative party, although as yet I have not found one that would make sound financial sense.

Therefore, the Bill is not an attack on the Conservative party or company directors. It is a modest Bill. On other occasions I have called it the shareholders' charter. It is an attempt to extend to shareholders the rights that trade unionists have enjoyed since 1913. If any Conservative Members oppose the Bill, they will be telling the country that they expect trade unions to hold ballots, give individuals the right to opt out, and have separate political funds for the payment of political donations, but that they do not expect any such controls or constraints on companies. It would be strange if there were such opposition because Conservative Members would be saying that they agreed that there should be a law for trade unions, but that there should not be the same application of that law for companies. When I look at Conservative Benches and see reasonable men — I include all Conservative Members present—I would expect them to put first the interests of the political system, not the interests of their own political party, and that what they would like is fairness in political donations so that trade unions and companies work on the same basis.

Therefore, the Bill attempts to provide rights for shareholders that they have not enjoyed previously. The Bill could have gone about that in several ways. First, I could simply have introduced a clause that said that companies could not make political donations. I could have sought to make illegal political donations either to the Conservative party or to front organisations. However, this is a modest measure, which does not attempt to be that far-reaching. I am seeking consensus.

I believe, as I am sure Conservative Members do, that it is part of our political process that the great institutions of our society donate to political parties and political organisations. Therefore, I do not want to make it illegal in that sense.

But if I did, I would have some support from companies. The chairman of Cadbury Schweppes, Sir Adrian Cadbury, may well have supported the measure. He was reported in the *Financial Times* on 23 January 1984 as having said:

> "Boards of directors should consider stopping political contributions and instead pay the equivalent in higher dividends to allow shareholders to decide whether to donate."

It is most unfortunate that Cadbury Schweppes did not listen to the excellent advice of its chairman. During the course of that year the organisation donated £15,000 to the Conservative party. Nevertheless, I could have taken Sir Adrian Cadbury's advice and simply introduced a Bill that said that there should be no political donations and that if shareholders wanted to donate to the Conservative party, or to the alliance, they could do so. I notice that no alliance Member is present. One of the great advantages of being an alliance Member is that the alliance has already introduced the shorter working week.

Instead, I have sought to build upon the existing institutions and the fact that companies do donate, and I have sought to allow such donations to continue. I am trying to take from companies the right that they seem to exercise through their directors at the moment without any consultation whatever with shareholders.

Let me draw attention to some of the problems that have been experienced by Gwent county council's superannuation fund. Employees of Gwent county council pay into

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

that fund. Looking at the political map of that part of the country I suspect that many of them are, wisely, Labour party voters. Gwent county council, probably feeling some of the democratic wishes of its employees, decided that it would examine the companies in which that fund invested to discover whether they donated to the Conservative party. The council then wrote to the companies and asked whether, if they did donate to the Conservative party, they would consider the possibility of no longer doing so because the pension fund would not be in favour of such donations.

For example, the council wrote to the Sedgwick group, an organisation in which the Gwent county council had investment funds. The group replied:

"This is not a matter in which shareholders can be involved."

That shows a great belief in democracy, does it not? I cannot imagine the General Secretary of the TUC saying that trade unionists should not be involved. The horror of Conservative Members would be unbelievable. It would be synthetic, but it would be unbelievable.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South) *rose——*

Mr. Fatchett: No, I shall not give way.

The Hambro group, in which Gwent county council also invested, said:

"The board reserves the right to act in accordance with its views."

That is a lovely democratic principle, is it not? One or two of my hon. Friends may say that company directors make such bizarre decisions on occasions that they appear not to act in accordance with their own views. But Hambro's belief in shareholders' democracy is so great that it says that the board of directors will act in accordance with its own views.

My modest Bill would extend to shareholders the right to a ballot. It would tell directors that they have a responsibility to consult individual shareholders before they use company money for political donations, just like a trade union. There would have to be a ballot to set up a political fund, and it would be at that point that the shareholders would choose whether they wanted their company to participate. They may say that they do not want their company to invest or spend money in that way, but that would be a democratic decision.

Who are we, having been elected by the democratic process, to deny the value and validity of that process? I cannot imagine any Conservative Members saying that they would disagree with such a decision. There will thus be a decision to set up a political fund. There will also be a right for individual shareholders to opt out of contributing to political donations. We may later wish to extend that to individual employees, who create the company's wealth, or to consumers who probably make a donation to the Conservative party every time they go into a public house. I am attracted by the idea of a non-Conservative party beer; that is a very populist issue. People could then opt out of the political levy. At present, however, the Bill extends that right only to shareholders——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 5 July.

Private Members' Bills

GAMING (BINGO) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 1 March.

TEACHERS (INDEPENDENT PAY REVIEW) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Second Reading what day? No day named.

PENSIONERS' RIGHT TO FUEL AND COMMUNICATIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

WATER AUTHORITIES (MEETINGS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[1 February]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 12 July.

DANGEROUS VESSELS BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 1 March.

SMALL BUSINESS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[18 January]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

NORTHERN IRELAND (TERMINATION OF JURISDICTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 April.

CHARITIES BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 1 March.

EDUCATION (SCHOOL BUDGETS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[8 February]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

CONTROL OF POLITICAL EXPENDITURE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

TRADE UNION AND EMPLOYMENT ACTS (REPEAL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ANIMAL WELFARE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 27th February proceedings on the business selected in pursuance of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of public business) shall, if not previously concluded, lapse at Seven o'clock and shall be counted as a half day as provided by that Order.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Professional Boxing

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): *The Times* in a notable leader last year commented:

"Boxing has a long history often invested with glamour. It is seen as a trial of courage and strength, a producer of heroes, a ritualisation of the combats by which mankind has developed. It has enabled a few exceptional individuals to escape from poverty and racial discrimination and rise to wealth and fame. It is held to have practical value in developing character and skill in self-defence. It is enjoyed by many spectators and it earns a lot of money for some businessmen."

It continued that banning boxing

"would be an unwarranted interference with individual liberty. It is perfectly legal to damage oneself with alcohol, nicotine and other permitted drugs. It is even legal to commit suicide. Boxing is voluntary for those who receive the damage as well as for those who inflict it."

The brain does not distinguish between the impact of an amateur or a professional glove, a football, a fist or shoulder in a rugby scrum, or the ground as a jockey falls from a horse. Hang-gliding, pot-holing, rock-climbing and other dangerous pursuits are not sports that I pursue and I share the concern at the enormous cost in money and human life when such high-risk sports go wrong and rescue operations have to be mounted. Nevertheless, I strongly respect the right of the individual to choose his own destiny.

To those people who would ban boxing on the grounds that it is dangerous, I put the facts. Yes, it is one of many dangerous sports. It is a tragedy that there have been 10 deaths in professional boxing in this country since 1945, of which six were British, one due to aspirin sensitivity. Yet over 480 people died in sport between the years of 1969 and 1981 alone. What of mountaineering, horse riding, football and rugby, where in each case the figures for deaths are higher? What of smoking and drinking? Would those who seek to ban boxing logically extend their argument and ban them? Stringent medical safeguards, popular support and willingness to discuss the moral and ethical issues concerned with professional boxing are essential to the success of the sport. The price for boxing's future will rightly be eternal vigilance in all these areas.

When we look at sport today, and particularly boxing, we see strong arguments why the 1980s should go down in the annals of professional boxing as a glorious decade for the sport. Yet the likelihood grows, year by year, that this decade may mark the end of professional boxing. It is deeply to be regretted that I come before the House concerned that the future of the sport is threatened—threatened primarily not from the medical lobby, from pressure groups or from lack of public interest but from within the sport itself.

I should state from the outset that I retain an unpaid interest in boxing. Along with my hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), I was honoured to represent Oxford university in the varsity match. An unexpected com/box swap with Charlie Magri at the helm of the Oxford VIII brought me into contact with Terry Lawless for whom I have the highest respect, and, I might add, into physical contact with Paddy McGuire in the ring, sparring against the former British bantamweight champion, down

[Mr. Michael Marshall]

interest in tabling amendments in Committee I am glad to withdraw in the light of his assurances. I want to ensure that the Bill reaches the statute book at the earliest possible moment. Any day that is saved in that process will significantly save jobs and the basis of British industry.

Mr. Butcher: No doubt the whole House will note my hon. Friend's comments. I should also correct the record and credit him with the very perceptive question that I answered earlier. He also raised the Australian issue and the international massaging of programmes for re-export.

Copyright protection covers not just authorised reproduction of a complete work, but the copying of a substantial part of the work. Thus, if a computer programme is copied in the manner suggested by my hon. Friend sufficient of the original programme is likely to be contained in the copy for it to be an unauthorised copy under copyright law. The copyright law cannot be avoided by making small and insignificant changes to a copyright work, even if the work is imported and the changes were made overseas. This will apply to computer programmes as much as to any other work.

On behalf of the Government, therefore, I welcome the Bill. It is particularly welcome in view of the importance we attach to encouraging the software industry in the United Kingdom. The Bill will provide the protection needed by the creators of original computer programmes to ensure continued development and expansion of this successful sector of the information technology industry.

A number of hon. Members have reminded us that there is growing concern about the scale of software piracy both in business software and in computer games. When I talk about piracy, I am thinking of those people who make unauthorised copies of computer programmes and then sell them, thereby threatening the livelihood of legitimate producers and dealers. The success of any industry is underpinned by protection from unfair competition and the software industry is no exception.

It is difficult to be sure about the exact scale of software piracy, but it is clear that a significant problem exists. I also believe that piracy could pose a real threat to the software industry if not acted against now. The amendments to copyright law contained in the Bill will go a long way towards helping the software industry to combat this growing threat. The Government are therefore glad of an opportunity to support the measures in the Bill and thus to prevent piracy getting out of hand.

A number of hon. Members referred to the relationship between the Bill and the broader implications of copyright law and future attempts to bring together some of the pressing copyright issues currently outstanding. Copyright law essentially provides an author with protection against unauthorised copying of his work. To attract copyright protection, the work must be original. Another important feature of copyright law is that registration of a claim to copyright is not required. The protection commences automatically as soon as the original work has been created. It does not depend on publication or any other form of public exposure of the work. Various categories of work can attract copyright protection—for example, literary works, artistic works, films and sound recordings.

The protection provided by copyright law is given by the Copyright Act 1956, which gives original literary works protection against unauthorised copying and various other acts such as publication and adaptation. Protection is also given against trading — for example, selling, importing or exhibiting copies of a work known by the trader to be infringing copies. It is established that the term "literary work" includes such mundane items as street directories and railway timetables.

In the enforcement of copyright, both the civil and criminal arms of the law can be brought into play. The civil remedies are available to a copyright owner suing someone whom he detects to be infringing his copyright. They include injunctions, which can often be used very effectively to stop unauthorised copying of a work subject to copyright. There is also the possibility of damages, which the courts will award after taking into account the seriousness of the unauthorised copying. It is clear that the damages awarded could be extremely high if a copyright owner has suffered seriously at the hands of a person involved in large scale piracy of his work. The civil remedies can therefore be used very effectively by many copyright owners to deal with the majority of cases of copyright infringement.

I should stress that the Government believe that copyright should in general be enforced by the use of the civil remedies as I have just described. The criminal remedies are important, but they can only be viewed as a last resort. The civil remedies are, in any case, more comprehensive since they can be used against any unauthorised copying, not just where the copying is done for commercial purposes. The criminal remedies, on the other hand, are available only against a person who makes infringing copies for sale or hire or who trades in infringing copies.

It is, however, right that the criminal remedies should be used in cases where the seriousness of the offence justifies this approach. However, other than for offences involving copyright films and sound recordings, it is true to say that at the moment the criminal remedies under copyright law are very seldom used.

In 1981, the Government published a Green Paper entitled "Reform of the Law Relating to Copyright and Performers' Protection", Cmnd. 8302. There we indicated the intention to strengthen the criminal measures under copyright law. In particular, an increase in the scale of penalities to deterrent levels was proposed. In due course, we intend to introduce increased penalties for all categories of copyright material in a comprehensive copyright Bill.

I come to the detailed provisions of the Bill. I shall consider its two distinct aspects separately. First, there is the intention to make clear provision for the protection of computer programmes by copyright. Although it is widely believed that copyright protection under existing law already extends to computer programmes, there is some doubt about the matter. It was precisely that area of doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Corby illustrated so vividly and successfully in reinforcing his argument for the Bill. After all, computers were in a very early stage of development when the Copyright Act 1956 was drafted, so it is hardly surprising that copyright law does not specifically mention how computer programmes are to be treated. The courts have not resolved the matter, so some doubt remains.

Under the Copyright Act 1956, making an unauthorised adaptation of a literary work is an infringement of the copyright in the work. The Bill, by giving computer

programmes the same copyright protection as is currently enjoyed by literary works, therefore presents an opportunity of clearing up a few crucial definitions.

The second aspect of the Bill concerns penalties and enforcement — matters that are obviously of great importance to the software industry. Naturally enough, the industry has seen the dramatic effect of recent changes to copyright law in reducing video piracy, and now seeks similar changes to deal with the piracy of computer programmes. Indeed, one or two commentators feel that those who exploited the video piracy market but who now find it difficult to do so, may be the same people who see similar opportunities in this market. Perhaps we need to protect this industry from those self-same individuals who wish to make another killing. So the Government support these changes to deal with piracy in this new area before it becomes an even more serious problem.

As I have said, the current level of criminal penalties under copyright law is generally low. All offences are triable only summarily and the maximum fine is £400 with the option of up to two months imprisonment. The Bill will have the effect that the more serious offences of making for sale or hire, importing by way of trade or distributing infringing copies of computer programmes knowing them to be such will become triable either way. On conviction on indictment, an unlimited fine and/or up to two years imprisonment will apply. Less serious trading offences, such as selling, hiring, exhibiting or possessing infringing copies of computer programmes knowing them to be such, will remain triable only summarily with a maximum fine of £2,000 and/or two months imprisonment.

The Bill will also give the police the power to enter premises in order to search for and seize evidence of a copyright offence involving computer programmes, upon the issue by a magistrate of a warrant to do so. A warrant may be issued only if the police satisfy the magistrate that there are reasonable grounds for believing that one of the more serious offences has been or is about to be committed. He must also be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is evidence on the premises that the offence has been or is about to be committed. Thus, the police powers to deal with piracy of computer programmes will be introduced with the same important safeguards that already apply to video and record copyright offences.

The Bill will give the police powers of entry, search and seizure. I must add a reservation about these additional powers. It must be for individual chief police officers to determine the priority that they can assign to these powers, and they can normally be expected to allow police involvement only where there is some evidence of a link with serious, large-scale or organised crime. As with video piracy, it is essential that the trade should undertake the bulk of enforcement work. I know that this has been accepted by the industry, mainly through the Federation Against Software Theft. I am glad that its commitment to fighting piracy of computer programmes will complement the important provisions in my hon. Friend's Bill.

I stress that the Government see the Bill only as an interim measure to deal with the immediate problem of uncertainty as to the copyright protection available to computer programmes, and to halt the growth of software piracy. Wider reforms are needed in copyright law which must await the introduction of a comprehensive Bill. Nevertheless, the Government welcome and support the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Corby. We congratulate him, and we give the Bill our wholehearted support. My hon. Friend will be able to guide the House on how he wishes to proceed today, in the light of the many comments that have been made.

12.41 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): This is the first occasion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have caught your eye since your knighthood. That honour gave pleasure to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I warmly welcome the Bill presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell). Cambridge is the father of the computer industry. The area's prosperity is based upon high technology. The Bill is overdue and welcome.

I declare an interest as an author. I enter one caveat. When we consider legislation we must remember that copyright is of value only if it has international strength. The international copyright convention is more important than a change in our own law. The current copyright law victimises certain scholars who wish to make quotations because they have to go through such a long process. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will consider those two crucial points.

When I was elected in December 1976 to represent Cambridge, the Cambridge science park consisted of one building, and fewer than 40 people were employed there. The park now comprises 40 companies employing 1,400 people. That is as good an example as any of the crucial link between research, science, industry, jobs and prosperity. An important element in that prosperity has been built in Cambridge, as elsewhere, on the remarkable development in computers.

Until my hon. Friend the Member for Corby introduced the Bill, there had been no real protection for the brains, initiative and research lying behind the software industry. Although my hon. Friends will have to address themselves to the Bill's international application, the Bill is welcome to me, to my constituents and, in many ways, is overdue.

I was glad that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary responded to the important point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall). My reservations about the Bill are not a criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Corby or his Bill—they represent the fact that we are dealing with a rather larger subject than can be dealt with briefly in a short Bill.

Mr. Lyell: My hon. Friend has made the excellent point that some of the anomalies in our existing copyright law are impinging upon scholars and those involved in the work of highest scholarship. Is he aware that as a result of changes through the courts, copyright protection is now given even to the drawing of a washer—and an old-fashioned washer at that?

Mr. Rhodes James: I am constantly amazed at the wisdom and the variety of standing of my colleagues. I was not aware that an ancient washer is covered by copyright, so I shall now leave the House a wiser person.

I warmly welcome the Bill, with the reservations that I have expressed and which go beyond the Bill. I hope that the Government will give it all assistance on to the statute book.

12.46 pm

Mr. William Powell: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I shall reply to the debate. During the

[Mr. Neil Macfarlane]

hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on the matter of professional boxing, which has been a source of much disquiet outside the House.

This is a subject on which both hon. Members are well qualified to speak. Both have personal experience of the sport, and it will bring a feeling of warmth and a glow to your heart, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to realise that they were both dark blues, obviously at varying weights. My hon. Friend is a competitor and steward of the British Boxing Board of Control, and he has wider experience as a member both of the Sports Council and the 1984 British Olympic team.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde has played a consistent part in these matters in the House for a number of years, and I am grateful for his contribution. He will understand that there are many points in the debate to which I cannot respond in view of the litigation which is occurring elsewhere.

Professional boxing has established a proud tradition in this country in the last 60 years or so, largely through the commendable efforts of the sport's governing body, the BBBC, the format of which has been followed in other countries.

The BBBC was first formed in 1918. As part of my preparation for the debate, I read the excellent BBBC jubilee document which was published in 1979 and was fascinated to read about how the board began. History is all-important in this, as in other spheres. An article by Gilbert Odd, the former editor of *Boxing News*, began:

"Answering a correspondent in its issue dated September 9th 1911, 'Boxing' stated, 'A licence is not required for a boxing hall, but you should apply for police protection.'"

Clearly, the sport felt that it should be well-regulated. I am happy to note that my hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell, (Mr. Hamilton), is doing duty on the Government Front Bench this afternoon. One of his forebears, a great uncle, Lord Hamilton of Dalzell, was one of the founding members of the BBBC.

This is an important debate and it is interesting to note exactly how the board was formed in 1929. It was born out of the old National Sporting Club, founded in 1891, and in March 1929 the BBBC's first constitution and regulations were issued. The first president of the BBBC was Lord Lonsdale, whose name lives on.

Before the BBBC came into being, managers and trainers were self-appointed with little or no qualifications, and the same applied to referees. Concern for the physical welfare of boxers was negligible and the attendance of a doctor at the ringside was very rare indeed. Since the board's inception, it has led the way in the introduction of measures to protect boxers, and has highly qualified members of the medical profession within its ranks. I endorse what has been said about its chief medical adviser. It has also played a significant role in the production of the stringent medical requirements that all professional boxers must meet before they are allowed to compete. In addition, the BBBC is recognised by many countries as a fine example of how a sport should be regulated, controlled and administered.

Just as the future development of professional boxing under the auspices of the BBBC relies on the amateur side of the sport—most professionals have had an amateur career—so the reverse is true. Professional boxing provides the incentive for amateurs. The amateur side of the sport is controlled by the Amateur Boxing Association in England, to which the Schools Amateur Boxing Association is affiliated.

There has been a marked increase in interest in amateur boxing in recent years. There are about 870 clubs with 45,000 registered members. Many of the youngsters who join boxing clubs come from deprived areas and inner cities and encounter at their clubs, sometimes for the first time, firm but fair discipline. They are encouraged to develop their physical fitness and mental awareness and they learn self-control and develop team spirit that they may have lacked before. The club gives them a positive interest and goals to aim for.

In recognition of the important role that amateur boxing has to play in the community and in encouraging youngsters to channel their energies into a demanding sport, the Sports Council assisted local clubs with £47,500 in capital grants and loans in 1983-84. In addition, the ABA received over £82,000 in current grant in that year and the schools body received about £3,500.

Between them, the BBBC and the ABA have been responsible not only for much of the development of the sport, but for producing world champions and Olympic medallists who have become household names and passed into folklore. The popularity of the sport is evidenced by the large crowds which flock to important bouts and by the press coverage that the sport receives, which is an important dimension.

Lately, some of those press reports have not been as encouraging as they might have been for the sport. There has been concern about the health dangers of boxing and reports of a cartel operating at the highest level within the sport. Those matters are primarily for the governing body—the BBBC. As one would expect, the board has responded responsibly.

The House would not expect me to comment in detail on the allegation of a cartel. I have read the newspapers and absorbed the articles. I note that the BBBC is to investigate the allegation and take whatever action is required. That open-minded approach can only be for the good of the sport, and the comments made in the debate will be widely read and absorbed.

I recognise clearly the legitimate concerns of some members of the medical profession about some of the risks associated with boxing—I discussed those concerns when I last met the BBBC formally—and the board of control also takes those concerns seriously. As I said, the board has led the way in the introduction of measures to protect boxers.

However, the risk of injury cannot be eliminated in any contest, as hon. Members have said, and it is important to recognise that those who take up boxing and many other sports do so in full knowledge of the injuries that they might sustain. Recent publicity about the health risks of boxing will have ensured that that is even more true. However, while those who take up boxing do so in that knowledge, and as a result of their interest in the sport, it is right that they should be subjected to the most rigorous medical requirements and that those should be controlled by their own governing body.

Like any sport or any other public activity, boxing will have its problems and difficulties with which it must cope. However, I am sure that, with continued responsible and clear leadership from its governing body, it will have a bright future. The ability of the sport to attract talent and spectators is not in doubt and I am sure that the BBBC will

continue to live up to its long and honourable traditions. The Government see that as a right and proper role for the BBBC. It is a fundamental principle of British sport that individual sports are controlled by the governing bodies that are responsible to their own members. The state does not run sport in Britain.

Those who call for legislation to ban professional boxing should remember that legislation of the type sometimes advocated would no more mean an end to people fighting with their fists for money than prohibition meant an end to people drinking in Chicago and elsewhere in America in the 1920s and 1930s. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East said in his excellent speech, it would signal the end to the control exercised by the governing body, which has been a model, and the rigorous code that it currently enforces. We would step backwards into time to the back-street or fairground booth style of boxing, which the current rules are designed to prevent.

This has been a constructive debate. I hope that the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East and of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde will be widely absorbed outside the House. Those of us who have an interest in and direct responsibility for the orderliness of a major sport in this country want to see question marks eliminated as quickly as possible. I commend the debate to the House and for wider reading. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for initiating, and to the hon. Gentleman for participating in, a debate on such an important subject. I shall consider many of the important issues which have been raised and write to my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 February 1985

ENERGY

Electricity and Gas

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the percentage rise in the price of *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: The price indices for domestic gas and electricity are both components of the general index of retail prices. Between 1979 and 1984 the index for gas rose by 112·5 and that for electricity by 76·5 per cent. However, between April 1983 and December 1984, the index for gas rose by only 4·2 per cent. and that for electricity by 2·1 per cent., in both cases a fall in real terms.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress of the Severn barrage project.

Mr. David Hunt: In answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 12 May 1983 at column *379* the then Secretary of State for Energy announced that the Government and the Severn Tidal Power Group would jointly fund an assessment of the technical and financial viability of a private sector Severn barrage. Work is proceeding on this assessment.

The Department has also been approached by the Wimpey-Atkins Group seeking support for a similar study for a smaller barrage at the English Stones Site near the Severn bridge. I hope to make an announcement on this shortly.

My Department has also recently funded some background studies on tidal energy.

Culham Laboratory

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Energy what reductions in expenditure have occurred in Her Majesty's Government-funded research at Culham laboratory since the financial year 1979-80; and what further reductions are required; and if he will make a statement as to the projects affected.

Mr. Goodlad: Culham laboratory carries out the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's programme of fusion research under a contract of association with Euratom, which contributes to its funding. This research constitutes the major component of the laboratory's activities.

Government expenditure on fusion programme through the nuclear vote has been:

	£ million
1979-80	10·5
1980-81	11·4
1981-82	17·3
1982-83	12·5
1983-84	14·1
1984-85	*14·3

* Estimated.

I reported the decisions which had been made on the Government's funding of this programme for the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) on 10 January.

Because, within the agreed Euratom budget ceiling for fusion research, the allocation of funds to contract of association work at Culham and elsewhere has not been determined, the UKAEA has not yet finalised the details of its fusion programme for those years. It intends, however, that work in support of the Joint European Torus (JET) project and related areas will continue to be given priority.

The laboratory has also carried out a small amount of research in areas other that fusion which will continue.

Coal Industry (Apprenticeships)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many apprenticeships were available in the coal mining industry in 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board.

Electricity Boards (Pricing Policy)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list his powers in relation to electricity boards' policy making with particular respect to pricing policy and private and commercial consumer tariffs.

Mr. Goodlad: I have no statutory powers over electricity prices. Electricity boards set their own tariffs in accordance with statutory provisions and taking into account the financial framework within which they operate.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Sector Employment (Costs)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Prime Minister if she will give the latest figures available for the total annual cost and the average annual cost of full-time equivalent posts in *(a)* the National Health Service, *(b)* the Civil Service, *(c)* local government and *(d)* all remaining public sector work forces, including nationalised industries; and if she will break down the average cost for a full-time equivalent post into pay, national insurance, superannuation and other costs, respectively.

The Prime Minister: The latest available figures of wages and salaries relate to the calendar year and are published in table 1.14 and 9.4 of the annual Blue Book "United Kingdom National Accounts". The corresponding full-time equivalent employment estimates were published in the annual *Economic Trends* article on employment in the public and private sector (March 1984 issue). Per capita averages calculated in this way have little meaning,

because of the wide variety of different types of staff employed in each sector, but, for what they are worth, they are as follows:

	1983 Total income from employment £ million	*Mid-1983 Total full-time equivalent thousands*	*Cost per f.t.e. £*
National Health Service	*8,616	1,045	8,250
Other central Government civilians*	*7,566	769	9,840
Her Majestys Forces	4,022	322	12,490
Local government	21,199	2,278	9,310
Public corporations	17,755	1,641	10,820

* The allocation between the NHS and other central government has been revised since publication of the Blue Book.

"Other central Government" comprises the Civil Services of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and various non-departmental bodies.

"Income from employment" is defined as for the national accounts. It covers pay and employers contributions to national insurance and superannuation but not the national insurance surcharge. It does not include other staff related costs such as training or accommodation costs.

The breakdown of the figures requested is not generally available, but some information on the central government sector is published in table 2 of the memorandum to the Supply Estimates by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The coverage of the information therein is slightly different to that of the figures quoted above.

Milk

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the Government now propose to veto the proposed increase in the price of milk.

The Prime Minister: The Government are studying the Commission's agricultural price proposals for 1985-86 and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be making the Government's view known in due course.

Payments to Farmers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the payments made from the Exchequer to farmers and their purpose.

The Prime Minister: Details of payments currently paid to farmers, and their purpose, by the Agricultural Departments and the Intervention Board for Agricultural produce are set out in the Supply Estimates for 1984-85 (class III votes 1, 3 and 4, class XV votes 1 and 2 and class XVI votes 2 and 5). A summary of public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies over the last 5 years is given in table 28 of the Annual Review of Agriculture 1985 (Cmnd. 9423), published on 15 January.

Northern Ireland (Security)

Mr. Maginnis asked the Prime Minister if she will list those aspects of internal security in Northern Ireland which fall outside the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; which Minister is responsible in each case; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Security policy in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who will undertake any necessary consultations within government, notably with the Secretary of State for Defence in relation to the support of the Armed Forces for the civil power. The Attorney-General and the Lord Chancellor are responsible respectively for the prosecution of offences and for the court service in Northern Ireland.

Guatemala

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister what representations she has made to the United States of America concerning the resumption of military aid to Guatemala.

The Prime Minister: The United States Government are well aware of our concern about the possible consequences of military aid to Guatemala for the British garrison in Belize. We continue to keep in close touch with them about this.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the Government's policy regarding civil aid to Guatemala.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no bilateral aid programme for Guatemala.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the Government's policy regarding military aid to Guatemala.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom gives no military aid to Guatemala and has no intention of doing so.

Belize

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if the Government's military and financial commitment in Belize is to increase following the proposed resumption in United States military aid to Guatemala; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We see no need to alter our present military and financial commitment to Belize.

Wintex—Cimex '85 Exercise

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister whether the armed forces headquarters, Brecon, will be involved in Wintex '85.

The Prime Minister: All major Service headquarters, including Army Headquarters Wales at Brecon, will be involved in Exercise WINTEX—CIMEX '85.

Security Vetting (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Maginnis asked the Prime Minister if she has transferred to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry responsibility for the operation of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Special Branch in relation to security vetting of British Telecom employees in Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *702*]: No. Responsibility for the operation of all branches of the Royal Ulster Constabulary rests with the Chief Constable and it is for British Telecom to ensure that all necessary security checks in relation to its employees are carried out.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Administration Costs

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the cost of administration of his Department expressed in constant prices in each of the last five years.

Sir Keith Joseph: The total cost of administration of the Department, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate expressed in 1983-84 prices in the last five years was:

	£ million
1979-80	46·889
1980-81	49·977
1981-82	49·334
1982-83	49·651
1983-84	51·604

The figures for all years include the Office of Arts and Libraries which became an independent Department on 1 July 1983 and whose running costs are included in the DES totals in the annual scrutinies of Departmental running costs (from which the information is derived) up to and including 1983-84.

Education and Training Board

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reply to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology concerning the proposed education and training board; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: This and other recommendations in the report will require careful consideration. The Government's response will be announced as soon as this process has been completed.

Teaching Shortages

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to respond to the advice on teaching shortages in schools from the University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has not received any advice from the University Grants Committee or the National Advisory Body on teaching shortages in schools.

Physics Teaching

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department about the number of schools which have been asked to stop teaching physics from 1985 onwards.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has no information that any school has been asked to stop teaching physics from 1985 onwards. Ministers have on a number of occasions made clear their view that all pupils, including all girls, should be properly introduced to science in the primary school and should continue to study a broad programme of science education throughout the first five years of secondary schooling.

School Closures

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have been closed since 1979; and how many staff teaching posts have been affected as a result.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The net reduction in the number maintained primary, middle and secondary schools in England between January 1979 and January 1984 was 1,539. Information about staff teaching posts affected by closures of schools is not collected centrally.

Universities (Recurrent Costs)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what degree he intends to instruct universities to reduce their recurrent costs per student during the next two years.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's Expenditure Plans (Cmnd. 9428) assume that the universities will continue to improve their efficiency, but my right hon. Friend has not set specific targets for costs per student.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the recurrence grant to the universties for each year since 1978-79 in constant 1984-85 prices and in cash terms, excluding the element of the grant paid since 1982-83 to compensate for the loss of fee income from the reduction in tuition fees for home students in that year.

Sir Keith Joseph: Recurent grant made available to universities in Great Britain on the advice of the University Grants Committee in each financial year since 1978-79, excluding elements to compensate for the loss of fee income from the reduction of the home undergraduate tuition fee in 1982-83 and its freezing in 1983-84, was as follows. (The real terms figures are the cash terms figures adjusted to a 1983-84 base, using GDP deflators which provide an estimate of the average movment of prices across the economy as a whole. A deflator for 1984-85 is not yet available.)

Financial year	*Cash terms* £	*Real terms* £
1978-79	602,005,233	1,022,323,189
1979-80	728,481,734	1,058,209,111
1980-81	942,931,714	1,154,845,945
1981-82	967,959,423	1,077,905,816
1982-83	1,006,705,242	1,051,147,770

Financial year	*Cash terms* £	*Real terms* £
1983-84	1,061,199,999	1,061,199,999
1984-85 (Estimates provision)	1,124,664,000	1,073,664,916

Provision specificallay for redundancy and restructuring, amounting to £57,000,000 in 1982-83 and £38,000,000 in 1983-84 is not included in the above.

A and O-level Passes

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list local education authorities in England in order of achievement according to *(a)* the percentage of school leavers obtaining two or more A-level passes and separately *(b)* the percentage of school leavers obtaining five or more O-level passes.

Mr. Dunn: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Comprehensive and Selective Systems

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all local education authorities in England, indicating in each case whether *(a)* a fully comprehensive system operates, *(b)* a fully selective system operates or *(c)* whether some combination of selective and comprehensive system operates.

Mr. Dunn: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

VAT (Books)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the cost to students, libraries and educational institutions if value added tax were to be imposed on books at the current rate and at 5 per cent.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have been asked to reply.

There is nothing I can usefully add to the replies which the hon. Member has already received on this subject from the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 25 and 31 October at columns *661* and *1001-103* respectively from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment on 25 October at column *209* and from myself on 31 October at column *1068*.

SCOTLAND

AIDS

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received asking him to take early steps to make acquired immune deficiency syndrome a notifiable disease in Scotland.

Mr. John McKay: None.

Buses

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out in the *Official Report* a table showing the total amount paid to bus operators in respect of revenue support for the financial year 1974-75 and 1984-85, together with the total bus route mileage and passengers carried for each of the years in respect of each of the regional and island councils in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Details of bus route mileage are not readily available on a regional of islands area basis. Regional and islands councils were not established until May 1975. A comparison of revenue support for buses by area is not therefore available for 1974-75. However, for Scotland as a whole such recenue expenditure in 1974-75 was £3·9 million and in 1983-84 (the latest year for which figures are available) £23·1 million.

Private Health Insurance

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has authorised the display and availability of British United Provident Association or other private health insurance material in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: No. That is a matter for the health boards.

Draft Deer (Firearms Etc.) (Scotland) Order 1984

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he withdrew the draft Deer (Firearms Etc.) (Scotland) Order 1984; and whether any further draft order on this specific subject matter which he may lay before Parliament will be identical to the 1984 order.

Mr. John MacKay: The draft Deer (Firearms Etc.) (Scotland) Order 1984 attracted criticism on a number of counts and there was an apparent irregularity in the laying procedure. My right hon. Friend expects to lay a new draft order before Parliament shortly. This will not be identical and will take account of representations made and certain drafting amendments.

Salmon and Sea Trout

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the decline in salmon and sea trout stocks in Scottish rivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Representations are received from time to time from organisations and individuals who are concerned about the state of salmon stocks. Data on catches for 1984 are not available. The Scottish catch of salmon in 1983, by all methods, was higher than in any of the four previous years though well below the levels attained in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Roads (Safety Barriers)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications by regional councils for the installations of safety barriers on trunk roads have been refused in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of requests from regional councils refused*
1980	0
1981	0
1982	0
1983	1
1984	0

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria must be satisfied before safety barriers are installed on trunk roads in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Safety fences are normally recommended only on major roads where speed restrictions permit 80 km/h (50 mph) or above and for which the circumstances below apply; there will also be a need for safety fences on less important roads where there may be exceptional hazards either affecting the layout or the roadside.

A. VERGES

(a) On embankments 6·0m or more in height.

(b) On embankments where there is a road, railway, river or abnormal hazard at the foot of the slope.

(c) On the outside only of curves less than about 850m radius on embankments between 3·0m and 6·0m in height.

(d) At obstructions such as bridge piers, or abutments, or posts to large signs.

B. CENTRAL RESERVES

(a) For protection at bridge piers, posts to large signs, etc, which, if displaced would cause danger to other vehicles or persons.

(b) For protection at lighting columns.

(c) On urban roads without central lighting columns where the central reserve is not more than 1·75m wide and enables adequate clearance to be provided between the face of the safety fence and the edge of the carriageway.

(d) On rural roads where the central reserve width is 2·5m or less.

(e) On roads where the difference in carraigeway levels exceeds 1·0m and the slope across the reserve is steeper than 25 per cent.

(f) On such heavily trafficked rural motorways as may be agreed by the Scottish Development Department.

(g) Exceptionally and subject to special justification on all-purpose dual carriageways on which speeds of 100 kph (60 mph) or above are permitted and which have central reserves between 2·5m and 6·0m wide.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what lengths of safety barriers have been replaced on motorways and on other trunk roads in Scotland each year for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: Replacement of safety barriers is one of several categories of trunk road maintenance work which comprise a single item in the annual expenditure accounts submitted to the Scottish Development Department by regional councils, as agent authorities. It cannot therefore be identified separately.

Corporal Punishment

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has had from Scottish local education authorities in reply to the request he submitted to them to abolish corporal punishment in schools.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I understand that of the 12 education authorities in Scotland six have completed the process of abolition and a seventh expects to do so by the end of this school session. Of the remainder, three authorities have abolished corporal punishment in all but secondary schools, one authority has decided to retain corporal punishment in all its schools and one authority has yet to reach a decision on this matter.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

In Camera Proceedings

Mr. Dubs asked the Attorney-General if he will list the cases, both civil and criminal, in the last 12 months in which he has applied for all or part of the hearing to be held in camera, giving the nature of each such case and the grounds for each application.

The Attorney-General: Since 1 February 1984 such applications have been made by the Director of Public Prosecutions in two cases, both of which involved offences under the Official Secrets Act 1911. No statistics are available for the number of cases in which the court has exercised its power under section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 to exclude members of the public whilst taking evidence from a child or young person. No applications of the nature specified in the question have been made in civil proceedings.

Gipsies (Hampstead Heath)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Attorney-General if he will bring proceedings to secure the observance by the Greater London council of its legal obligations in respect of the prevention of nuisance arising from gipsy encampments on Hampstead heath.

The Attorney-General: If the hon. Member will write to me with the details of the case I shall consider them.

Small Claims

Dr. Godman asked the Attorney-General if it is Her Majesty's Government's intention in the near future to raise the financial limit for small claims procedure in the county courts.

The Attorney-General: Not at present.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Building

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department where the 16 new prisons which the Government plans to build will be located.

Mr. Mellor: The locations of the new establishments in the current programme are as follows:

Wayland—In the village of Griston, north of Thetford, Norfolk.

Thorn Cross—In the village of Appleton Thorn, Cheshire.

Stocken—Near Oakham, Leicestershire.

Full Sutton—Adjacent to the village of Full Sutton, near Stamford Bridge, Humberside.

Mount—On the former airfield at Bovingdon, Hertfordshire.

Garth — Adjacent to Wymott prison, Ulnes Walton, near Leyland, Lancashire.

Gaynes Hall—On the site of the former youth custody centre, adjacent to the village of Perry, near Great Staughton, Cambridgeshire.

Swaleside—Adjacent to Standford Hill prison, at Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent.

Featherstone II—Adjacent to the existing Featherstone prison north of Wolverhampton, Staffordshire.

Milton Keynes——Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire.

Bicester—Near the village of Arncott, Oxfordshire.

March—In March, Cambridgeshire.

Lancaster Farms—In Lancaster, Lancashire.

Woolwich—On the royal arsenal site at Woolwich, Greater London.

Ashford—On the site of the existing remand centre at Ashford, Middlesex.

North of England—On a site yet to be determined.

Prisoners (Suicides)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any evidence that would suggest why a majority of those who committed suicide in penal establishments in 1984 were unsentenced prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: No. The Chief Inspector of Prisons' recent report on suicides in prison recommended that research should be mounted into the circumstances and characteristics of prisoners who kill themselves, and this is under consideration.

Royal Prerogative of Mercy

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in 1984 the royal prerogative of mercy was used to effect the early release of prisoners; and, in each case, what was the age, sex, offence, sentence, length of sentence uncompleted and the nature of the illness.

Mr. Mellor: In 1984 the royal prerogative of mercy was used to effect the release of three men because of illness. One 26-year-old man, serving a total sentence of 18 months' imprisonment for assault occasioning actual bodily harm, breach of an order of conditional discharge and breach of suspended sentences, was released with three months of his sentence to serve because he was suffering from cancer. (I regret that, in the reply given to a question from the hon. Member on 9 July 1984 at column *359*, the length of sentence uncompleted in this case was wrongly stated as two months.

A 67-year-old man serving a sentence of seven years' imprisonment for illegal importation of drugs was released with 16 months of his sentence to serve because he was suffering from cancer. A 20-year-old man who was serving a total sentence of nine months' youth custody for burglary, behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace and assault occasioning actual bodily harm was released with three months of his sentence to serve because he was suffering from acute myeloid leukaemia.

Probation Service (North Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the policy of his Department in regard to the provision of a probation service in north Wales which reflects the linguistic character of the area.

Mr. Mellor: When it falls to my right hon. and learned Friend to make any decision affecting the North Wales probation service, the factor which the hon. Member mentions is one of several that he takes into account in so far as they may be relevant. The primary consideration must be the overall effect of the decision on the service's ability to discharge its duties satisfactorily.

Extradition (Spain)

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has made for new extradition arrangements between the United Kingdom and Spain.

Mr. Mellor: Discussions with the Spanish authorities are still continuing and useful progress has been made. At this stage, however, we feel it would be premature to go into the detail of particular proposals.

Mr. and Mrs. Mahmoud

Mr. Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now reply to the letter sent to him on 14 January by the hon. Member for Gower regarding his constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Mahmoud, of 5 Hall Lane, Penssard, Swansea.

Mr. Waddington: I have written to the hon. Member today.

M25 (Accident)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet received reports on the M25 accident from the chief constables of Kent and Surrey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend has received reports from the Chief Constables of Surrey and Kent on the accident which took place on the M25 motorway on 11 December 1984. These confirm that the accident resulted from a combination of excess speed by some drivers and freak weather conditions. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Transport and I recently discussed this accident and the arrangements for policing the M25 motorway with the chief constables concerned.

Prevention of Terrorism (Amendments)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many other persons carrying Syrian passports accompanied the four men travelling on Syrian passports who were deported on or around 29 January; whether they were all given leave to enter the United Kingdom; for how long in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: I am not aware of any other persons carrying Syrian passports who accompanied the four men from Damascus. The men who were in possession of valid visas, were each given leave to enter the United Kingdom for six months, having satisfied the immigration officer at the time of examination that they met the requirements of the immigration rules.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the interests of security and avoidance of terrorist incidences, he will require the closure of the premises in London purporting to represent the Palestine Liberation Organisation; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. Any organisation may maintain an office in this country provided that the activities of that office, and its occupants, remain within the law. If there were any suggestion that the law had been broken or that there was a threat to security the police would, of course, take appropriate action.

Fire Service Regulations

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to modify the Fire Service (Appointments and Promotions) Regulations 1978 to reflect continuing changes in fire-fighting techniques and the increasing recruitment of women firefighters.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend is required by section 18 of the Fire Service Act 1947 (as amended) to consult the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council before making any changes in these regulations. The council agreed at its last meeting to a proposal by the Home Departments to establish a working party jointly with the Scottish Council to review, inter alia, those aspects of the regulations which govern the physical requirements for appointment as a whole time firefighter, both men and women.

The working party will consist of representatives of fire authorities, fire service representative bodies and officials of the Home Departments together with medical advisers.

Voluntary After-care Scheme

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to report the results of his review of the voluntary after-care scheme which provides accommodation for ex-prisoners, referred to in his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *55*.

Mr. Mellor: We expect the present fact-finding stage of the review to be completed this spring, and my right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be able to report his conclusions to the House as soon as practicable thereafter.

Fire Service (Funding)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of the fire service in England and Wales are funded under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Waddington: Six fire service posts are funded under section 11, five in the west midlands and one in Kent.

Police Service (Funding)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of the police service in England and Wales are funded under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Waddington: Police officers are not local authority employees. It follows that posts in the police service are not eligible for funding under section 11.

Wintex-Cimex '85 Exercise

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Northumbria and Durham police forces will be involved in the Wintex-Cimex '85 exercises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police participation is a matter for each chief constable but I understand from the Chief Constable that Northumbria police will be involved; but the Chief Constable of Durham constabulary has yet to reach a decision.

Hospitals (Assaults on Staff)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases criminal proceedings have arisen in 1984 resulting from assaults on staff in hospital premises.

Mr. Mellor: Except for assaults on police officers the information collected centrally on court proceedings does not include details of the circumstances of the assault.

Ex-Pc I. M. McQuarrie (Criminal Injuries Claim)

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the cause of the delays by the Criminal Injuries Compensation board in finalising the claim for criminal injuries by ex-Pc I. M. McQuarrie, whose claim has been with the board since March 1982.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I will write to the hon. Member.

Overseas Visitors and Immigrants

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to ensure that all immigrants and visitors arriving at United Kingdom airports and other points of entry are always treated with courtesy at all times.

Mr. Waddington: This is already the policy. Immigration officers are required to maintain a correct and courteous relationship with the public and to ensure that their behaviour gives no cause for complaint.

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to organise a civilian equivalent of the military exercise Brave Defender.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Not at present.

Lowdham Grange Youth Custody Centre

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates of Lowdham Grange youth custody centre were given leave to attend funerals of friends or relatives in January.

Mr. Mellor: Two.

Winson Green Prison

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, his hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *255*, whether the register of applications to the board of visitors at Winson Green prison was checked for any reference to his noble Friend, Lord Elton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Nitroglycerine (Greiss Test)

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Greiss test is still in use by his Department's laboratories for the detection of nitroglycerine.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes.

Prevention of Terrorism (Arrest)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether four men travelling on Syrian passports who were arrested and questioned by the

Metropolitan police under the Prevention of Terrorism Act were suspected of conspiring to cause an explosion or of any other terrorist act;

(2) for how long the four men travelling on Syrian passports arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and deported around 29 January were held by the Metropolitan police; and on what date they were arrested;

(3) why four men travelling on Syrian passports who were arrested and questioned by the Metropolitan police on or about 20 January were not charged with any offence.

Mr. Brittan: There is nothing I can add to the reply I gave to a question from the right hon. Member on 7 February at column *656*.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will give the names, ages and purported occupations of the four Syrian nationals who were arrested on 20 January, detained until 27 January and deported on 29 January; and which of the four men was in possession of a Syrian diplomatic passport.

Mr. Brittan: The names and ages recored in the men's passports were: Mohammed Ali Abdullah, 34, Ahmed Hussein Al-Bitam, 31; Marwan Lostan, 49; and Morris Youssef Saba, 40. Only Mr. Lostan's passport recorded his occupation—that of engineer—and it was he who was carrying a diplomatic passport.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Imports and Exports)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the United Kingdom share of imports of manufactures by the EEC Six, the present European Free Trade Association countries plus Denmark, and the Irish Republic for each year from 1962 together with his estimate for 1984.

Mr. Channon: The information is in the table. Estimates for 1984 could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

*United Kingdom share of imports of manufactures**

percentages

	EC†	*EFTA‡ plus Denmark*	*Irish Republic*
1962	9·5	13·2	63·1
1963	9·7	13·5	63·9
1964	9·0	13·6	61·8
1965	8·4	13·4	63·4
1966	7·9	13·8	64·0
1967	7·4	13·8	62·6
1968	7·1	12·9	62·5
1969	6·7	13·5	60·8
1970	6·3	13·2	61·8
1971	6·3	12·9	58·2
1972	6·1	11·7	58·3
1973	6·0	10·3	56·4
1974	6·1	9·8	53·2
1975	6·5	9·9	54·7
1976	6·8	9·5	52·6
1977	7·3	10·0	52·5
1978	7·3	9·7	51·9
1979	7·4	9·5	51·4
1980	7·5	9·5	51·6
1981	7·4	8·0	45·0
1982	7·1	7·4	41·9
1983	7·0	7·0	39·4

* Standard International Trade Classification (Rev1) sections 5 to 8.
† Original Six members.
‡ Current membership throughout.

British Standards Institution (Exhibition)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the British Standards Institution to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall to take place from Monday 25 February to Friday 1 March 1985.

Certification Marks

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how he intends to replace the current variety of certification marks with one national promotable mark.

Mr. Butcher: The Government have no current plans to introduce a single national mark to replace the marks of individual certification bodies.

Accredited Certification Bodies

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration he is giving to the creation of an additional mark for accredited certification bodies.

Mr. Butcher: The Government intend to introduce a distinctive mark which accredited certification bodies will be permitted to use to denote their status.

"Standards, Quality and Inter-nation Competitiveness"

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to which objectives in his White Paper (Cmnd. 8621), "Standards, Quality and Inter-nation Competitiveness", he will be giving priority to in the current year.

Mr. Butcher: The Goverment intend to press ahead with implementing all aspects of the White Paper proposals. Major targets will include; broadening the scope and appeal of the national quality campaign; expanding the coverage of certification schemes and activating voluntary arrangements for accrediting certification bodies; and work with the British Standards Institution to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of standards-writing.

British Safety Council

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list his responsibilities regarding the British Safety Council.

Mr. Butcher: The British Safety Council is a self-constituted body. It has no statutory authority or functions. But I consult it along with other organisations about proposed consumer safety legislation.

Church Services (Broadcasting)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to permit the broadcasting of church services, including the singing of hymns, on citizens' band radio.

Mr. Butcher: CB is intended for short duration two way communication and it is a condition of the licence that the transmission of music in any form is not permitted. The conditions are necessary because the frequencies available are limited and are for the use of all people, for business and pleasure. CB is not intended for broadcast purposes and I do not consider it would be in the interests of CB users as a whole for the licence conditions to be altered in the way the hon. Member suggests, particularly as church services are broadcast on radio and television.

Riding Hats

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ban the import from Korea and other countries of riding hats which do not conform to British Standards Institution approved safety standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Hats manufactured to the new British standard on riding hats (BS 6473) have been available for the last few months. The equestrian societies are recommending to their members that they buy hats to the new standard. I think in this case that the involvement of interested bodies is the best way of promoting improved safety. The Department will be taking steps to reinforce this publicity. In the circumstances, I see no need for legislation at present.

Under the general safety duty proposed in last July's White Paper on the Safety of Goods (Cmnd. 9302), the supply of riding hats that do not conform to BS 6473 may well become illegal, since the Secretary of State could approve that standard as satisfying the general duty. The clear implication of such an approval would be that riding hats offering less protection were unsafe in relation to sound modern standards of safety.

Telephones (BT Approval)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what information he has regarding the number of inspectors to approve applicants, and how many applicants are waiting certification for approved maintainers for British Telecom approved telephone systems following the changes of 1 January;

(2) what provision has been made for the certification of approved maintainers for British Telecom approved telephone systems following the changes of 1 January.

Mr. Butcher: In accordance with condition 8 of the class licence for the running branch telecommunication systems, (granted under section 7 of the Telecommunications Act 1984) maintenance contractors require approval under section 20 of that Act only for the purpose of maintaining telephone call routing apparatus connected to public switched telephone networks. There is no such requirement for maintainers of any other type of telecommunication apparatus.

Such approval will normally only be given when the applicant has obtained registration under the relevant scheme run by the British Standards Institution (BSI). BSI, which has supplied the following information, currently employs two assessors for dealing with applications for registration, and two inspectors for the periodic surveillance of companies once registration has been given. BSI is currently seeking to recruit a third assessor. As at 7 February 1985, 57 applications for registration were pending. In 53 of these cases BSI is awaiting action by the applicants concerned. 26 companies have been registered by BSI.

In exceptional cases, and particularly where the marketing of newly approved apparatus or of apparatus that has newly qualified for competitive maintenance is otherwise likely to be seriously delayed, approval may be granted provisionally in advance of BSI registration.

On 31 December 1984 newly-installed analogue call-routing apparatus, in the form of private branch exchanges with not more than 120 extensions and certain single exchange line systems, became eligible for competitive maintenance. On 27 September 1984, BSI had extended its registration scheme to cover maintenance of these classes of apparatus; my Department's announcement on 21 September 1984 of this extension included an invitation to apply for registration and approval.

Micro-electronics

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to liaise with the Ministries of Trade and Industry in France and the Federal Republic of Germany on advances made in those countries in their use of micro-electronics; and what investment he intends to make to enable British firms employing more than 20 people to use micro-electronics.

Mr. Butcher: Officials of the Department are in contact with their counterparts in France and the Federal Republic of Germany. This liaison includes the developing use of micro-electronics in all three countries.

The use of micro-electronics by British firms is promoted through the Micro-electronics Application Project (MAP) operated by the Department. Support is provided by the provision of seminars, industrial training, together with advice and consultancy for potential users. In addition, financial assistance has been provided for firms developing the use of micro-electronics in both products or processes. Currently this latter, in common with other R&D support activities of the Department, is under review. A statement on the future of selective financial assistance for industrial R&D, including MAP, will be made shortly.

EC (Insurance)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what restrictions are placed on insurance companies based in other member states of the Common Market in the provision of car insurance for residents of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if there are any licensing or authorisation procedures required by his Department before Common Market-based insurance companies can underwrite car insurance for United Kingdom residents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Any insurance company carrying on insurance business in the United Kingdom must be authorised by the Secretary of State under the Insurance Companies Act 1982. However, offshore insurance companies which are not authorised here are permitted to solicit for business, and United Kingdom residents are free to place insurance business with such companies by remitting premiums either directly or through intermediaries. All insurance companies providing compulsory

Speed Limits

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* complete details of all speed limits currently in force on United Kingdom roads for each class of private and commercial vehicle.

Mrs. Chalker: Motor cycles and cars (passenger vehicles with up to 8 passenger seats) and car derived vans, not towing a trailer are subject to the national road speed limits, which are 70 mph on motorways and dual carriageways and 60 mph on other roads. Such vehicles when towing trailers and all other motor vehicles are subject to the limits detailed in Schedule 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, chapter 27, unless a lower road speed limit applies.

These limits relate to the main classes of vehicle as follows:

	Motorways	*Dual Carriageways*	*Miles per hour Other Roads*
Buses and Coaches	70	60	50
Goods Vehicles:			
(i) under 7·5 tonnes m.l.w.*	70	60	50
(ii) over 7·5 tonnes m.l.w.	60	50	40
Private cars, car derived vans and motorcycles towing one trailer	50	50	50

* m.l.w.: maximum laden weight.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the volume of motor vehicle traffic, in billion vehicle kilometres, for the years 1963 to 1983.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Motor traffic (Great Britain): billion vehicle kilometres

Year	
1963	121·2
1964	135·3
1965	144·8
1966	153·4
1967	160·7
1968	168·6
1969	172·6
1970	182·1
1971	194·0
1972	204·0
1973	212·3
1974	208·1
1975	209·8
1976	220·4
1977	225·2
1978	234·3
1979	236·5
1980	252·9
1981	255·2
1982	266·6
1983	271·2

Road Transport (Statistics)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state, for each of the following industrial categories, the tonnage of goods lifted and the proportion accounted for by road transport in 1983: *(a)* building materials, timber and aggregates, *(b)* food, drink and tobacco, *(c)* petroleum products, *(d)* coal and coke, *(e)* iron and steel, *(f)* chemicals and fertilizers, *(g)* other goods and *(h)* all goods.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Domestic freight lifted in Great Britain 1983 (million tonnes)

Commodity	*Total tonnes lifted**	*Per cent. by road*
Building materials, timber and aggregates	501	96
Food, drink and tobacco	307	99
Petroleum products	213	31
Coal and coke	167	43
Iron and steel	66	76
Chemicals and fertilizers	59	95
Other goods	384	97
All goods lifted	1,698	83

* By road, rail, inland waterways, coastal shipping and pipeline.

M25 (Accident)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what lessons have now been learned from the major accident on the M25 on 11 December; what action is being taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The accident on the M25 on 11 December last year was distinguished from other multiple crashes on motorways by the subsequent intense fire and the high death toll, but in its general nature and causes it was not uncommon.

Investigation by the police of the circumstances surrounding the accident lead to the conclusion that the accident was caused by some drivers travelling at excessive speeds at a time when dense but isolated banks of fog were likely to be encountered. The danger inherent in such behaviour should be well known to all drivers, but my Department intends to step up its publicity concerning the need for extra care while driving in foggy conditions. We are also instituting new studies to identify any stretches of the M25 and M42 particularly liable to fog and shall be installing experimental fog detectors on a section of the M25.

Railway Accidents (Reports)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that the findings of any inquiry or investigation into railway accidents resulting in personal injury are made available to the public within 14 days of those findings being concluded.

Mr. David Mitchell: Under existing legislation I am required to make public, in such manner as I think expedient, the reports made by inspectors appointed under the legislation to investigate particular railway accidents. When an investigation is made other than by a specially appointed inspector there is no requirement for the findings to be made public. I can give no guarantee that formal reports by Inspectors will always be published within 14 days of the conclusion of their inquiries, although we endeavour to publish these reports as quickly as circumstances allow.

Railway Accident (Rugby)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a copy of his letter

to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth dated 4 February, together with the annexed statement by his Department's railway inspectorate, concerning the circumstances surrounding the railway accident at Rugby on 9 December 1984.

Mr. David Mitchell: I share to the full my hon. Friend's concern that there should be made available a simple statement of the facts about such a railway accident as occurred at Rugby on 9 December 1984. I am placing in the Library of the House a copy of the letter my right hon. Friend wrote to my hon. Friend together with a statement of the facts about the accident at Rugby, and we propose to discuss with the chairman of the British Railways Board whether some simpler way can be found of conveying the facts that are ascertained by the board's own inquiries in those cases where a formal inquiry by one of our railway inspectors has not been ordered.

Roads (Safety Barriers)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many applications by local authorities for the installation of safety barriers on trunk roads have been refused in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) what criteria must be satisfied before safety barriers are installed on trunk roads in England;

(3) what are the current specifications for safety barriers on motorways and on trunk roads;

(4) what data are available to his Department on the performance of road safety barriers;

(5) what is his estimate of the natural life of safety barriers on motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: Current specifications for the five types of safety fences and barrier used on trunk roads are contained in the Specification for Road and Bridgeworks published by HMSO, supplemented by transport and road research laboratory drawings, the supplement No. 1 to the Specification and by the Department's technical memorandum H973. The estimated life of steel safety fences is in excess of 20 years and of concrete barriers in excess of 40 years when they remain undamaged by the impact of vehicles.

Criteria for their provision on central reserves are that the appropriate type shall be installed on all new motorways and on new all purpose dual carriageway trunk roads estimated to carry 30,000 vehicles per day in the year of opening where the central reserve is less than 6 metres wide. On lengths of existing trunk roads not less than 5 km and normally over 10 km long and on existing motorways they are provided where the fatal accident rate over 3 years is more than 0·2 per km per year of which half involve crossing the central reserve.

No records are kept of the number of applications made by local authorities and others for the provision of safety fences and barriers on trunk roads and motorways where they are not already installed. Of the order of 6 cases have been refused in the last 5 years, but some of these have been and are being re-considered.

Accident data are available to the Department which suggest that safety fences and barriers perform satifactorily in preventing serious accidents in the great majority of cases in which they are involved. Only 2 or 3 cases per year are reported where they have been penetrated by vehicles, causing casualties. Extensive testing by vehicular impact is carried out on the various types of safety fence before they are approved for installation.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport what lengths of safety barriers have been replaced on motorways and on trunk roads in England each year for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Chalker: The information sought is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Trinity House

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to provide assistance to Trinity House to enable it to place its order for one or two buoyage and lighthouse tenders in the United Kingdom rather than overseas.

Mr. David Mitchell: Trinity House has sought my right hon. Friend's statutory consent for the expenditure that would fall on the general lighthouse fund if an order for tenders were placed. Financial assistance from public funds would not be available to Trinity House for that purpose, but if an order were placed in the United Kingdom the shipbuilder might seek assistance from the Intervention Fund: that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Coal Imports

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list quarter by quarter the tonnages of coal imports at individual coastal towns during 1984.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that monthly information of broadly this kind is available from the Bill of Entry section of HM Customs and Excise.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has that the employment prospects of groups with above average earnings are linked with changes in their real or relative earnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is evidence of a general link between pay and jobs, and I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 6 February 1985 at column *586*. There is no specific evidence on the employment effects of changes in real or relative earnings of groups with above average earnings.

Doctors

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many qualified medical doctors are currently receiving unemployment benefit.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available.

South-West Region

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what further steps he will take to reduce unemployment in Bideford;

(2) if he will make a statement on employment prospects for 1985 for the south-west region.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are committed to maintaining its economic policies which are directed at holding down inflation and public borrowing while encouraging enterprise, flexibility and competitiveness in industry and the labour market. That is the only way to generate lasting jobs in Bideford, the south west and elsewhere. In the meantime we are spending over £2 billion this year on a range of employment and training measures to help the unemployed, which are currently benefiting nearly 50,000 people in the south west region.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the current provision of jobcentre facilities in Bideford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. The Manpower Services Commission has agreed proposals for the development of the employment service, which my right hon. Friend has recently endorsed. These provide for Bideford jobcentre to retain a full level of service.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Employment which of Her Majesty's Government's initiatives have been most successful in generating new employment in the south-west of England.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are committed to maintaining their economic policies which are directed at holding down inflation and public borrowing, while encouraging greater enterprise, flexibility and competitiveness in industry and the labour market. This is the only way to generate lasting jobs in the south west and elsewhere. In addition, we are encouraging the growth of employment in the south west through initiatives such as the enterprise allowance scheme, which is currently helping some 3,300 people in the region to set up their own businesses, and the young workers scheme which is currently benefiting over 7000 youngsters. Moreover many parts of the south west continue to enjoy assisted area status.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current trend in unemployment in the south-west of England.

Mr. Alan Clark: The seasonally adjusted level of unemployment (excluding school leavers) increased in the south-west region by 2,100 between December and January. Over the six months to January, which probably gives the best guide to the current trend, there was an average increase of 1,600 per month.

Collective Agreements

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Employment what action he has taken following the judgment of the European Court of Justice in Case 165/82, Commission of the European Communities *v.* United Kingdom, to amend the law in respect of provisions contained in collective agreements which are not in conformity with the obligations of the European Community equal treatment directive.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been considering the implications of the judgment and shall bring forward proposals as soon as I can.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Minister of State's recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On 8 February I visited Liverpool where I presented prizes to the winners and runners-up of a youth training scheme business game. This competition, which was jointly sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission and the Liverpool junior chamber of commerce and administered by Deloitte, Haskins and Sells, provides youngsters with an opportunity to learn something of the business world and to appreciate the importance of decision making, finance, team work and risk taking.

Labour Statistics (Burnley)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Burnley travel-to-work area have participated for the last three months for which figures are available in job release schemes.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number in the Burnley travel-to-work area in receipt of an allowance under the job release scheme was 343 in November 1984, 339 in December 1984 and 330 in January 1985.

EC Funds

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total allocation of funds within the 1983 European Economic Community budget to the social fund to help with projects for young people; how much of this money has been spent on helping to give young people within the United Kingdom employment; what discussions he has had with the European Economic Community Commission about this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The European Economic Community budget for 1983 had an allocation of about £531 million available to the social fund to assist with projects for young people. The United Kingdom's share of this amount was £240·7 million (45·2 per cent.) and this money is being claimed when payments fall due. These allocations were discussed with officials of the European Commission at the time through normal procedures. They provide a very welcome contribution to employment and training measures for young people.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total allocation of funds within the 1983 European Economic Community budget to the social fund to assist the textile industry; how much of this money has been spent on helping the textile industry within the United Kingdom; what discussions he has had with the European Economic Community Commission about this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The European Economic Community budget for 1983 had an allocation of about £16·5 million available to the social fund to assist workers in the textiles and clothing industries. Of this amount the United Kingdom's share was £3·7 million (22·4 per cent.) and this money is being claimed when payments fall due.

These allocations were discussed with officials of the European Commission at the time through normal

procedures. They provide a very welcome contribution to employment and training measures in the textiles and clothing industries.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. John Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of mode A places in youth training scheme schemes and what proportion of mode B places available in September 1984 have now been taken up.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1985, c. *18*]: I regret the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, about 77 per cent. of approved mode A places and 85 per cent. of approved mode B places were occupied by the end of December.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Helsinki Accord (Monitoring)

30. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedures are available for monitoring progress on the Helsinki accord; and if he has made representations about the position of Mr. Josef Berenstein and his family in the Soviet Union through these procedures.

Mr. Rifkind: A series of special follow-up meetings were agreed in 1983 at Madrid to discuss a wide range of CSCE issues. The human rights provisions will be the subject of such a special meeting to be held in Ottawa in May and June 1985. The specific case of Mr. Josef Berenstein and his family has not to our knowledge been raised in the conference on security and co-operation in Europe context but his plight and that of many others like him is something we shall have very much in mind in our preparations for the Ottawa meeting.

Extradition (Spain)

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the negotiations he has been conducting with Spain for a new extradition treaty.

Mr. Renton: Exchanges are continuing with the Spanish authorities with a view to finding a mutually acceptable basis for a new extradition treaty.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the amount of overtime payments for his office for each year since 1979.

Mr. Renton: The amount of overtime payments made to employees of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (including the Passport Office which was transferred to the Home Office as from 1 April 1984) was as follows for the last six financial years.

	£
1978-79	3,069,881
1979-80	3,571,659
1980-81	4,197,312
1981-82	4,774,067
1982-83	5,250,472
1983-84	5,151,837

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff have been and are employed by his office on a short-term contract for each year since 1979.

Mr. Renton: The numbers are:

Year	*Aid wing*	*Diplomatic*
1980	4,283	36
1981	3,602	28
1982	2,957	26
1983	2,605	27
1984	*2,256	27

* provisional

Mr. Adam Fergusson

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the appointment of Adam Fergusson as an adviser to his Department; and what is his salary, length of tenure, role in the Department and his qualifications.

Mr. Rifkind: Mr. Adam Fergusson was appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend on 4 February 1985 as my special adviser on European Community affairs with particular responsibility for maintaining contact with members of the European Parliament on Community and other issues.

In accordance with long-standing procedures for such appointments, his tenure is for the duration of the present Administration or when my right hon. and learned Friend leaves office or moves to another appointment. His salary is £21,313, the minimum of the scale appropriate for this appointment.

Mr. Fergusson was a member of the European Parliament from 1979 to 1984, during which period he served as a member of the Political Affairs Committee and in other capacities.

Margaret Hicks

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has received from the French Ministry of External Relations since making representations on behalf of Margaret Hicks for payment of compensation due to her for the loss of her yacht in Papeete on 30 September 1983.

Mr. Renton: The French Ministry of External Relations informed Her Majesty's embassy in Paris on 28 January that it awaited comment from the examining magistrate in Papeete. The embassy has been instructed to continue to press the Ministry with a view to bringing the matter to a satisfactory conclusion as rapidly as possible.

Syrian Nationals (Deportation)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what explanation has been given to him by the Syrian chargé d'affaires for the possession of a Syrian diplomatic passport by one of the men deported from the United Kingdom on 29 January, but not accredited to the Syrian embassy in London.

Mr. Luce: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) on 8 February at column *749*.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the diplomatic status of the four men holding Syrian passports arrested by the Metropolitan police and deported on 29 January.

Mr. Luce: None was accredited to the Syrian embassy in London but one carried a Syrian diplomatic passport in addition to a normal Syrian passport.

Kampuchea

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance, direct or indirect, Her Majesty's Government are giving to the Kampuchean rebel leader Son Sann and his supporters.

Mr. Luce: We give some modest assistance, solely of a humanitarian nature, to Mr. Son Sann's organisation and to that of Prince Sihanouk to help relieve hardship caused by Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers or officials had meetings with Son Soubert, son of the Kampuchean rebel leader Son Sann, during his visit to London in January.

Mr. Luce: Mr. Son Soubert had no meetings with Ministers during his visit to London in January. He called on the head of South East Asian department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

THE ARTS

Taxation (Acceptance in Lieu)

25. **Sir David Price** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what is to be the total provision made for 1985-86 for acceptances of art objects in lieu of taxation; and whether the Minister for the Arts is satisfied that it is sufficient for him to fulfil his duty to the national heritage.

Mr. Waldegrave: The acceptance in lieu of tax provision for 1985-86 is £2 million. The amount must depend on what can be afforded.

Riverside Studios and London Orchestral Concert Board

27. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what representations the Minister for the Arts has had about the Arts Council's decision to cease funding the Riverside Studios and to reduce its grant to the London Orchestral Concert Board.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Libraries (Privatisation)

28. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he has any plans for the privatisation of libraries.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. It is, however, for the statutory authorities concerned to decide how far they want to contract out work which goes into the provision of the services of the library.

British Empire (Museum)

Mr. Murphy asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will make a statement on the proposal to create a museum of the history of the British empire.

Mr. Waldegrave: My noble Friend the Minister for the Arts has recently received a copy of the feasibility study prepared for National Heritage on the creation of a museum of the British empire. He has not been asked to back the project with Government funding, which could clearly be very difficult at the present time.

It will be for National Heritage to decide how to take the project forward.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. George Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is provided by the European Economic Community to countries outside those specified in the Lomé protocols.

Mr. Timothy Raison: The European Community's expenditure on overseas aid in 1983 to developing countries not associated with the Community under the Lomé Convention was $379·25 million (£250 million). This includes both food and financial aid.

Sub-Sahara Africa (Special Facility)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom will be eligible for offshore procurement arising from the World Bank special facility for sub-Saharan Africa on the same terms as the countries which are contributing to it.

Mr. Raison: It is the intention that procurement access under the facility will be extended to those counries which care committing bilateral aid, provided that the aid is offered on the same terms as direct financial contributions to the facility. In practice, that means that the bilateral aid is offered on grant or very soft loan terms and is untied. Our aid will be on grant terms to the countries to which funds from the facility are likely to be made available but we are still considering whether it will be untied.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues will be on the agenda at the forthcoming meeting of the International Fund for Agricultural Development; and what views Her Majesty's Government's representative will be putting forward in relation to funding of the second replenishment.

Mr. Raison: At the next meeting, the British representative will be working for agreement on the main outstanding issue on he agenda, that of equitable burden sharing between the two principal categories of donors, namely the OECD and OPEC countries.

LORD PRIVY SEAL

Magistrates (Lancashire)

Mr. Pike asked the Lord Privy Seal how many magistrates were appointed to each bench in Lancashire in each of the last five years.

Mr. Biffen: The number appointed to each bench are listed in the following table.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Accrington	—	—	5	5	5
Blackburn	—	5	2	6	8
Blackpool	8	9	11	10	11
Burnley	—	6	4	11	2
Chorley	1	6	1	4	6
Church	1	—	—	3	2
Darwen	—	—	5	2	—
Fylde	7	3	1	2	2
Lancaster	8	5	—	8	5
Ormskirk	6	3	3	7	7
Pendle	5	4	3	8	6
Preston	1	8	6	5	5
Ribble Valley	—	—	3	2	—
Rossendale	—	—	2	5	3
South Ribble	5	4	2	9	8
Wyre	8	6	5	2	1

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in England have a cash target figure more than 50 per cent. above their grant-related expenditure figure; and if he will list them in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Waldegrave: Thirteen local authorities in England have a target for 1985-86 which is more than 50 per cent. above their grant-related expenditure assessment. They are:

City of London
Camden
Greenwich
ILEA
Sedgefield
Wear Valley
Basildon
Harlow
Stevenage
Burnley
Rossendale
Crawley
Thamesdown

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in England have a cash target figure below their grant-related expenditure assessment figure; and if he will list them in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows.

Two hundred and nine local authorities in England have a target for 1985-6 which is below their grant-related expenditure assessment. They are:

Avon
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Dorset
Durham
East Sussex
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcestershire
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
North Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wiltshire
Wandsworth
Bromley
Croydon
Merton
Redbridge
Sutton
Bolton
Oldham
Stockport
Trafford
Sefton
Wirral
Birmingham
Dudley
Sandwell
Solihull
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield
Greater Manchester
West Midlands
Bath
Kingswood
Northavon
Wansdyke
North Bedfordshire
Luton
Mid Bedfordshire
Bracknell
Slough
Wokingham
Aylesbury Vale
South Bucks
Chiltern
Wycombe
Cambridge
East Cambridgeshire
Fenland
Huntingdon
South Cambridgeshire
Macclesfield
Caradon
Carrick
Kerrier
North Cornwall
Penwith
Restormel
Allerdale
Eden
South Derbyshire
East Devon
Exeter
North Devon
Plymouth
Teignbridge
Torbay
West Devon
Bournemouth
Christchurch
North Dorset
Purbeck
West Dorset
Weymouth and Portland
Wimborne
Teesdale
Eastbourne
Hastings
Hove
Rother
Wealden
Braintree
Brentwood
Chelmsford
Colchester
Maldon
Uttlesford
Cheltenham
Cotswold
Forest of Dean
Gloucester
Stroud
Tewkesbury
Basingstoke and Deane
Eastleigh
Gosport
Havant
New Forest
Southampton
Test Valley
Winchester
Bromsgrove
Leominster
South Herefordshire
St Albans
Beverley
Great Grimsby
Holderness
Kingston upon Hull
Medina
Ashford
Dover
Gillingham
Maidstone
Rochester upon Medway
Tunbridge Wells
Blackpool
South Ribble
Blaby
Charnwood
Hinckley and Bosworth
Oadby and Wigston
Rutland
Boston
East Linsey
Lincoln
North Kesteven
South Kesteven
Breckland
Broadland
North Norfolk
South Norfolk
Daventry
East Northamptonshire
Northampton
South Northamptonshire
Alnwick
Berwick-upon-Tweed
Castle Morpeth
Hambleton
Ryedale
Selby
York
Broxtowe
Nottingham
Cherwell
Oxford
South Oxfordshire
Vale of White Horse
West Oxfordshire
Bridgnorth
North Shropshire
Oswestry
Shrewsbury and Atcham
South Shropshire
Mendip
Sedgemoor
Taunton Deane
West Somerset
Yeovil
East Staffordshire

Lichfield
South Staffordshire
Stafford
Tamworth
Babergh
St Edmundsbury
Suffolk Coastal
Waveney
Warwick
Arun
Chichester
Horsham
Kennet
North Wiltshire
Salisbury
West Wiltshire
Isles of Scilly

Disabled and Elderly Persons

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to bring forward draft regulations requiring developers to take specific account of the needs of the disabled and the elderly.

Mr. Gow: The Department has carried out a public consultation on draft regulations to require the provision of access to all floors of new shops and offices and other new single storey public buildings.

I intend to introduce new building regulations as soon as possible to require the provision of access for disabled people to such buildings.

The proposed regulations will be extended to other types of public buildings as soon as a comprehensive technical code is available on means of escape for disabled people in the event of fire.

Sewage Waste

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in what schemes or experiments his Department has been involved concerning the use of sewage waste in *(a)* Wiltshire and *(b)* England and Wales: (1) with private landowners, (ii) with local authorities and (iii) on its own land.

Mr. Macfarlane: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Wintex-Cimex '85 Exercise

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment with respect to Wintex '85, what Government officers and departments were represented at the last meeting of the North East Regional Emergency Committee.

Mr. Waldegrave: The last meeting of the North East Regional Emergency Committee was not concerned with Wintex '85.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the involvement of the regional directors of his Department responsible for the north east of England in Wintex '85.

Mr. Waldegrave: Regional directors of my Department will not be involved in Wintex '85.

North Eastern Regional Emergency Committee.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Northumbria and Durham police forces are represented on the north eastern regional emergency committee; if he will list the names and ranks of personnel involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. The committee meets infrequently and the representatives will vary from time to time.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the powers of the north east regional emergency committee; if he will list the names and function of the members of the committee; and under what circumstances the committee would assume these powers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The committee is chaired by the regional director of the Departments of the Environment and Transport with representatives from a number of Government Departments such as Environment; Transport; Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Employment; Trade and Industry; Energy; Health and Social Security and the Central Office of Information. The committee also has a military and police representative appointed by the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office respectively.

Regional emergency committees would normally be activated only in an emergency which threatened seriously to disrupt the supply and distribution of essential supplies in the regions. The main purpose of the committees would be to co-ordinate, under central government direction, arrangements for maintainng essential supplies and services, and to act as a channel of communication with authorities and organisations concerned.

Archaeological and Historic Artefacts (Whitehall)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what has been the total cost to his Department of protecting archaeological and historic interests in the excavations between Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, and Norman Shaw North;

(2) what artefacts or other items of archaeological or historical interest have been *(a)* identified and *(b)* preserved in the excavation for the building works behind Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, and the Norman Shaw North Building;

(3) what agencies have been involved in investigating and monitoring the archaeological and historical aspects of the excavations between Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, and the Norman Shaw North Building.

Mr. Macfarlane: The inner London archaeological unit undertook a small survey of part of this site in 1980 and a more extensive investigation was carried out by the central excavation unit of the Department of the Environment between May and July 1983. Very little of archaeological or historic interest was found and no significant costs were incurred on further protection.

Rates Revaluation

Mr. Churchill asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when Her Majesty's Government propose to honour the commitments contained in paragraph 5.8 of Cmnd. 9008, entitled, "Rates", published in August 1983, to carry out a non-domestic rate revaluation.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 22 October at column *491*.

Mr. Churchill asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any evidence to suggest that domestic properties in the north of England may, as in the case of industrial properties, be generally over-rated relative to the south-east.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the average length of time required to process applications to his Department under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for each of the metropolitan county councils, Greater London council and the Inner London education authority;

(2) what is the average length of time required to process applications of his Department under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for each of the metropolitan county councils, Greater London council and the Inner London education authority.

Sir George Young: The information requested is as follows, as at 31 January 1985.

Time taken to process applications (Median average, days including non-working days)

Authority	*Section 8*	*Section 9*
Greater London council	21	13
Greater Manchester county council	15	18
Inner London education authority	1	11
Merseyside county council	25	14
Tyne and Wear county council	11	18
West Midlands county council	12	20
South Yorkshire county council	22	—
West Yorkshire county council	15	17
All authorities	14	15

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the sites submitted under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 have been visited by him.

Sir George Young: None in the course of consideration of applications for consent.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the value of contracts applied for has been under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 in total and broken down for each metropolitan county council and the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: The information requested is as follows:

Total value of contracts

Authority	*£*
Greater London council	115,131,357
Greater Manchester county council	17,458,658
Inner London education authority	7,860,365
Merseyside county council	4,255,113
South Yorkshire county council	*(one contract)
Tyne and Wear county council	2,680,968
West Midlands county council	8,993,875
West Yorkshire county council	11,734,939
All authorities	168,115,275

* Not specified.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many consent applications under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 have been refused for each of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council;

(2) how many consent applications under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 have been refused for each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority.

Sir George Young: None.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many consent applications have been received under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 from each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the inner London education authority;

(2) how many consent applications have been received under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 from each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority;

(3) how many consent applications have been received under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 from each of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: The information requested is as follows:

Number of applications received by 31 January 1985

Authority	*Section 7*	*Section 8*	*Section 9*
Greater London council	1	1,455	63
Greater Manchester county council	3	453	18
Inner London education authority	—	707	6
Merseyside county council	4	106	13
South Yorkshire county council	12	224	1
Tyne & Wear county council	243	94	7
West Midlands county council	17	435	25
West Yorkshire county council	12	170	8
All authorities	292	3,644	141

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many press releases have been issued by his Department relating to sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984; and what are the dates thereof.

Sir George Young: Three. The dates were 1 November 1984, 26 November 1984 and 3 December 1984.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the longest period a case submitted under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 has remained with his Department before consent was given.

Sir George Young: One hundred and thirty-two days. The delay in issuing consent was due entirely to the GLC's failure to supply basic information necessary to enable proper consideration to be given to its application.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are employed by his Department, and what are their grades, to process consent applications under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Sir George Young: I wrote to the hon. Member on 22 November 1984 setting out the most recent available

details of Department of the Environment staff employed on administering specific applications for consent under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984. These are reproduced in the following table. We do not distinguish between the sections in the Act for administrative purposes.

Grade	*Estimated full-time equivalents*
3	0·01
5	0·28
6	0·14
Principal	0·23
Principal professional and technology officer	0·02
Principal estates officer	0·03
Principal research officer	0·02
Principal planning officer	0·01
Senior research officer	0·19
Senior executive officer	0·68
Higher executive officer	0·66
Executive officer	1·32
Clerical officer/clerical assistant	2·35
Total	5·94

These figures exclude related typing and messengerial staff.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been received under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for exhibitions and concerts.

Sir George Young: At least 47, some of which were for more than one concert.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applications have been received for food under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984;

(2) how many applications have been received for contracts for blanched chips under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Sir George Young: Six, for contracts totalling £3·8613 million. One, value £298,500, was frozen blanched chips.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the managerial and administrative implications of sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 on local authorities.

Sir George Young: To a large extent the implications will depend upon decisions and organisational arrangements made by the local authorities concerned. The Department will continue to make whatever arrangements are necessary to ensure that applications for consent are dealt with expeditiously. General consents have been issued relating to a number of activities falling within the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will grant a general consent for all projects excluding the enterprise boards funded under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, from the provisions of section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Some general consents have already been issued and my right hon. Friend is considering the need for a further general consent under section 7 of the Act as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when a further series of general consents will be issued under sections 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is keeping the position under review. Further general consents under sections 8 and 9 of the Act will be brought forward as necessary, consistent with the need to prevent activities which are prejudicial to the Government's abolition proposals.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations have been received from voluntary and community groups about section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Sir George Young: 79 from a variety of bodies, including voluntary and community groups.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications for the Greater London council and each of the metropolitan county councils under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 were for a value of less than £100, between £100 and £1,000, between £1,000 and £10,000, between £10,000 and £100,000, between £100,000 and £1 million and over £1 million.

Sir George Young: Financial considerations are not always a material factor in determining applications under the Act and such details have not been supplied or sought in every case. The following information relates o those cases where the value was known:

Authority	*No. of applications by value (£)*					
	Under 100	*100-999*	*1,000-9,999*	*10,000-99,999*	*100,000-1,000,000*	*Over £1 million*
Greater London council	130	139	474	364	45	4
Greater Manchester county council	77	90	145	100	6	0
Inner London education authority	527	0	0	0	0	0
Merseyside county council	11	14	27	6	2	0
South Yorkshire county council	38	26	69	6	0	0
Tyne and Wear county council	12	14	48	18	1	0
West Midlands county council	109	37	158	96	5	0
West Yorkshire county council	28	17	37	29	1	0

Authority	No. of applications by value (£)					
	Under 100	100-999	1,000-9,999	10,000-99,999	100,000-1,000,000	Over £1 million
All authorities	932	337	958	619	60	4

South Yorkshire (Asbestos)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to safeguard public health following the deposition of asbestos in parts of South Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health and Social Security said in his answer to the hon. Member on 20 December 1984, at column *305* that the health risk in this case was negligible. The primary responsibility for protecting public health in these circumstances rests with the local authority, and I am informed that adequate measures were taken by the authorities concerned.

Merseyside (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Merseyside.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I visited Merseyside on 8 February 1985.

In the morning I met representatives of Knowsley borough council. Later I met the press and then went to meet senior management officials of Bibby Edible Oils Ltd. and see the derelict Brocklebank Dock site where Bibby's intend to build a new factory. Afterwards I opened the Southport information technology centre.

In the afternoon in addition to two political engagements I met representatives of Sefton borough council and officially opened the renovated Southport town hall. Finally, I visited the Radio City studios to take in its "Taking Issue" programme.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets have been fired in Northern Ireland in 1984 and since the beginning of the current year; in what circumstances; in what location the bullets were fired; how many bullets were fired; and if any persons were injured as a result of the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Scott: 1,768 plastic baton rounds were fired in Northern Ireland during 1984, 4 rounds have been fired so far this year. Police records show that 42 people were allegedly injured by plastic baton rounds in 1984. There have been no reports of anyone having been injured this year. I am writing to the hon. Member with the information he has requested about the circumstances and places in which the baton rounds were fired. A copy of my letter will be placed in the Library.

Non-scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give separately for magistrates courts and Crown courts for 1984 the number of cases involving non-scheduled offences in which pleas of not guilty were entered; in how many of these cases verdicts of not guilty were returned; and in how many of these cases trial was by jury.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	1984	
	Crown courts	Magistrates courts
Pleas 'not guilty' entered	195	6,357
Verdicts 'not guilty' returned	96	2,410

In all non-scheduled cases tried in the Crown courts, trial is by jury.

Notes:

1. The figures refer only to the principal offence.
2. The figures for the magistrates' court include motoring offences.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give separately for magistrates' courts and for Crown courts in each of the years 1980, 1981 and 1982 and to date, the number of court cases involving non-scheduled offences in which a plea of not guilty was entered; and in how many of these cases a verdict of not guilty was returned.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *713-14*]: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Crown court		Magistrates' court	
	Pleas "Not Guilty" Entered	Verdicts "Not Guilty" Returned	Pleas "Not Guilty" Entered	Verdicts "Not Guilty" Returned
1980	113	74	3,025	1,321
1981	141	96	5,214	2,249
1982	145	81	6,119	2,532
1983	176	92	6,154	2,774
1984	195	96	6,357	2,410

Notes:

1. The above figures refer only to the principal offence.
2. Figures for the magistrates' courts include motoring offences.

Beef

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the number of beef cattle slaughtered in Northern Ireland in each of the last four years.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

Year	*Beef Cattle Slaughtered**
1981	465,535
1982	362,952
1983	455,935
1984	532,870

* *Note:* Clean cattle only i.e. steers and heffers.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the average price of beef cattle sold in Northern Ireland dead-weight in each of the last four years.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

Beef Cattle average market price pence per kilogramme deadweight*

Year	
1981	156·17
1982	176·43
1983	175·11
1984	175·23

* Clean cattle only: ie steers and heifers.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dairy farmers in Northern Ireland with fewer than 40 cows have left the industry in the last 12 months.

Dr. Boyson: This information is not readily available. The agricultural census shows that the overall number of farms with dairy cows fell by 88 from 8,171 to 8,083 between June 1983 and June 1984. The number of dairy herds of less than 40 cows fell from 5,341 to 5,207, a decline of 134, but this cannot be taken as the number of farmers who have left the industry; some herds may have expanded, others may have contracted from higher size groups.

Sewage Disposal

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the volume of sewage sludge which has been transported to and dumped at the East Antrim coastal area of Drain's Bay, Larne, in each of the last five years for which records are available; and how much of the above sewage sludge originated outside Larne borough council area.

Mr. Chris Patten: Figures for the volume of sewage sludge from septic tanks and small sewage treatment works transported by tanker to the retention tank at Drains Bay (Black Cave North) before discharge at the sea outfall are available only for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Gallons in 000's (approx)

	1982	*1983*	*1984*
Sludge transported by tanker to Black Cave North	1,008	1,270	832
Volume originating outside Larne borough council area	481	615	398

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many different types of major sewage disposal schemes for Larne are under consideration at this time by the Department of the Environment; what is the estimated cost of each scheme; and how effective each scheme has been evaluated to be in sewage treatment.

Mr. Chris Patten: Two major sewage disposal schemes for Larne are under consideration. One scheme involves the construction of retention tanks at Redlands industrial estate which would discharge the town sewage to the sea through the existing outfall at Sandy Bay in suitable tidal conditions. The cost of this scheme is estimated at £935,000.

An alternative scheme would involve discharge of the town sewage through a new outfall in the Black Cave area. A marine survey will be required to confirm the suitability of this proposal and until this has been assessed, no estimate of cost can be made.

In both cases the effluent will be processed to remove or break up solid materials. It is common practice at coastal sites throughout the United Kingdom, where dilution factors and dispersion patterns are favourable, to discharge sewage after such treatment via submarine outfalls.

Road Accidents (Statistics)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost of accidents on non-built up roads in Northern Ireland with *(a)* speed limits of 60 miles per hour and *(b)* speed limits of 70 miles per hour; and if, in each case, he will indicate whether the roads or streets are lit or not.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost. I can, however, advise my hon. Friend that the total cost of road accidents in Northern Ireland for 1983 is estimated at £57,162,000.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were convicted in 1984, either on their own admission of guilt or following a plea of not guilty, on the basis of evidence given by accomplices on behalf of the Crown in cases concerning scheduled offences in Northern Ireland; how many suspects arrested on the basis of such evidence have been released as a result of the retraction of evidence given by accomplices; and how many people are presently awaiting trial as a result of evidence obtained from terrorist accomplices.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply,* 28 January 1985, c. *71*]: Eleven persons were convicted in cases concerning scheduled offences during 1984 following trials in which the evidence of a former accomplice was given on behalf of the Crown. A further 10 persons were convicted on the

basis of their statements of admission made during enquiries arising from the evidence of a former accomplice.

It is not possible to associate directly the number of persons released with the withdrawal of evidence by alleged accomplices, because arrested persons may be released for other reasons and because persons who have been charged on such evidence may also face criminal charges on other grounds. However, the available records show that in 1984, following the withdrawal of evidence by alleged accomplices, some or all of the charges against 21 persons were dropped.

On 28 January 1985, 112 persons were on remand or had been returned for trial for scheduled offences in cases in which it was intended that an alleged accomplice would give evidence for the Crown.

Security Statistics

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for 1984 are now available, together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for that year.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *712-13*]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland gave to a question by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 7 February 1985, at column *650-52*.

WALES

Regional Development Grant

6. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage of the working population in the counties of Dyfed, West Glamorgan and Mid-Glamorgan who resided in assisted areas eligible for regional development grant before the changes that took effect in the assisted area map on 29 November 1984; and what is the equivalent percentage figure now.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information on a county basis relates to employee population. Prior to 29 November 1984, the percentages were Dyfed 73 per cent., West Glamorgan 38 per cent. and Mid-Glamorgan 100 per cent. The percentage still eligible for automatic grant under the new two-tier system is now 25 per cent., 33 per cent. and 65 per cent. respectively. However, 77 per cent. of Dyfed and the whole of the other two counties will of course remain eligible for selective financial assistance.

A55 (Roadworks)

20. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will report progress on the A55 roadworks for a dual carriageway along the north Wales coast; if the works are currently on time; and when he expects the A55 dual carriageway to be completed.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: We are making good progress in upgrading the A55. Eleven sections have already been improved. These include the Hawarden bypass and stage I of the Colwyn Bay bypass opened by my hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts) in September and December 1984 respectively. The remaining section of the Colwyn Bay bypass will be opened in the early summer. Work is in progress on stage 2 of the Holywell bypass and a contract for the Bodelwyddan bypass should be let shortly. Preparation work on the remaining stages is well in hand and we expect substantially to complete the upgrading around the turn of the decade.

Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth

21. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to cut financial aid during the next five years to the Welsh plant breeding station at Gogerddan, Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The effects on individual institutions of the overall reduction in planned expenditure on research and development for 1986-87 and 1987-88 announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 22 January have yet to be determined.

Statutory Bodies (Confidential Statements)

22. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that statutory bodies in Wales do not make confidential settlements in circumstances such as happened with the claim made by the Welsh Health Technical Services Organisation for defects at the University hospital of Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall consider each case on its merits and will of course ensure accountability to the Public Accounts Committee. This was specifically provided for in the terms of this particular settlement. However, it is essential always to bear in mind the need to protect the interests of the taxpayer.

Wintex Cimex '85 Exercises

14. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total costs of the Wintex Cimex '85 exercises attributable to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Approximately £850.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department's officials involved in Wintex '85 will be liaising with the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation at Carmarthen.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply he received from my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 30 November 1984 at column *597*.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether the alert state Fandango 85 will apply to his Department's facilities in connection with Wintex '85.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department has no knowledge of this matter.

Milk Quotas

15. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what submissions he has received from the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union concerning the securing of additional milk quotas for those areas of Wales defined as less favoured areas; and if he will make a statement.

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

the Becket in the Old Kent road. Soon thereafter I joined the Boxing Board, along with other stewards whose sole service is to have the privilege of serving the active sportsmen, in our case the boxers, and the licence holders who support them.

Having declared my interest I should like to substantiate my view that professional boxing should be at its zenith. To begin with, we have record levels of boxers who are licensed by the board. Hon. Members should consider the facts. For example, 1974, 1975 and 1976 saw 242, 356 and 395 licensed boxers participating in 150 tournaments. Over the past three years the figures have stood at 538, 576 and 551, with over 242 tournaments last year alone.

Recently, the British Boxing Board of Control for the first time since its inception in 1929 was accepted as a full member of the World Boxing Association. Now our fighters can challenge for WBC and WBA titles.

Only last year, television policy limited coverage to two live and two delayed contests in a year. Today, after a carefully monitored 12-month pilot scheme to ensure the prevention of studio boxing, licensed promoters can have 20 shows televised in total on the national network. That is a reflection, not only of the increasing popularity of the sport and of the high viewing figures, but of the substantial public support that exists, as those attending promotions will know. The advent of increased television coverage, although it has meant administrative problems, will, we hope, mean that more people connected with the sport will try their hand at promoting, and may themselves develop into major forces to challenge any recent tendencies towards monopoly, thereby becoming capable of staging world title fights, and enabling boxers from the regions to have the chance of boxing before their home crowds and audiences. It should be healthy to have two major promoters. It should not develop into an internal battle at the expense of the sport.

To match this growth in activity, unrivalled medical controls and safeguards are implemented by the board. Boxing in Britain leads the world in assessing, maintaining and developing standards of medical control. It was we, the British, who introduced the universal boxing passport two years ago, now carried by all boxers under the aegis of the World Boxing Council, and containing specific medical and boxing records. It is we who have sought to improve the state of boxers' fitness and the degree of medical control.

Before any boxer is considered for a licence he must have the official medical examination form completed. This form must be completed every year when his licence is due for renewal. In addition, every boxer is examined before every contest in which he takes part, and again after each contest.

A minimum of two medical officers must attend every tournament. Incidentally, many of them are members of the British Medical Association. The medical arguments outlined in the BMA report published last year do not, I believe, stand up to examination. The moral question is, of course, worthy of consideration and debate, and I put it on record that I am as fully aware as anyone of the hazards of the sport, and, certainly as far as professional boxing is concerned, so are the participants.

Professional boxing is undertaken through consent. Banning it would drive it underground without adequate medical supervision, as in unlicensed shows. The continuation of the sport under those circumstances, devoid of stringent medical safeguards, would be unacceptable to me.

As Eric Armit, a respected boxing statistician, said:

"When our sport is attacked we all close ranks. All that I ask is that we must never close our minds to the fact that boxing is about boxers and we should always be looking for ways to increase their safety."

The real danger to the future of the sport—my prime intention today is to draw this to the attention of the House—derives from the threat to boxing from within its ranks. Let us consider the board's role. The board has accepted many of the challenges of today's world. Since its inception in 1929 some outstanding stewards have helped to promote the interests of the sport. The board is not financially interested and has been totally independent. It could be said that the board comprised moneyed Corinthians. In the past the board has been able to devote a great deal of time to boxing. Not only do the board's members seek to influence through rules and regulations, but they offer arbitration services for disputes among licence holders.

The tempo of life today is different. The Corinthians of the past were not burdened with instant media coverage or by huge financial deals. Perhaps the Corinthians have gone. Perhaps the board is sticking too hard and fast to a non-financially interested status. Perhaps it should consider restricting its involvement in the sport to administration. Perhaps it should look for statutory backing through a charter responsible to the Minister. Perhaps it should withdraw from arbitration between licence holders.

In the old days licence holders would go to the stewards with a range of problems. They were the best benevolent oligarchies ever known. I still like to think that the board is benevolent, but the concept of oligarchy is now as outmoded as the Corinthian ideal.

Some would argue that the board performs best in assessing where the sport is going, developing policies for television and protecting the six-rounders. These are valid questions and the board should never cease to address them.

What about the promoters? I remind those involved in unnecessary litigation over technical actions, which can only damage the sport, that the only finance generated by the board comes from the licence holders. Traditionally, that has rightly been kept at a low level. Unlike football and other sports, boxing does not enjoy direct handouts. The board does not promote the sport, own venues, have fixture lists or act as impresarios. Yet today we are using money from many Peters to defend against a few Pauls.

There comes a time when the figures involved in litigation are greater than the resources available to the board. When the board shrinks from doing what it believes to be right because of monetary restraints, the sport will be under serious threat. When the board looks for the easy way out because the course that it believes to be right cannot be pursued due to the cost of litigation, it will be time for the board to go.

Before Conteh, in the 1970s, I cannot recall the last time that the board was taken to court. Perhaps the last time involved Sullivan in the 1940s. Apart from the first action with Conteh the board has lost no further cases. The

cost of defending the litigation currently pending on two High Court actions could far outstretch the board's present reserves of about £100,000.

I for one do not believe that I could stand in the House, or anywhere else, and defend the future of professional boxing, despite my deep commitment to the sport, without the medical control and supervision that is exercised by the board and is respected worldwide. The safety of the boxers is paramount and their interests must be served first. The main fight is between rival factions, which has resulted in litigation, with the non-financially interested board in the middle. Of course people should be entitled to ply their trade within the law and any constraint on their freedom is lawful only if it is reasonable.

The board believes that such constraints as it imposes are reasonable and fair. Indeed, the board's regulations are open to change at annual general meetings and embrace all licence holders. It is there that the opportunity to change the rules exists. I accept that all licence holders are professional business men, but let us consider the analogy of planning control. One cannot build on a piece of land irrespective of anyone else. The law is there to protect the public at large from the whims of the individual. Similarly, once a man takes out a licence and accepts the British Boxing Board of Control's regulations he cannot expect to promote when and where he wants, irrespective of clashes of dates or the future interests of the sport. The general body of rules and regulations protect all the promoters and licence holders and, above all, secure the future of the sport.

We must recognise that the future of British boxing is at stake. The board has a duty to respond to a world of boxing far removed from that which faced its Corinthian predecessors. It is doing just that. There is an onus on promoters to put on the very best shows to encourage the paying public to continue their support. Above all, there is an overriding duty to promote the interests of the boxers who are the sport's greatest asset.

I have tried to restrict my comments to under the usual 15 minutes to allow the hon. Member—although on this occasion it would be fair to say my hon. Friend—for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) to contribute to the debate. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is agreeable to that.

2.46 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I thank the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) and the Minister for their generosity in allowing me to have my tuppence worth—more likely my five minutes' worth—on this important subject. I commend the hon. Gentleman not only on his choice of subject but on the way that he has spoken, which was very commendable. It is probably the only subject on which we agree. We both broke sweat in the ring for the dark blues at Oxford, which qualifies us more than most hon. Members to speak about this subject.

There is no doubt that boxing is under threat, and the House knows that. It is under threat from the British Medical Association which, at its Manchester delegate conference, agreed to campaign actively to ban the sport —even though only a minority of members took part in the conference. It is campaigning, and we must take the threat seriously.

Everyone knows that boxing can be dangerous, and I do not exclude the hon. Gentleman from that comment. It must have affected him because otherwise he would be not on the Conservative Benches but on the Opposition Benches. However, boxing has a good record in this country. There have been 10 deaths since 1945—10 too many — with two deaths during the past 15 years. Putting that statistic in the context of other sports, the number of deaths in boxing pales into insignificance—if one can use that expression about death. That applies also to serious injuries, and I am sure that the Minister agrees with that.

Unless we are to be a nation that wraps itself in cotton wool, we must accept that a person entering competitive sport will get hurt at some stage. Tragically, some people will be killed. We must ensure that boxing remains in being while forever trying to ensure that the safeguards are maintained.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that a special mention should be made of the chief medical officer of the BBBC, Dr. Adrian Whiteson, and his staff. They have done a tremendous job to ensure that boxing is as safe as possible. Not a great deal of publicity has been given to their work. The number of boxers forced to retire by the board has received little publicity, and the same applies to boxers who have decided to quit. Colin Jones, with 33 bouts, will probably retire permanently, as will Charlie Magri with 33 bouts. Compare that with boxers like Ted "Kid" Lewis with 280 fights in less than five years, yet who lived to the ripe old age of 74. That would not be permitted today. Therefore, I support the hon. Gentleman and the BBBC.

I wish briefly to mention an area that is worrying us all. The subject, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Lewisham, East is vital to the good name of boxing. I refer to the allegations that a cartel is operating in boxing, as exposed by *The Sunday Times* last month. If Jarvis Astaire, Mickey Duff, Mike Barrett and Terry Lawless are guilty of those allegations, they must go to the BBBC and give it the fullest co-operation. Instead, one gathers, they are hiding behind their lawyers' apron strings. The board must not be inhibited by such tactics. We expect the board to be positive and firm in ensuring that boxing's good name is maintained.

In my submission, parliamentary privilege was established to assist people such as those members of the board who wish to get to the facts but who are inhibited from doing so by lawyers. I am sure that many hon. Members would be prepared to speak up for the BBBC in this matter. However, there is no substitute for the board, as the governing body of boxing, taking upon itself this role and doing it without help even from well-meaning hon. Members and others.

The Minister, who is sympathetic to boxing, cannot sit back overlong and allow this matter to drag on. As the custodian of British sport in the House, he must, if necessary, trigger off the mechanism of the Office of Fair Trading if he believes that a restraint on trade is in operation. I hope that he will reply to that point. Again, I congratulate the hon. Member for Lewisham, East on initiating the debate and on the way in which he did so.

2.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Neil Macfarlane): I echo the sentiments of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) in welcoming this debate introduced by my

motor insurance in respect of vehicles registered in the United Kingdom must comply with the requirements of the road traffic legislation.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any restrictions are placed on the movement of funds between the various members of the Common Market and the United Kingdom which would affect the payment of insurance claims taken up by United Kingdom residents with Common Market insurance companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I am unaware of any restrictions imposed by other member states on the movement of funds that would prevent a United Kingdom resident successfully pursuing a claim against an insurance company established in another member state.

Companies Acts (Consolidation)

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the measures to consolidate the Companies Acts will take effect; and, in the light of the consolidation, which statutory instruments he proposes to remake.

Mr. Fletcher: The consolidation of the Companies Acts is due to come into effect on 1 April as proposed in the Bills currently before the House of Lords. However, the Government consider that users should be given a longer period to familiarise themselves with the new legislation before it comes into operation. The Government therefore propose to introduce amendments to all four Bills so that each would take effect on 1 July.

As regards subordinate legislation, the substance of some regulations has been incorporated in the consolidation, some will remain in force unchanged, some will be re-made to reflect the provisions of the legislation in its new form and some will be re-made for the convenience of users. The list of regulations we intend to remake has yet to be finalised but it will include the Forms Regulations, the Companies (Disclosure of Directors Interests) (Exemptions) Regulations, the Stock Exchange (Designation of Nominees) Order, the Unregistered Companies Regulations and the Companies (Disqualification Orders) Order.

The regulations will be re-made to coincide with the entry into force of the new legislation.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Administration

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost of administration of his Department, expressed in constant prices, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ridley: The total cost of administration of the Department of Transport expressed in 1983-84 prices in each of the last five years was:

	£ million
1979-80	258·9
1980-81	259·1
1981-82	244·7
1982-83	220·7
1983-84	256·2

The figures exclude capital in all years. The figure for 1983-84 includes £25·0 million in respect of staff dealing with aviation and shipping transferred from the former Department of Trade on 1 July 1983.

Bypasses (Trees and Shrubs)

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage or require local authorities to plant trees and shrubs along bypasses they construct with the aid of central Government funds.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department lays down no requirements of this sort; it must be for local highway authorities to decide on such matters on their roads. But I commend the planting of trees and shrubs and we set a good example on our own roads. My right hon. Friend takes the environmental aspects of schemes into account when considering them for support with transport supplementary grant, and expenditure on planting attracts grant to the extent that it is included in the local authority's estimates accepted by him.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the amount of money spent on road maintenance in the last financial year for which statistics are available.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1982-83, the latest year for which out-turn information is available, £1,330·9 million was spent on road maintenance by central and local government throughout the United Kingdom.

Railways (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the numbers of fatalities or serious injuries sustained by train passengers known to his Department in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other countries, where goods trains carrying hazardous materials were involved in accidents in railway tunnels for each year since 1960.

Mr. David Mitchell: There have been no fatalities or serious injuries to train passengers from this cause in the United Kingdom since 1960. The Department's main source of information on railway accidents in other countries is the annual report published by the International Union Railways (UIC). These reports do not give the kind of detailed information requested.

Buses

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in the *Official Report* a table showing the total amounts paid to bus operators in respect of revenue support for the financial years 1974-75 and 1984-85, together with the total bus route mileage and passengers carried for each of the years in respect of each of the shire and metropolitan county councils in England.

Mr. David Mitchell: Bus route mileage figures are not readily available. Figures on vehicle kilometres by stage services and passenger journeys on stage services are available on a national basis for calendar years and are given as follows for 1974 and 1983. Figures on revenue support by county councils for public passenger transport

services are available for financial years and are given below for 1974-75 and 1983-84, but these include revenue support for rail and ferry services. In the metropolitan areas expenditure on rail and ferry services accounts for some 20 per cent. of the total support; in the shire counties such expenditure is very small.

(millions)

	1974	*1983*
Vehicle kilometres by stage services in GB	2,360	*2,125
Passenger journeys on stage services in GB	7,682	5,550

* The definition of stage carriage services was changed in 1980. As a result a number of services previously classified as express come within the stage definition.

Revenue Support for Public Passenger Transport Services (£ million)

County	*1974-75*	*1983-84*
GMC	13·473	49·119
Merseyside	10·827	54·908
South Yorkshire	4·828	60·074
Tyne & Wear	2·382	19·699
West Midlands	10·873	30·226
West Yorkshire	4·679	44·000
Total Mets	47·063	258·027
Avon	0·066	4·553
Bedford	0·034	0·753
Berkshire	0·038	1·287
Buckinghamshire	0·043	1·145
Cambridgeshire	0·010	0·816
Cheshire	0·103	5·044
Cleveland	0·038	6·097
Cornwall	0·026	1·376
Cumbria	0·056	2·110
Derbyshire	0·035	2·775
Devon	0·056	1·316
Dorset	0·007	1·012
Durham	0·233	1·755
East Sussex	0·025	1·720
Essex	0·072	3·137
Gloucestershire	0·042	0·464
Hampshire	0·377	3·331
Hereford and Worcester	0·016	1·076
Hertfordshire	0·154	4·740
Humberside	0·031	0·970
Isle of Wight	0·040	0·267
Kent	0·093	2·724
Lancashire	0·055	7·251
Leicestershire	0·005	1·839
Lincolnshire	0·030	0·411
Norfolk	0·024	0·803
Northamptonshire	0·079	0·400
Northumberland	0·041	0·506
North Yorkshire	0·060	1·476
Nottinghamshire	0·943	1·832
Oxfordshire	0·118	0·239
Shropshire	0·011	0·756
Somerset	0·021	0·495
Staffordshire	0·013	4·147
Suffolk	0·041	0·292
Surrey	0·073	4·118
Warwickshire	0·001	0·411
West Sussex	0·100	1·780
Wiltshire	0·029	0·563
Total Shires	3·240	75·787
Total	50·303	333·814

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received a reply in response to his White Paper, "Buses," Cmnd. 9300, from the London Regional Passenger Transport Committee.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many replies he has received in response to his White Paper, "Buses," Cmnd. 9300, in favour of and how many were against *(a)* eliminating cross subsidy, *(b)* reducing subsidy, *(c)* reorganising the National Bus Company into smaller units, *(d)* introducing shared taxis without controls, *(e)* replacing conventional full size bus services with mini bus services, *(f)* introducing the requirement that authorities seek competitive tenders for contracts to run bus services and *(g)* abandoning the controls the number of taxis in metropolitan areas.

Mr. David Mitchell: The White Paper did not propose nor does the Transport Bill provide powers for the elimination of cross-subsidy, the reduction of subsidy, the introduction of shared taxis without controls nor the replacement of conventional full size bus services with minibus services. There was a wide range of responses on the NBC, tendering and taxis proposals but the complex and thoughtful nature of many of the responses makes it impossible to place them in to the simple categories of for and against.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many replies he has received in response to his White Paper, "Buses," Cmnd. 9300, from area transport users consultative committees in areas outside London that might be affected; and how many of these were in favour of reducing the subsidy to bus services and how many were opposed;

(2) how many replies he has received in response to his White Paper, "Buses," Cmnd. 9300, from area transport users consultative committees in areas outside London that might be affected; and how many of these were in favour of deregulating the bus industry and how many were opposed.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received one response from an area transport users consultative committee broadly in favour of the White Paper proposals. Several area transport users consultative committees have endorsed the response by the joint public transport users group in the six metropolitan counties which was broadly opposed to the policy. The proposals set out in the White Paper are about improving local bus services and getting better value for money, not about changing the level of subsidy available to support the industry.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many replies received in response to his White Paper, "Buses," Cmnd. 9300, indicated that the proposals would have an adverse effect by causing *(a)* reduced services in rural areas, *(b)* loss of a co-ordinated network, *(c)* higher fares and cuts in services on less well used or costly routes and at less popular times of the day or week and *(d)* increased congestion and reduced safety.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received over 8,000 responses many of which contained a mixture of these particular points. The Department has now published a response to the consultation, which addresses these arguments, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Stanley: Any nuclear weapon with the requisite range to reach a given known target could theoretically be used against that target in a first strike, but in practice a first strike by either NATO or the Warsaw Pact would have no prospect of achieving success because each side has an assured retaliatory capability. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that 'first strike' forms no part of NATO policy.

Wintex-Cimex '85 Exercise

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the areas of the northern region that he expects to be used by ground forces during the Wintex '85 exercises; and if he will indicate the flight paths to be used by aircraft involved in the exercises.

Mr. Stanley: Wintex-Cimex '85 is a command post exercise that does not involve the deployment of either ground formations or aircraft.

Departmental Purchases

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a description of the types of articles purchased by or on behalf of his Department from Eastern bloc countries.

Mr. Butler: We are not aware of any systems or sub-systems currently being purchased from Eastern bloc countries, although four Britten Norman aircraft purchased between 1982 and 1984 were assembled in Rumania. At the component level, some limited purchases of materials and parts may occur from time to time, but only in circumstances where no problems of strategic dependence are involved.

Royal Navy Stores

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the measures being taken to open the supply of stores to Royal Navy warships to private competition.

Mr. John Lee: In accordance with Government policy, opportunities are being sought to contract out elements of the naval stores organisation, where that would be to the advantage of the Royal Navy and of the taxpaper.

Brave Defender Exercise

Mr. Dafydd Ellis Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether exercise Brave Defender is part of the annual series of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Autumn Forge exercises.

Mr. Stanley: No.

HMS Starling (Logbook)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the log book of HMS Starling (F66) for the period shortly following the time when Starling was subjected to radiation trials in the Atlantic in 1953 has been withdrawn by his Department from the Public Records Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: The ship's log of HMS Starling for the month of August 1953 was withdrawn from the Public Record Office in order that it might be examined within the Ministry of Defence for the purposes of replying to the hon. Member's prior correspondence on the subject of alleged radiation trials. From this examination of this document it would appear that there are no grounds whatsoever for believing that such trials took place as alleged in the hon. Member's letter. The log has now been returned to the Public Record Office; for the hon. Member's convenience in retrieving it, the reference number is ADM53/136740.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the terms and conditions of employment of the new head of defence procurement, Mr. Peter Levene.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave some information about the terms and conditions of employment on which Mr. Peter Levene will be appointed as the chief of defence procurement in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on 19 December 1984 at columns *205-6*. Certain other aspects of them are still under discussion, and will write to the hon. Gentleman when they have been finalised.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure

29. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures stating the differential in per capita public expenditure between people living in Wales and the United Kingdom average.

Mr. Peter Rees: The latest available figures of identifiable public expenditure in each country of the United Kingdom are for 1982-83. For that year, identifiable per capita expenditure in Wales was £1,726 and the United Kingdom average was £1,612. Figures for 1983-84 will be available shortly.

Economic Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish such figures as he has, comparing in local currencies and in £ sterling equivalent: *(a)* gross domestic product per person, *(b)* average income tax paid per person and *(c)* average value-added tax paid per person in each of the United Kingdom, Germany and France during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is given below in terms of local currencies and in £ sterling based both on market exchange rates and purchasing power parities. The latest comparable data on income tax and VAT are for 1982 and accordingly GDP per capita figures for that year are as follows. A more recent comparison of GDP per capita of the countries in question using PPP was given in my answer on 22 January 1985 at column *364* to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell).

1982

	Local currencies	Exchange rates £ sterling	PPP £ sterling
(a) GDP (market prices) per person			
United Kingdom	4,950	—	—
Germany	25,940	6,110	5,860
France	65,470	5,710	5,800
(b) Personal income tax per person			
United Kingdom	550	—	—
Germany	2,790	660	630
France	3,700	320	330
(c) Value Added Tax per person			
United Kingdom	280	—	—
Germany	1,590	370	360
France	6,010	520	530

Sources: OECD Statistics 1984, OECD Main Economic Indicators January 1985.

European Community (Competitiveness)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what change in the overall competitiveness of the United Kingdom economy has occurred as a result of United Kingdom Membership of the EEC.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is impossible to quantify the effects of United Kingdom membership of the European Community on general competitiveness. However, the United Kingdom has benefited from access to the large Community internal market because of the opportunities for greater specialisation and exploitation of comparative advantage which a larger market affords.

European Community (Expenditure)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been the annual increases in total EC expenditure since 1970; and what have been the annual increases in own resources since the system was first introduced.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Information prior to 1973 is not readily available. The remainder of the information requested is set out in the table.

The budget figure to which expenditure relates were established in Units of Account (u.a.) before 1978; from 1979 until 1980 they were established in European units of account (EUA). Since these two units were calculated on different bases they are not directly comparable, except in the case of the European development fund for which it was agreed that a conversion rate of 1 u.a. = 1 EUA would be adopted. Community budgets from 1981 have been established in European currency units (ECU), with the agreement that 1 ECU = 1 EUA for the years 1981 and 1982.

As from 1 January 1971 the system of own resources progressively replaced the former system of fixed percentage financial contributions by member states. From 1975 these financial contributions were calculated on the basis of the gross national product (GNP) shares of members states.

In 1979 own resources, for the first time included VAT. This was paid by member states other than the Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg, which continued to pay GNP-based financial contributions. From 1980 the VAT system was applied by all then member states. Greece joined the Community in 1981 and, on a transitional basis, has paid financial contributions based on GNP.

	Increase in total EC expenditure	Increase in own resources
1974*	90·5	387·6
1975*	1,043·3	921·6
1976*	2,202·3	1,817·2
1977*	1,113·7	489·9
1978†	2,778·4	3,803·7
1979†	1,084·3	2,368·5
1980†	1,735·5	1,055·2
1981†‡	2,251·5	2,596·4
1982†‡	3,550·4	3,140·2
1983‡	3,076·7	1,849·4
1984‡	2,187·5	2,435·7

* Budget established in units of account (u.a.).
† Budget established in European units of account (EUA).
‡ Budget established in European currency units (ECU), for 1981 and 1982 1 EUA = 1 ECU.

Note:
The information given has been taken from the relevant European Court of Auditors' reports, except in the case of the increase between 1983 and 1984 where, for 1984, Supplementary and amending budget figures have been used.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage total European Economic Community expenditure has increased in each year since 1970.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 February 1985, c. *336*]: I regret that an error was made in the compilation of the table supplied with the original answer. The corrected version is as follows:

Information prior to 1973 is not readily available.

The remainder of the information requested is set out in the table. The budget figures to which the percentages relate were established in Units of Account (u.a.) before 1978; from 1978 until 1980 they were established in European Units of Account (EUA). Since these two units were calculated on different bases they are not directly comparable, except in the case of the European development fund for which it was agreed that a conversion rate of 1u.a. = 1 EUA would be adopted. Community budgets from 1981 have been established in European currency units (ECU), with the agreement that 1 ECU = 1 EUA for the years 1981 and 1982.

Percentage increase over previous year of 1 per cent.

	per cent.
1974	2
1975	20
1976	35
1977	13
1978	29
1979	17
1980	12
1981	14
1982	19
1983	14
1984	9

Figures for 1985 are not yet available.
Source:
Figures derived from the reports of the European Court of Auditors' and, for 1984, the supplementary and amending budgets.

European Community (Economic Comparison)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a comparison between gross

domestic product, income tax and value added tax, for each member state of the European Economic Community for the years 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Peter Rees: Comparisons between gross domestic product, income tax and value added tax for the years 1981 and 1982 for each member of the EC are given, or can be derived from, 'Revenue statistics of OECD Member Countries 1965-1983', published by the OECD. The publication also contains less detailed, provisional figures for 1983 for all the EC countries except Belgium and Italy. Corresponding data for income tax and value added tax are not yet available for 1984 but some broad comparisons of gross domestic product on a per capita basis, based on OECD provisional estimates, were contained in the answer given to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 22 January at column 364.

A copy of the publication is available in the House of Commons Library.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the effect on the exchange rate against *(a)* the United States dollar *(b)* other currencies and *(c)* overall after three years of his simulation on the Treasury model of the effect of a reduction in real wages on employment; and if he will publish in the *Offical Report* a table showing what is the effect on employment of such a change in the absence of a reduction in real wages but assuming an accommodating monetary policy.

Mr. Peter Rees: The effect on the sterling index in simulations of lower real wages under various assumptions about fiscal and monetary policy is shown in tables A to D of annex B of the recent paper by Treasury officials on "The Relationship between Employment and Wages". The simulations assume implicitly that the proportionate changes in sterling are the same against all currencies. It would be misleading to consider the effects of changes in the exchange rate on output and employment in isolation from the factors which brought the change about.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Treasury model of the economy incorporates the findings in Treasury Working paper no. 2 by Messrs Odling-Smee and Hartly concerning the effect of exchange rate changes; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement showing how the predicted changes since 1980 have been realised in practice.

Mr. Peter Rees: The effects of exchange rate changes in the current version of the Treasury model differ from those reported in Treasury working paper No. 2. The most recent results of simulations of the effect of an exchange rate change were published in HM Treasury Macroeconomic Model Technical Manual Supplement 1984 (J. Barber ed.). Results of simulation cannot be compared to outturn: those factors assumed fixed in simulation will in practice vary.

Wage and Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the significant changes in command to the Treasury model used in his simulation of the relationship between real wages and employment.

Mr. Peter Rees: The version of the model which was used to produce these simulations is described in annex B of the recent paper by Treasury officials entitled "The Relationship between Employment and Wages". Apart from the wages sector, the model has been used without adjustment.

Administration Costs

Mr. Proctor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost of the administration of his Department expressed in constant prices in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The total cost of administration of the Treasury expressed in 1983-84 prices was £70·3 million in 1981-82, £70·4 million in 1982-83, and £68·3 million in 1983-84. This information is taken from the last annual scrutiny of Departmental running costs. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available because of machinery of government changes.

Civil Service

Mr. Key asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the amount of overtime payments for each Department or Ministry in the Home Civil Service in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is not available centrally for 1979-80 and 1980-81. The table shows the provision sought in Supply Estimates for the period 1981-82 to 1984-85.

Overtime Provision

Ministerial responsibilities and departments	*Financial Year*			
	1981-82 £000	*1982-83* £000	*1983-84* £000	*1984-85* £000
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food				
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	1,683	2,042	1,979	1,721
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	11	21	16	25
Chancellor of the Exchequer				
Treasury (including Civil Service Catering Organisation)	602	660	722	809
Customs and Excise	17,210	17,465	19,123	20,157
Central Office of Information	206	176	205	240
Government Actuary	—	—	—	—
Inland Revenue	1,424	1,790	2,007	4,213
Department for National Savings	546	745	1,765	905
National Investment and Loans Office	—	—	—	2

Ministerial responsibilities and departments	*Financial Year*			
	1981-82 £000	*1982-83 £000*	*1983-84 £000*	*1984-85 £000*
Registry of Friendly Societies	1	1	—	2
Education and Science				
Department of Education and Science	120	143	156	113
Victoria and Albert Museum*	498	519	658	—
Science Museum*	355	398	438	—
Employment				
Department of Employment	4,136	3,348	3,427	2,202
Health and Safety Commission/Executive	158	196	150	154
Manpower Services Commission (including its divisions)	333	700	526	596
Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	5	9	9	13
Energy				
Department of Energy	136	151	156	125
Environment				
Department of the Environment	1,684	2,031	1,940	1,361
Property Services Agency (excluding supplies division)	11,285	10,993	12,470	12,472
Ordnance Survey	75	271	81	84
Home Office				
Home Office	60,665	74,402	82,005	104,195
Lord Chancellor				
Lord Chancellor's Department (including Public Trustee Office)	310	464	431	442
Land Registry	1,017	1,194	1,383	2,442
Public Record Office	28	36	37	35
Northern Ireland				
Northern Ireland Office	65	41	50	40
Paymaster General				
Paymaster General's Office	118	85	72	62
Scotland				
Scottish Office (including Royal Scottish Museum)	8,263	9,527	11,600	10,592
Scottish Courts Administration	64	130	128	151
General Register Office, Scotland	12	26	12	33
Registers of Scotland	282	327	—	206
Scottish Record Office	19	27	22	21
Social Services				
Department of Health and Social Security	11,948	14,446	11,085	14,525
Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys	189	219	111	110
Trade and Industry				
Departments of Trade and Industry	2,026	1,787	1,904	1,915
Export Credits Guarantee Department	12	17	35	21
Office of Fair Trading	2	3	4	5
Transport				
Department of Transport	863	1,027	793	1,244
Wales				
Welsh Office	117	143	151	157
Small Departments				
Cabinet Office (including Management and Personnel Office)	283	294	341	322
Charity Commission	7	10	17	61
Crown Estate Office	2	3	3	2
Director of Public Prosecutions	19	21	19	20
Law Officers' Department	1	2	1	1
Lord Advocate's Department	—	—	—	3
Privy Council Office	11	15	14	16
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service	60	62	53	16
Treasury Solicitor	13	11	12	13
Defence				
Ministry of Defence	92,653	121,829	110,112	114,384
Totals	219,517	267,807	266,223	296,228

* Accorded trustee status from 1 April 1984

Mr. Key asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff have been and are employed by each Department or Ministry of the home Civil Service on a short-term contract for each year since 1979.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is not held centrally; and could only be drawn together at disproportionate cost.

Customs and Excise (Drug Seizures)

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much cannabis was seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers in each of the past three years; what was the value for each year; and what is the percentage increase in the current year over the previous year;

(2) how much cocaine was seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers in each of the past three years; what was the value for each year; and what is the percentage increase in the current year over the previous year;

(3) how much heroin was seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers in each of the past three years; what was the value for each year; and what is the percentage increase in the current year over the previous year.

Mr. Hayhoe: The quantities and estimated street value of cannabis, cocaine and heroin seized in each of the past three years and the percentage increase by weight over the previous year are set out in the following table. The figures for 1984 are provisional.

	Cannabis			*Cocaine*			*Heroin*		
	kgs	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*kgs*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*kgs*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*
1982									
Increase over previous year	16,425	23	−32	12·117	2	−11	183·244	31	+110
1983									
Increase over previous year	20,692	30	+26	73·326	14	+505	212·463	22	+16
1984									
Increase over previous year	24,904	46	+20	34·751	7	−53	298·968	47	+31

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total value of drugs seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in each of the past three years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The total estimated street value of drugs seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in each of the past three years is as follows:

	£ million
1982	57
1983	70
1984	102

Customs and Excise (Establishment)

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the establishment of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers in England and Wales during each of the last three years; and what is the forecast for 1984-85.

Mr. Hayhoe: The establishment of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers in England and Wales during each of the last three years and the estimated figure for 1984-85 is given in staff in post terms at 31 March.

	Number
1982	23,172
1983	22,085
1984	22,554
1985	*22,900

* Estimated.

A functional analysis for the United Kingdom as a whole can be found on pages 11 and 12 of the report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise for the year ended 31 March 1984, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Drug Smuggling

Mr. Steen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Government are taking to limit drug smuggling in Great Britain.

Mr. Hayhoe: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced last October, the 60 additional posts allocated to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise for 1984-85 to enhance levels of preventive control on passengers and freight have been made permanent and a further 100 new posts have been allocated for 1985-86 specifically for prevention of drug smuggling. In addition a customs officer has been posted to Pakistan and a police officer to the Netherlands to liaise closely with the law enforcement agencies in those countries and feed back intelligence on drug trafficking activities.

Taxation and National Insurance Contributions

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, pursuant to his answer given on 20 December 1984, *Official Report*, column *325*, he will provide the same information on the breakdown of taxation and national insurance contributions as a percentage of gross domestic product for 1960-61, 1964-65, 1970-71, 1974-75 and 1978-79, respectively.

Mr. Moore: The information is in the following table. Figures for earlier years on a consistent basis are not available.

Percent of gross domestic product at market prices

	1964-65	*1970-71*	*1974-75*	*1978-79*
Taxes on income	10·8	14·2	15·4	13·6
Taxes on expenditure	10·1	12·2	9·4	10·3
National insurance contributions	4·2	5·0	6·0	6·0
Capital taxes	0·9	1·2	0·9	0·5
Stamp duty	—	0·2	0·2	0·3
Local authority rates	3·2	3·5	3·6	3·4
Total*	29·3	36·3	35·7	33·9

* Components may not sum to total because of rounding.

Tax Revenue

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer given on 11 January, *Official Report*, column *563*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the total estimated tax revenue for 1984-85 broken down into the headings used in his earlier reply and show this as a proportion of gross domestic product at market prices.

Mr. Moore: The information is in the table.

	£ billion	Percentage of gross domestic product at market prices
Income tax	34	10·3
Non-North sea corporation tax	5	1·7
North sea taxes*	12	3·6
Capital taxes and stamp duty	3	0·8
National insurance contributions—employees	11	3·4
National insurance contributions—employers	12	3·6
National insurance surcharge	1	0·2
Local authority rates	13	3·9
Taxes on expenditure	38	11·6
Total†	128	39·2

* Before advanced corporation tax set-off.
† Components do not sum to total because of rounding.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect on revenue in 1984-85 of the decisions made in Budgets from 1982 onwards to raise higher tax bands over and above the rate of inflation.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of revenue forgone in respect of mortgage interest tax relief on second or subsequent loans over and above those used for the first purchase of a house.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

"Nationalised Industries Legislation"

Mr. Rooker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many copies of the consultative proposals, "Nationalised Industries Legislation", were *(a)* printed, *(b)* circulated on 20 December 1984 and *(c)* circulated since;

(2) at what time of day on Thursday 20 December 1984 the document, "Nationalised Industries Legislation", was deposited in *(a)* the Library and *(b)* the Press Gallery, respectively;

(3) what Ministers in his Department have made statements and speeches since Thursday 20 December 1984 where reference has been made to his consultative proposals, "Nationalised Industries Legislation";

(4) if he will make a statement on the scope and scale of distribution of his consultative proposals, "Nationalised Industries Legislation";

(5) if he will extend the deadline of the end of February for receipt of comments on his consultative proposals, "Nationlised Industries Legislation";

(6) how many comments have so far been received on the consultative proposals "Nationalised Industries Legislation";

(7) why no press notice was published on 20 December 1984 drawing attention to his consultative proposals, "Nationalised Industries Legislation".

Mr. Peter Rees: Following earlier discussions with the nationlised industry chairman, a consultation note was issued on 20 December and has been made freelt available to all who have requested it. Copies are availble from a number of sources and because the note is not copyright it is not possible to say how many copies are in circulation. The note was placed in the Library of the House at 3.30 pm on 20 December following an answer given by me that day to a parliamentary question put down by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle Upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) at column *326*. Simultaneously, 70 copies of the note were placed in the Lower Press Gallery and additional copies were sent direct to a number of national newspapers. In view of these arrangements it was not thought necessary to issue a formal press notice. I am not aware of any reference to the consultation note in formal statements on speeches made by Treasury Ministers since 20 December.

No formal comments have yet been received by the Treasury on the note but I understand that a number of discussions are taking place between sponsor Departments and nationalised industries. The consultative note sets a deadline of end-February for comments on the principles underlying the legislative proposals and I have no plans generally to extend this. I am of course willing to consider comments thereafter on the detail of any legislation we may introduce.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Churchill asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in net take-home pay or benefit since 1979 of a married man with two children aged under 10 years who is *(a)* employed and in the lowest 10 per cent. of wage-earners and *(b)* unemployed and in receipt of supplementary and other benefits.

Mr. Moore: [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1985, c. *160*]: the position for a married man with two children aged 4 and 6, whose earnings were equal to the estimated lowest decile of earnings for full-time males (all occupations), paid at adult rates, is as follows:

In April 1979, he would have had take home pay of £49·10 per week after tax and NIC and, in addition, would have received child benefit of £8·00. He would also have been entitled to benefits-in-kind (free school meals) of £1·25 and, had he lived in Local Authority accommodation with typical rent and rates of £10·10 per week (including water rates), he would have been entitled to £2·09 in rent and rate rebates.

In April 1984, his weekly take home pay would have been £78·59 after tax and NIC, his child benefit £13·00 and, with typical Local Authority rent and rates of £22·75 per week, he would have been entitled to £10·22 in rebates. He may also have been entitled to benefits-in-kind (free school meals and welfare milk) of £2·60 per week.

A man in similar circumstances but unemployed and receiving supplementary benefit, would have received, in April 1979, in addition to child benefit of £8·00, benefits in cash or kind totalling £39·25 per week. This would have included full allowance for rent and rates.

In April 1984, an unemployed man getting supplementary benefit would hve received child benefit of £13·00 and other benefits in cash or kind totalling £77·67 per week. This would have included full rent and rate rebates.

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the value to *(a)* a married man on national average earnings with two children aged 5 and 11 years, *(b)* a married man with the same family on two-thirds national average earnings and *(c)* a married man with the same family on five times national average earnings, from the expenditure of £2 million to either (i) increase child benefit or (ii) raise tax thresholds.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 February 1985, c. *675-76*]: The increases in tax thresholds or child benefit which could be obtained at a cost of £2 million are very small. I assume that the hon. Member intended to specify a cost of £2 billion. The information in the table (for a married man with two children) therefore assumes an increase in expenditure or reduction in revenue of £2 billion in a full year.

£ per week	*£ per week*	*£ per week*
Multiple of average earnings	Increase in child benefit*	Reduction in income tax
½	6·20	1·85
1	6·20	1·85
5	6·20	3·69

* Assuming similar increases in the supplementary benefit ordinary scale rates for dependent children.

Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Churchill asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is estimated to be the revenue likely to be raised in the current financial year from the lowest 10 per cent. of wage-earners *(a)* in income tax and *(b)* in national insurance contributions.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1985, c. *160*]: The normal definition of the lowest 10 per cent. of earners relates to full time employees on adult rates only. I regret that the income tax and national insurance contributions paid by these people cannot be distinguished, in tax records, from those paid by part-time employees or juveniles with the same earnings levels, who would not be confined to those in the lowest 10 per cent. of the earnings distribution appropriate to them.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of abolishing capital gains tax on *(a)* assets held before 1979 and *(b)* held for more than two years.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 February 1985, c. *674*]: I regret that precise estimates cannot be made but a very large proportion of the yield of capital gains tax would be lost—probably about three-quarters of it for *(a)* and even more for *(b)*.

Taxation

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the total amount of revenue accruing to the Exchequer from *(a)* income tax, *(b)* investment income surcharge, *(c)* capital transfer tax, *(d)* capital gains tax and *(e)* income tax above the basic rate in each year since 1979 in real terms, calculated at (i) 1979 prices and (ii) 1984 prices;

(2) what is the total amount of revenue expected to accrue to the Exchequer from *(a)* income tax, *(b)* investment income surcharge, *(c)* capital transfer tax, *(d)* capital gains tax and *(e)* income tax above the basic rate in the years 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. John Moore [*pursuant to his replies*, 7 February 1985, c. *673*]: The information in respect of years up to 1984-85, for total income tax, capital gains tax and capital transfer tax receipts, is as shown. The figures have been converted to constant prices using the GDP deflator.

Net receipts *£ million*

	1978-79 prices			*1984-85 prices*		
	Income tax	*Capital gains tax*	*Capital transfer tax**	*Income tax*	*Capital gains tax*	*Capital transfer tax**
1978-79	18,750	355	370	33,350	630	655
1979-80	17,620	370	370	31,340	655	660
1980-81	17,520	365	325	31,170	650	580
1981-82	18,840	345	325	33,510	610	580
1982-83	18,740	390	315	33,330	690	560
1983-84	18,420	395	360	32,770	705	635
†1984-85	19,000	400	380	33,800	710	680

* Including estate duty.
† Estimated.

Revised estimate of tax receipts for 1984-85 and a forecast for 1985-86 will be published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report on 19 March.

It is not possible to distinguish receipts of investment income surcharge and tax in excess of the basic rate. The estimated percentage breakdown for each year on the basis of tax liabilities in respect of income in each year is as follows:

Percentages of income tax liabilities

	Tax at basic rate	*Tax in excess of the basic rate**	*Investment income surcharge*
1978-79	94·8	4·0	1·2
1979-80	95·6	3·4	1·0
1980-81	95·5	3·6	0·9
1981-82	94·6	4·4	1·0
1982-83	94·7	4·4	0·9
1983-84	94·8	4·2	1·0
1984-85	95·3	4·7	—

* Excluding investment income surcharge.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hill Farmers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the purpose of compensatory allowances paid to hill farmers for sheep and cattle;

(2) if he will estimate the effect of abolishing compensatory allowances paid to hill farmers for sheep and cattle.

Mr. MacGregor: These allowances are paid in accordance with the European Community Directive on Less Favoured Areas to help ensure the continuation of farming in those areas. Their abolition would substantially reduce net income on hill livestock farms.

Lupin Grain

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which products compete with lupin grain as an animal feed; how much of these products are imported into the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Economic Community from third countries; and how the total subsidy to farmers and processors per tonne of feed product compares to the landed price before duty, levies, and so on on the competing products from third countries.

Mr. MacGregor: The principal competitors with minor products such as lupins for inclusion in compound feed are Community-produced cereals, soyameal and maize gluten feed. In 1983 Community imports of soyameal and maize gluten feed, which enter free of levies and duties, were 9·8 and 3·6 million tonnes respectively, of which the United Kingdom imported 0·8 and 0·4 million tonnes respectively. Direct price comparisons are difficult particularly because of different protein contents. In December 1984, however, the aid payable on lupins incorporated into animal feeds was £93·2 per tonne, the import price of soyameal is £169·1 per tonne and of maize gluten feed £109·2 per tonne.

Sugar

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table showing the proportion of sugar consumed in the United Kingdom that is derived from imported cane sugar and home-grown sugar beet, respectively, for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. MacGregor: United Kingdom sugar production from imported cane raws and from home-grown sugar beet as percentages of domestic consumption have been as follows:

(Oct/Sept)	*Cane raws per cent.*	*Sugar beet per cent.*
1974-75	58	23
1975-76	56	28
1976-77	55	29
1977-78	52	39
1978-79	50	44
1979-80	50	45
1980-81	45	55
1981-82	49	48
1982-83	48	50
1983-84	52	51

Note: The percentages do not add up to 100 per cent. because of exports and other sugar imports.

Goats' Milk

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will detail those regulations covering the sale of goats' milk together with the dates that they took effect; and if he has any intention to relax those regulations.

Mr. Jopling: There are no specific regulations governing the production and sale of goats' milk. However, goats' milk is subject to the general provisions of the Food Act 1984 which, among other requirements, specifies that all food (including drink) should be of the nature, substance and quality demanded by the purchaser, that it should not be labelled in a false or misleading way, and that it should be fit for human consumption.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the amount of goats' milk produced each year for the last 10 years.

Mr. Jopling: No figures on the production of goats' milk are collected by my Department. However, it is estimated that milk production by goats on agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom amounted to about 19 million litres in 1983 having nearly doubled from about 11 million litres in 1975, the only other recent year for which a corresponding estimate is available.

EC Expenditure

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each year since 1972 the percentage increases in European Economic Community prices for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* rye, *(c)* rice, *(d)* sugar, *(e)* milk, *(f)* butter, *(g)* fruit and vegetables, *(h)* beef, *(i)* sheepmeat and *(j)* wine, and the percentage increase in total EEC agricultural expenditure in (i) the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guarantee section, (ii) the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund guidance section and (iii) overall terms.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is given as follows. In the case of cereals and fruit and vegetables price changes are given for individual products:

Table II

Expenditure under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund

	Guarantee Section	*Guidance Section*	*Total EAGGF*
	(Annual change per cent.)		
1972-73	+32	+67	+33
1973-74	−16	+6	−15
1974-75	+46	+37	+46
1975-76	+24	+13	+23
1976-77	+22	+40	+23
1977-78	+27	+11	+26
1978-79	+20	+25	+21
1979-80	+8	+50	+10
1980-81	−2	−4	−2
1981-82	+11	+13	+11
1982-83	+28	+12	+28
1983-84*	+16	−15	+14

* (estimated)

The current system of charging Guarantee Section expenditure to the Budget was introduced by the Financial Regulation of 7 November 1972. To achieve comparability the figure for 1972-73 has been calculated as though the current system applied throughout 1972 and earlier.

Source: EC Court of Auditors Reports and Commission's Financial Reports. 1984 Supplementary and Amending Budget No. 1.

Average Support Price Changes:
Common prices expressed in ECU (was until 1978-79)—by sector

per cent. change over previous year

	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Common Wheat	1·0 (2·8)	9·2 (11·4)	9·0 (10·8)	4·1 (5·7)	3·5 (4·9)	1·0 (2·4)	1·5	4·3	5·5 (5·6)	7·6 (7·9)	2·5	– 3·7
Durum Wheat	1·0	48·3	8·8	6·0	0·5	0	1·5	4·5	5·6 (5·9)	8·5 (9·5)	4·6	0
Barley	1·0 (4·6)	4·9 (8·6)	9·4 (12·9)	4·5 (7·6)	3·5 (6·3)	1·3 (3·8)	1·5	4·5	6·0	8·5	3·0	– 1·0
Rye	0·5 (0·6)	9·2 (9·3)	12·0 (12·1)	3·5 (3·6)	4·0 (4·1)	1·0 (1·1)	1·5	2·5	3·3	6·0	3·0	0
Maize	1·0	11·8	10·0	8·5	5·2	3·0	1·5	4·5	6·0	8·5	3·0	– 1·0
Rice	1·0	9·2	8·0	6·0	4·5	2·0	3·3	6·9	11·0	12·0	5·5	2·5
Sugar	1·5	12·9	17·6	8·7	– 0·9	1·5	1·5	5·2	8·4	9·4	4·0	0
Table Wine	1·0	16·6	8·0	6·5	3·5	2·0	1·5	5·5	10·0 (10·1)	11·0 (11·3)	5·5	1·0
Sweet Oranges	6·9	16·8	10·3	7·5	3·3	2·0	1·4	5·7	10·6	11·5 (13·5)	6·3 (8·0)	0·5 (2·0)
Mandarins	6·0	13·1	10·6	7·8	3·4	2·0	1·5	5·8	10·7	10·8 (11·5)	5·4 (6·1)	0·5 (1·1)
Lemons	0·5	12·7	5·5	6·8	3·9	1·8	0	6·6	9·7	10·7 (11·9)	5·9	0·5
Table grapes	7·8	14·7	9·7	7·1	2·3	1·8	1·3	5·4	10·0	11·0 (10·4)	6·0	1·9
Apples	11·3	16·7	10·9	4·7	4·1	2·4	1·8	6·5	10·4	12·5	3·9	0·6
Pears	3·0	6·5	8·3	3·7	3·3	1·9	1·4	5·6	10·3	11·3 (10·4)	3·3 (2·8)	0·5
Peaches	5·3	7·0	15·8	7·5	4·3	1·9	0	7·2	10·5	11·5 (12·3)	6·5 (7·2)	0·5 (1·1)
Cauliflowers	0	15·4	11·3	8·2	4·6	2·0	0	1·6	18·0	12·2	6·6	2·1
Tomatoes	6·1	11·8	9·1	6·7	3·9	1·8	0	6·5	6·9	7·9 (9·2)	3·1 (4·2)	– 0·9 (0·1)
Milk	7·8 (10·6)	13·7 (15·5)	10·6 (11·6)	5·8 (6·9)	3·3 (4·6)	2·2 (3·5)	0	4·0	9·0	10·5	2·4	0*
Beef and Veal	14·9 (15·1)	17·6 (18·6)	8·5 (9·4)	8·0 (8·8)	3·5 (4·3)	2·5 (3·2)	1·5	4·0	10·0	11·0	5·5	– 1·0
Sheepmeat	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·5 (9·0)	10·5 (12·9)	5·5 (6·3)	– 1·0 (– 0·3)

Notes:
Figures in brackets denote the price changes for acceding member states during periods of transition where different; and for member states which adopted in stages common prices under the sheepmeat regime.
* Milk equivalent intervention price which incorporates butter and skimmed milk powder intervention prices.
Source: MAFF

Conservation

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to introduce a national scheme of support for farmers in evironmentally sensitive areas if he is unsuccessful in persuading his European colleagues to amend the proposed agricultural structures regulation, COM (83) 559, in favour of conservation.

Mr. Jopling: I am still hopeful of persuading other member states of the Community of the prudence of strengthening the conservation provisions of the EC Commission's draft regulation on agricultural structures. If I do not succeed I shall have to consider what other action would be appropriate.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that the proposed regulation on agricultural structures, COM (83) 559, will represent a fair balance between conservation and agriculture if the United Kingdom's draft amendments to the regulation are not fully accepted by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Jopling: I have already stated on a number of occasions that I do not believe that the EC Commission's proposed regulation on agricultural structures pays sufficient regard to conservation, which is why I have proposed certain amendments to it.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be able to announce new supports for farmers in environmentally sensitive areas permitted under the proposed agricultural structures regulation, COM (83) 559; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The EC Commission's proposed regulation on agricultural structures is still being negotiated. I hope that the negotiations will be concluded soon but until they are I am not able to announce my intentions with regard to any of the provisions in the regulation.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has proposed in the course of the current negotiations on the agricultural structures regulation, COM (83) 559, that an additional clause be added to the regulation empowering member states to withhold grant aid to farmers on the grounds that works may be harmful to the environment.

Mr. Jopling: The amendment in question was one of a series of amendments I proposed to the commission's draft regulation on agricultural structures which were designed to strengthen its conservation provisions.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any member state of the European Community has introduced under its national legislation a scheme of assistance to farmers in environmentally sensitive areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The concept of defining certain areas as environmentally sensitive is mine and I am not aware that this particular approach is used elsewhere in the Community.

SOCIAL SERVICES

EC (Poverty Definition)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *219*, if the European Economic Community definition of poverty is accepted by Her Majesty's Government as a definition for use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: The European Economic Community's form of words quoted in my reply of 17 January 1985 at column *219*, was accepted solely for the purposes of the European Community programme to combat poverty. In this country we have no generally accepted definition of poverty.

Acute Beds

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many acute beds there are within the National Health Service in London; and what has been the level of demand for them in each year since 1980.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is set out in the table which shows that while beds have reduced by

3·5 per cent. in-patient cases have increased by 4·6 per cent.—a net increase in cases treated per bed of 8·4 per cent.

*NHS hospitals in health authorities wholly or partly within the GLC area—Acute specialties**

Year	*Average daily number of available beds*	*In-patient cases*
1980	29,543	872,408
1981	29,262	883,132
1982	28,995	884,999
1983	28,510	912,945

* "Acute" is defined as all specialties except geriatrics, younger disabled, GP maternity, obstetrics, mental handicap and mental illness.

Health Authorities (Appointees)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria he observes when appointing medical members of regional health authorities and district health authorities; how many appointees for each year since 1980 have been in receipt of merit or distinction awards when appointed; how many were women; how many were from ethnic groups; and what was the total number appointed in each year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We take a wide variety of factors into account when considering all appointments to regional health authorities, including the candidates' personal qualities, their interest in and commitment to the National Health Service and their management or other relevant experience. The other information requested is not readily available and could be collated only at disproportionate cost. My right hon. Friend does not appoint members of district health authorities.

Steroids

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to require that creams and other preparations containing steroids for use in the treatment of eczema are clearly labelled as containing steroids and should carry instructions for use and guidance as to possible side-effects.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not think such action is necessary. Existing regulations under the Medicines Act provide that dispensed medicinal products must be labelled with directions and precautions as requested by the prescriber. Comprehensive advice for prescribers about the application of external steroid preparations is already contained in the appropriate product data sheets that are supplied to all doctors and in prescribing aids such as the British National Formulary. In addition the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain recommends that pharmacists, in the absence of instructions from the prescriber, label external steroid preparations with the words "To be applied sparingly".

Post Neonatal Mortality

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what complaints have been sent to him in response to his Department's publication entitled, "A Multi-centre Study of Post Neonatal Mortality".

Mr. John Patten: None.

Board and Lodging

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet Shelter, the Campaign for the Single Homeless, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Disability Alliance and the Central London Social Security Advisers' Forum about his plan for new regulations governing allocation of social security payments for board and lodging to claimants under the age of 18 years.

Mr. Newton: I have already agreed to a request from these bodies for a discussion with me.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations he proposed to have with the National Association of Probation Officers about his proposals to reduce ceilings on board and lodging charges, to refuse benefit payments to 16 and 17-year-olds except in exceptional circumstances and to reduce the allowances of claimants who move to live out of their normal area after two to four weeks.

Mr. Whitney: We have received a copy of representations made to the Social Security Advisory Committee by the National Association of Probation Officers. These will be taken into account, along with all the other representations received, when we are considering the comments of the Social Security Advisory Committee on our proposals.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what investigations he intends to conduct into rents charged by private landlords in relation to the level of earnings of claimants of board and lodgings payments;

(2) what assessments he intends to make in respect of availability of boarding accommodation to claimants of board and lodgings payments within his Department's individual office areas.

Mr. Whitney: More information about the operation of the market in board and lodging accommodation would, in our opinion, be valuable, and both this Department and the Department of the Environment are seeking ways of improving the information available.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies he made of the effects which his proposals to limit the timespan to two to four weeks prior to the reduction of benefit to claimants could have on lodging schemes administered by the probation service for the placement of ex-offenders.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the hon. Member is referring to our proposals to reform the arrangements for making board and lodging payments under the supplementary benefit scheme. The effects of our proposals on particular groups of claimants are among the matters we shall be considering in framing our response to the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the individuals and organisations who have submitted evidence to the Social Security Advisory Committee in response to its inquiry into the proposed changes in board and lodging regulations for supplementary benefit claimants.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that a list of the individuals and organisations who have submitted evidence to the Social Security Advisory Committee on this subject will

be published as an appendix to their report to my right hon. Friend on the proposed changes. The report will be laid before the house when draft regulations are laid. In the meantime, I have placed a list of those submitting evidence in the Library.

Benefits (Overpayments)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants of unemployment or supplementary benefit have been instructed by his Department to return overpaid allocations in each single year since 1979; what proportion of such claimants were registered as blind or disabled; and what proportion of such benefits extended back over a time-span of *(a)* two years, *(b)* three or four years, *(c)* five or six years and *(d)* for longer than six years.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths have occurred arising from acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the United Kingdom in 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1984, there were 30 deaths in the United Kingdom from acquired immune deficiency syndrome fulfilling the criteria for the case definition compiled by centres for disease control for the purposes of epidemiological surveillance.

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received asking him to take early steps to make acquired immune deficiency syndrome a notifiable disease.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Benefits

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion supplementary benefit for a childless married couple is of supplementary benefit for a single person; what proportion supplementary benefit plus child benefit for a married couple with two children under the age of 11 years is of supplementary benefit for a single person; and how these proportions have changed since 1966.

Mr. Whitney: The information is as follows:

Supplementary benefit plus, where there are children, child benefit as a proportion of the ordinary scale rate for a single householder.*

	November 1966 (per cent.)	*November 1984 (per cent.)*
Couple	164	162
Couple with two children†		
i. both aged under 5	222	231
ii. both aged 5-10	233	231
iii. one age under 5 and one aged 5-10	228	231

Notes:

* Child benefit is taken fully into account as income when calculating a claimant's entitlement to supplementary benefit.

† In 1966 there were two separate scale rates for children under 5 and children aged 5 to 10; from 1980 there was one rate for children under 11.

752

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest information for the west midlands and for Great Britain as a whole on the number of claims for national insurance benefits, broken down into each available benefit, in which it is discovered that an employer has failed to deduct national insurance contributions from an employee's wages, showing *(a)* the proportion and number of these cases in which the claim was refused and *(b)* the proportion and number in which the claim was allowed only at a reduced rate;

(2) if he will give the latest information for the west midlands and for Great Britain as a whole on the number of claimants for national insurance benefits, in which it is discovered that an employer has deducted national insurance contributions from an employee's wages but failed to pass them on, showing *(a)* the proportion and number of these cases in which the claim was refused and *(b)* the proportion and number in which the claim was allowed only at a reduced rate;

(3) if he will give the latest available figures for the west midlands and for Great Britain as a whole, for the number of cases referred to him under regulation 39 of the Social Security (Contributions) Regulations 1979, under which he may exercise his discretion and allow a national insurance benefit to be paid where a claimant's contribution record is deficient for these reasons; and if he will give corresponding figures for the number of national insurance benefit payments so allowed giving a breakdown by benefit, amounts involved and by the value of contribution deficiencies.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Health Authorities (General Managers)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his guidance to health authorities on the appointment of general managers distinguishes between the previous administrative function and the new management function.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our guidance lists the fundamental characteristics of the general management function which are clearly much wider than the previous administrative function.

Winterton General Practice Partnership South Humberside

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the income from dispensing National Health Service prescriptions of the Winterton general practice partnership in south Humberside.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Financial information relating to individual doctors or practices is confidential.

Doctors (Consultation Times)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time that a National Health Service general practitioner spends with each patient; and what were the figures for the average time spent in the previous five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this information centrally.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will invite a member of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee to join his expert advisers on the preparation of a limited list of drugs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will invite a member of the Royal College of Nursing to join his expert advisers on the preparation of a limited list of drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The experts from the medical and pharmaceutical professions who are advising the Chief Medical Officer on the content of the limited list have virtually completed their work. There is no need to invite anyone else to join them at this stage. One of the experts, Mr. David Coleman, is vice-chairman of the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee. That committee and members of the Royal College of Nursing have also given valuable advice which is being considered by our experts.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether, as a result of his consultations, he intends to include the drug Brufen in his limited list proposals;

(2) whether, as a result of his consultations, he intends to include Tagamet or Indocid suppositories in his limited list proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Brufen, Tagamet and Indocid were never in the categories of drugs affected by our limited list proposals.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to over-rule local drug and therapeutic committees where hospital formularies differ from his proposals for a limited list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Health authorities will be asked to apply to the hospital service the limitations being introduced to the range of drugs prescribable in the family practitioner services. The precise arrangements have yet to be determined.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish the regulations under the Social Security Act 1984 relating to formal links between family practitioner committees and community health councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We intend to publish new Community Health Council Regulations during March to provide for the formal link between community health councils (CHCs) and the new family practitioner committees (FPCs) with effect from 1 April 1985.

The regulations will be made under the National Health Service Act 1977 as amended by the Health and Social Security Act 1984 and will introduce a duty on:

i. CHCs to advise FPCs on appropriate matters relating to the operation of the Health Service;
ii. FPCs to consult CHCs on proposals for substantial developments of, or variations in, services;
iii. FPCs to provide CHCs with such information about the planning and operation of services as CHCs reasonably require to carry out their duties; and
iv. an FPC to provide a separate response to those parts of a CHC's annual report that concern the FPC.

The regulations will also update and consolidate extant CHC Regulations and introduce a provision to dismiss a CHC member for misconduct.

Nursing Staff (Back Injuries)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate, on an annual basis, the number of nursing staff in the National Health Service who experience and suffer from back injury, and the number of working days lost through back injury; if back injury in the nursing profession is greater than among the rest of the working population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect this sort of detailed information centrally.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will revise the criteria for determining the standard payment for nursing home accommodation;

(2) whether he is satisfied that the existing rate of payment for nursing home care is sufficient to maintain satisfactory standards; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consultations he has had in relation to rates of payment for registered nursing homes and standards of care within them.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the hon. Member is referring to payments made under the supplementary benefit scheme to certain people in nursing homes. We put proposals for changing the relevant arrangemens to the Social Security Advisory Committee last year. Over 500 bodies submitted comments on the consultative document, a copy of which is in the Library. We are now considering the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee, which we have just received, and will publish the report and our response when our consideration is complete. So far as standards of care are concerned, we introduced measures to improve control on 1 January after extensive consultation.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nursing homes were deregistered in each of the years 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 as a result of the inspection process.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested for past years is not available centrally, but a national list of cancelled registrations for nursing homes, residential care homes and voluntary children's homes is being compiled from 1 January 1985.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied that the inspection powers in relation to registered nursing homes have sufficient penalties to make them effective; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Yes, we are not aware of any evidence to the contrary.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many state pensioners would be taken out of housing benefit by increasing by £10 per week the state pension.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not available.

may be asked to provide receipts for the purchase. We have no present plans to revise these arrangements, but if my hon. Friend has any evidence of abuse I will look into it.

Ketoconazole

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines he has issued to doctors about the risks of using the oral drug Ketoconazole weighed against its benefits to patients.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The chairman of the Committee on Safety of Medicines the body established under the Medicines Act to advise Health Ministers, wrote last month to all doctors in the United Kingdom about reports of liver damage associated with the use of oral Ketoconazole. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library. It advises doctors to weigh the potential benefits of treatment against the risk of liver damage and to monitor their patients carefully both clinically and biochemically. The letter supplements the guidance published by the manufacturer in its data sheet on the product's side effects and contra-indications.

Doctors (Prescriptions)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what checks are made on the quality and quantity of drugs supplied by dispensing doctors against their own prescriptions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Because of practical difficulties the drug testing scheme which operates for chemists does not apply to dispensing doctors.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average number of prescriptions per patient issued by prescribing and dispensing doctors respectively; and what is their relative average drug cost per prescription.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1983-84 dispensing doctors in England and Wales issued on average 6·7 prescriptions per dispensing patient with an average drug cost of £3·34; prescribing doctors issued on average 7·0 prescriptions with an average drug cost of £3·50.

Prescriptions (Costs)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the saving in the cost of the pharmaceutical service if all prescriptions were dispensed by pharmacist contractors, assuming that all prescriptions now dispensed by doctors were dispensed by average size pharmacies.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have the detailed information that would be required to attempt to answer this question. The cost or savings associated with a redistribution of dispensing from dispensing doctors to dispensing pharmacists would depend on the pattern of costs of available dispensing outlets in the localities in question.

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all bodies which advise him in the discharge of his health functions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I would refer the hon. Member to the Cabinet Office (MPO) booklet "Public Bodies 1984", published on 18 December last year, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the members of the supra-regional specialities advisory group.

Mr. John Patten: The supra-regional services advisory group makes recommendations to the Secretary of State on which services are appropriate for supra-regional designation, on which units are appropriate for designation as supra-regional centres for their provision, and on what level of funding is appropriate for allocation to each. Its membership is as follows:

Mr. A. V. Driver (Chairman) — Regional Health Authority; Chairman, South West Thames RHA.
Dr. G. F. Cohen — Consultant physician, representing the Joint Consultants Committee.
Mr. D. P. Eccleshall—Regional Works Officer (Oxford RHA).
Mr. A. H. Grabham — Chairman of the Joint Consultants Committee.
Mr. F. Jackson — Regional Treasurer (North West Thames RHA).
Mr. A. J. Kember—Regional General Manager (South West Thames RHA).
Dr. A. McGregor — Regional Medical Officer (West Midlands RHA).
Miss Z. Oxlade — Regional Nursing Officer (East Anglian RHA).
Professor D. A. Shaw—Dean of Medicine, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (representing medical academic interests).
Sir Geoffrey Slaney—Profession of Surgery representing the Joint Consultants Committee.
Mr. A. C. Taylor—DHA Chairman (Newcastle Health Authority).
Dr. D. Innes Williams—Director, British Postgraduate Medical Federation (representing Special Health Authorities responsible for postgraduate hospitals).

The arrangements for supra-regional funding and the role of the supra-regional services advisory group are set out in Health Notice HN(83)36.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the members of the transplant advisory panel.

Mr. John Patten: The transplant advisory panel advises the Chief Medical Officer on clinical matters related to transplantations, and he takes the chair at its meetings. The membership is as follows:

Mr L D Abrams
Professor J R Anderson CBE
Mr R D Atlay
Mr A D Barnes
Professor P G Bevan
Professor J P Blandy
Dr J B Foster
Dr P Freeling
Dr Gillian C Hanson
Mr B S Jay
Professor W B Jennett
Mr R W G Johnson
Dr Mary G McGeown CBE
Dr Celia M Oakley
Professor J R Salaman
Professor D J Wheatley
Mr D H Wilson

Ambulance Service

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many members of the ambulance service in England and Wales are funded under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. John Patten Ambulance staff are employed by National Health Service authorities to which section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 does not apply.

Doctors (Medical Certificates)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the circumstances in which general practitioners are permitted to charge a fee for providing notes as evidence of illness or infirmity to claimants who are required to produce such evidence by supplementary benefit adjudication officers;

(2) if he will take steps to exempt supplementary benefit claimants from charges imposed by general practitioners for medical certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Paragraph 31(1) of the Doctors' terms of service requires a general practitioner to issue to his National Health Service patients free of charge a certificate reasonably required as evidence to support a claim for supplementary benefit. A charge may be made if a general practitioner issues a certificate to a person who is being attended by another doctor, other than a partner, assistant, or other deputy of that doctor, or, is not being treated by, or under the supervision of, a doctor. We see no reason for wider exemption.

Rampton Hospital (Nurses)

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why staff nurses Irene Hollis and Josephine Mason at Rampton hospital have not been re-instated following suspensions on suspicion of theft in November 1984 when the Director of Public Prosecutions has confirmed to the chairman of the Rampton review board that he cannot trace any papers relating to a police prosecution and their police bail expired on 5 December 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The matter has not yet been resolved. The nurses will remain suspended until police inquiries have been concluded and a decision taken on prosecution. It would be improper for me to seek to intervene in or influence those inquiries and that decision.

Specialist Claims Control

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish his report of the review into savings achieved by specialist claims control.

Mr. Newton: The report has just been received and we will announce our conclusions in the light of the results when these have been considered.

DHSS Statistics

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistics his Department has ceased to collect since June 1983.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 January 1985, c. 227]: Since June 1983 the Department's statistics and research division has stopped collecting the following routine statistics.

Item	*Reasons for stopping collection*
Hospital and Community health service statistics	
Parts of form SH3 giving statistics on the following types of ancillary department in hospitals:	
Blood gas analysis	
Electrolysis	
Electro myography	•
Medical illustration	
Medical photography	
Plaster room	
Skin treatment	
Stoma therapy	
Parts of form SH9 giving statistics on in patient and out-patient costs incurred under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service.	More reliable but less detailed information on expenditure is available separately from the annual accounts of health authorities.
Forms SBH13A and B on legal status of patients on admission to and discharge from mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units.	Similar data could be obtained from the general-purpose Mental Health Enquiry.
Parts of forms SBH112A, B and C giving statistics on various facilities in mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units.	•
Parts of form SBH195 giving statistics on mileage travelled by ambulances.	•
National Health Manpower statistics	
From the Medical Manpower Census	
i. numbers of general practitioners participating in Hospital Bed Fund arrangements (paragraphs 88-93 of the terms and conditions of service for Doctors and Dentists).	It was decided that the need for these statistics did not justify the cost of collecting them.
ii. numbers and whole-time equivalents of Post-Registration House Officers.	The grade title has been discontinued.
iii. for Senior Registrars, information on whether the individual is in training or has completed training.	It was decided that the need for these statistics did not justify the cost of collecting them.
Local authority personal social services statistics	
Tables from form SSDA906 showing the number of children or young persons engaged in intermediate treatment and the number of intermediate treatment staff employed.	These two tables were added to the return in 1981 to monitor for a limited period the planned expansion of intermediate treatment for children. When the form was reviewed it was decided that this purpose had been served and the tables were dropped.

Item	*Reasons for stopping collection*
Form SSDA907 on Adoptions.	In order to provide improved statistics on adoptions, both the DHSS return and the derivation of statistics from adoption orders received by the Registrar General were discontinued in favour of a new unit return which is completed in the course of the adoption process and analysed by OPCS.
Parts of form RA5 on Residential Accommodation for the Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped giving statistics on the date each home was built and the original purpose for which the home was built.	These two items which were of limited value were deleted from the gazetteer in order to incorporate new data requirements without adding to the burden of data collection.
Social Security Statistics	
Short term incapacity statistics for periods up to 8 weeks.	Collection ceased following the introduction of statutory sick pay in April 1983. (Statistics were collected in arrears.)
Injury benefit statistics.	As a consequence of the Industrial Injuries Review, Injury benefit was abolished from April 1983 but transitional arrangements lasted until October 1983.

* The Health Services Information Steering Group has recommended that these items should no longer be returned centrally.

General Practitioner (Dispensing)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will introduce amendments to the regulations applying to general practitioner dispensing so as to permit general practitioners to sell medicines that will no longer be available on National Health Services prescription.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985 c. *611*]: Prescribing general medical practitioners will not be permitted to sell drugs to their National Health Service patients.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 February 1985

ENVIRONMENT

District Heating Schemes

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is provided by his Department to local authorities seeking information on the implementation of coal-fired district heating schemes.

Sir George Young: Advice on the factors to be taken into account when considering the installation of district heating in new housing, whether or not coal fired was included in the Department's circular 82/71, although we have since freed local authorities from the detailed controls embodied in that circular.

The Building Research Establishment has carried out research on many aspects of district heating, including heat metering, heat distribution, and the opportunities for various refurbishment measures to reduce energy consumption and costs. The establishment gives advice on these aspects; I have placed a list of its relevant publications in the Library.

Departmental Administration

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost of administration of his Department expressed in constant prices in each of the last five years.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The total cost of administration of the Department of the Environment—including the Property Services Agency—expressed in 1983-84 prices in the last five years was as follows:

	£ Million
1979-80	693·5
1980-81	692·8
1981-82	653·4
1982-83	641·1
1983-84	641·8

This information is taken from the annual scrutinies of departmental running costs.

Reema Conclad Houses

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding Reema Conclad houses; and whether this category can be added to those covered by the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. Gow: I have received correspondence about the mortgagability of Reema Conclad houses from my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and the Department's regional office has received a letter on the same subject from Southampton city council. I am not aware of any reports of defects in Reema Conclad dwellings. There is therefore no basis on which my right hon. Friend could consider designating this type of dwelling under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Urban Aid

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now extend the disregard for expenditure arising from the inner urban aid programme to all local authorities designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 12 November 1984 at column *131*.

Lead in Air

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about measures taken to reduce concentrations of lead in dust and air *(a)* in the central and greater London area and *(b)* in the west Midlands region, during the last three years.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not aware of any such measures which are specific to these two areas. The Government decided in 1981 that the lead content of petrol should be reduced by over 60 per cent. by the end of this year. This will produce a rapid and substantial reduction in concentrations of lead in air everywhere. The Health and Safety Executive has recently prepared revised guidance for lead works, including more stringent limits on emissions. This will also help to reduce local concentrations. The relationship between concentrations in air and in dust is the subject of continuing research, but reductions in air concentrations are likely to be followed by reductions in dust concentrations.

Wintex-Cimex '85

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will define the involvement of his Department in Wintex-Cimex '85.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department does not have a major interest in Wintex-Cimex '85 but takes part in the corporate exercise of testing crisis management measures.

Rents

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average percentage rent increase agreed by rent officers in Greater London in each year since 1975; and what was the equivalent figure determined by rent assessment committees.

Sir George Young: The mean percentage changes on re-registrations by rent officers in Greater London in the years 1975 to 1983 appear in table 11.5 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1973-1983." Figures for the first half of 1984 appear in table 1.14 of "Housing and Construction Statistics," September quarter 1984, part 1 of issue No. 19. All the currently available information about rent assessment committee decisions is in table 11.8 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1973-1983." Copies of these sources are available in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the guidelines he issues to rent officers.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the replies which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction gave to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr.

Fraser) on 4 February, at columns *420-421*, concerning the nature of the Department's guidance to rent officers and the question of its publication.

UN Decade for Women

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that his Department has complied with article 63*(b)* of the 1975 world plan of action for the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Yes. A sub-committee of my Department's General Whitley Council has been established to take forward those items in the centrally agreed programme of action on equal opportunities for women, which were recommended for action at the departmental level. We have, in addition, appointed equal opportunities officers to co-ordinate policy in this area generally.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to promote policies designed to challenge those traditional attitudes which Her Majesty's Government state in their response to the United Nations End of Decade for Women's questionnaire are detrimental to women's attainments in local government.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Within the framework of general anti-discriminatory legislation, it is for those involved in local government to combat such discriminatory attitudes and stereotyped assumptions which remain. The Equal Opportunities Commission has advised numerous local authorities on the adoption of equal opportunities' policies.

Housing Courts and Tribunals

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the case for new housing courts and tribunals.

Mr. Gow: The Select Committee on the Environment recommended in its report on the private rented housing sector — First Report, Session 1981-82 — that the Government should examine in detail the proposals that had been made for the establishment of a housing court. Since then, I have received a number of representations on this subject.

I have given careful consideration to the wide range of evidence and views on the case for a new housing court or tribunal, in consultation with my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. In the Government's view, the examination of the wide and important issues which have been raised can best be carried forward in the context of the full and systematic review of civil justice which the Lord Chancellor announced on 6 February. Accordingly, as the Lord Chancellor's announcement made clear, housing matters will be given specific consideration in this major review. I have written to the Chairman of the Select Committee, in response to the recommendation in the Committee's report, and a copy of my letter has been placed in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Penal Establishments (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will detail the visits made by himself and each of his Ministers to penal establishments in each area from 1982.

Mr. Mellor: On the basis of those records which are readily available, the following visits have been made:

Secretary of State

1983
- HMYCC Northallerton—(North Region)
- HMP Hull—(North Region)

1984
- HMP Wormwood Scrubs—(South East Region)
- HMP Brixton—(South East Region)
- HMP Styal—(North Region)

Former Minister of State (Mr. Hurd)

1984
- HMP Leeds—(North Region)

Minister of State (The Lord Elton)

1982
- HMP Pentonville—(South East Region)
- HMDC Haslar—(South West Region)
- HMP Leeds—(North Region)
- HMP Highpoint—(South East Region)
- HMP Manchester—(North Region)

1983
- HMP Birmingham—(Midland Region)
- HMP Holloway—(South East Region)
- HMYCC & DC Usk—(South West Region)
- HMP Swansea—(South West Region)
- HMP Grendon—(South East Region)
- HMDC Send—(South East Region)
- HMP Exeter—(South West Region)
- HMP Wandsworth—(South East Region)
- HMP Chelmsford—(South East Region)
- HMP Brixton—(South East Region)

1984
- HMYCC Dover—(South East Region)
- HMP Wakefield—(North Region)
- HMP Parkhurst—(South East Region)
- HMP Albany—(South East Region)
- HMP Camp Hill—(South East Region)
- HMP Bedford—(Midland Region)
- HMP Shepton Mallet—(South West Region)
- HMP Bristol—(South West Region)
- HMDC Aldington—(South East Region)
- HMP Stafford—(Midland Region)
- HMYCC Aylesbury—(Midland Region)

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Mr. Mellor)

1983
- HMP Gartree—(Midland Region)
- HMP Kingston—(South East Region)
- HMP Wandsworth—(South East Region)

1984
- HMP Wakefield—(North Region)

Juvenile Offenders (Statistics)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers, ages, sex, location, sentence and length of time held of those juveniles in adult penal establishments at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: The information available is given in the following tables:

Sentenced juveniles held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 30 November 1984: by type of establishment; time since first reception into a prison department establishment; under sentence, sex and age*

*Type of establishment and time since reception under sentence**	*15*		*16*		*Total*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Adult prisons with remand units/wings for prisoners aged under 21:						
Up to 1 month	—	—	12	—	12	—
Over 1 months up to 2 months	—	—	3	—	3	—
Over 2 months up to 3 months	—	—	1	—	1	—
Over 3 months up to 6 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	—	16	—	16	—
Remand centres taking remand prisoners of all ages:						
Up to 1 month	2	—	9	—	11	—
Over 1 month up to 2 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Over 2 months up to 3 months	—	—	1	—	1	—
Over 3 months up to 6 months	1	—	—	—	1	—
Total	3	—	10	—	13	—
Other adult establishments:						
Up to 1 month	3	—	4	3	7	3
Over 1 month up to 2 months	1	—	—	1	1	1
Over 2 months up to 3 months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Over 3 months up to 6 months	—	—	1	—	1	—
Total	4	—	5	4	9	4
Grand Total	7	—	31	4	38	4

* Reception under sentence may have been into a different establishment; some of the intervening time may have been spent elsewhere.

Sentenced juveniles held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 30 November 1984: by establishment, age and sex*

Establishment	*15*		*16*		*Total*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Adult prisons with remand units/wings for prisoners aged under 21:						
Dorchester	—	—	1	—	1	—
Liverpool	—	—	6	—	6	—
Manchester	—	—	9	—	9	—
Total	—	—	16	—	16	—
Remand centres taking remand prisoners of all ages:						
Low Newton	2	—	9	—	11	—
Pucklechurch	1	—	—	—	1	—
Risley	—	—	1	—	1	—
Total	3	—	10	—	13	—
Other adult prisons:						
Bedford	—	—	1	—	1	—
Birmingham	2	—	1	—	3	—
Bristol	—	—	1	—	1	—
Canterbury	—	—	1	—	1	—
Gloucester	—	—	1	—	1	—
Holloway	—	—	—	4	—	4
Lincoln	1	—	—	—	1	—
Reading	1	—	—	—	1	—
Total	4	—	5	4	9	4
Grand Total	7	—	31	4	38	4

* All youth custody trainees except for two detained in Manchester, one in Risley and two in Holloway under S.53(2), Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

Passports

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any restrictions on the right of people with dual Irish and British citizenship to hold passports of both countries simultaneously.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Firearms

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the decline in England and Wales in the last 10 years of section 1 firearm ownership; and if he will give figures.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information on the numbers of section 1 firearm certificates held has only been collected regularly since 1979. The information for each of the years since then is as follows:

Number of firearm certificates on issue in England and Wales as at 31 December

Year	Firearm certificates
1979	169,590
1980	168,047
1981	164,872
1982	162,696
1983	159,804

The figure for 1984 is not yet available, but the decline between 1979 and 1983 was 6 per cent.

Immigrants' Advisory Service

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the cost incurred by the United Kingdom immigrants' advisory service on translations in each of the last three years for which figures are available and as to how many cases handled by the service required translations in each of the years in question.

Mr. Waddington: None. Expenditure on translations in connection with immigration appeals is a matter for determination by the United Kingdom immigrants' advisory service within the terms of the grant-in-aid given under section 23 of the Immigration Act 1971.

Prisoners (Death Statistics)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 25 January, *Official Report*, columns *535-37*, if he will indicate in each case the cause of death of prisoners who died in 1983 either in prison, on the way to hospital, or in hospital.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows (the numbers correspond to those given in reply to the hon. Member's earlier question on 25 January, at columns *535-37*):

Died in Establishment

1. Misadventure: massive pulmonary embolism
2. Open verdict: asphyxia by hanging
3. Misadventure: asphyxia by hanging
4. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
5. Misadventure: asphyxia by hanging
6. Natural causes: asphyxia, epileptiform fit
7. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
8. Misadventure: cerebral anoxia, drug and alcohol withdrawal and hepatitis due to chronic alcohol and drug abuse
9. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
10. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
11. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
12. Natural causes: severe myocardial ischaemia due to coronary artery atheroma
13. Natural causes: asthmatic condition
14. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
15. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
16. Natural causes: myocardial infarction
17. Natural causes: peritonitis
18. Natural causes: myocardial degeneration due to coronary stenosis due to coronary atheroma
19. Open verdict: asphyxia by hanging
20. Suicide: died after cutting wrist with razor blade
21. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
22. Misadventure: heart attack
23. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
24. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
25. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
26. Natural causes: left ventricular hypertrophy, suboartic stenosis, myocardial ischaemia
27. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
28. Natural causes: coronary occlusion
29. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
30. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
31. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
32. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
33. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
34. Natural causes: coronary thrombosis, coronary atheroma
35. Natural causes: asphyxia, status epilepticus
36. Natural causes: myocardial infarction, coronary occlusion, atheroma
37. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
38. Natural causes: hypertrophic cardio myopathy/broncho-pneumonia
39. Natural causes: acute left ventricular failure, coronary atherosclerosis
40. Suicide: asphyxia by hanging
41. Natural causes: acute respiratory failure subsequent to asthmatic attack with associated chest infection
42. Natural causes: heart attack
43. Misadventure: asphyxia due to toxic fumes from cell fire
44. Natural causes: inhalation of vomit fluid during a fit

Died in outside hospital or on way to hospital

1. Natural causes: haemorrhagic pneumonia
2. Natural causes: mixed sub-arachnoid and intra-cerebral haemorrhage
3. Natural causes: ruptured development cerebral aneurysm
4. Natural causes: coronary thrombosis*
5. Natural causes: brain tumour
6. Natural causes: acute viral meningitis
7. Natural causes: chronic peptic ulcer of duodenum
8. Natural causes: subarachnoid and intra-cerebral haemorrhage
9. Natural causes: cerebral infarction
10. Natural causes: heart attack
11. Natural causes: carcinoma of the lungs
12. Natural causes: cancer of the liver
13. Suicide: paraquat poisoning
14. Natural causes: heart attack
15. Natural causes: coronary occlusion, atheroma*
16. Open verdict: peritonitis
17. Natural causes: died following an epileptic fit
18. Natural causes: lung cancer
19. Open verdict: died after jumping from a hospital window
20. Natural causes: acute pneumonia

* Died on the way to hospital.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if an inquest has now been completed on all those who died in penal establishments in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The results of the inquest are now available in cases 48 and 57, as listed in reply to the hon. Member's earlier question on 25 January, at columns 534-36, and are as follows:

Cause of death

Case 48 — natural causes: kidney failure
Case 57 — suicide: asphyxia by hanging

Coroners' verdicts in the other nine cases are still awaited.

Prisoners (Suicides)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the ages, sexes, offences, sentences, causes of deaths and prisons of all those who committed suicide in penal establishments in 1983.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

	Age	Sex	Offence/Charge	Sentence	Cause of Death	Establishment
1.	45	M	Grievous bodily harm	3 years	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Stafford
2.	52	M	Arson	4 years	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Dartmoor
3.	36	M	Murder	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Winchester
4.	28	M	Burglary, theft forgery	3 years	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Channings Wood
5.	17	M	Attempted robbery, theft	Borstal Training	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Manchester
6.	58	M	Murder	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Norwich
7.	40	M	Theft	9 months	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Dartmoor
8.	43	M	Assault with intent to rob	2 years	Suicide: died after cutting wrist with razor blade	Liverpool
9.	46	M	Murder	Life	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Maidstone
10.	26	M	Assault, actual bodily harm, criminal damage	6 months	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Camp Hill
11.	20	M	Murder	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Leeds
12.	29	M	Criminal damage	3 months	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Pentonville
13.	25	M	Theft, Robbery	3½years	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Liverpool
14.	42	M	Murder	Unsentenced	Suicide: paraquat poisoning	Brixton
15.	33	M	Possession of drugs, burglary	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Brixton
16.	43	M	Handling stolen goods, theft	2 years	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Stafford
17.	25	M	Burglary	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Brixton
18.	41	M	Forgery	4 years	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Highpoint
19.	25	M	Murder, criminal damage	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Winchester
20.	28	M	Murder	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Brixton
21.	45	M	Wounding, grievous bodily harm	Unsentenced	Suicide: asphyxia by hanging	Gloucester

BBC (Licence Fee)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in considering the proposal now before him for an increase in the British Broadcasting Corporation's licence fee to £65, he will require details from the British Broadcasting Corporation regarding the amounts spent on damages and on legal costs, both to outside lawyers and in respect of the British Broadcasting Corporation's legal department, incurred in defending and settling libel actions in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, since the detailed expenditure of the BBC's grant is a matter for the board of governors.

Human Rights

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he will make to the European ministerial conference on human rights to be held in Vienna on 19 March 1985 to increase the effectiveness of the operation of the European Convention on Human Rights in protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals.

Mr. Mellor: The United Kingdom will continue to promote the provisions of the European convention on human rights by working with her partners at the Vienna conference to further the consolidation and universal acceptance of these provisions.

UN Decade for Women

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement about the reply given by the Government to section D of part II of the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire;

(2) if he will request the British Broadcasting Corporation and Independent Broadcasting Authority to provide him with the information required by question 2.2 of section D of part II of the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to make extra funds available to the Equal Opportunities Commission as a result of additional responsibilities due to the Government's responses to the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Waddington: The statutory duties of the Equal Opportunities Commission are closely linked to the aims of the United Nations Decade for Women. It is for the commission to formulate its programme and allocate its resources within the limits of its grant-in-aid.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss implementing the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Waddington: The objectives of the commission, in pursuance of its statutory duties, are closely aligned with those of the United Nations Decade for Women. I meet the commission as often as necessary to discuss matters of mutual concern.

Mr. James Magis

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, 14 January, column *15*, whether Mr. James Magis whilst being detained in the United Kingdom under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, asked for his wife or his lawyer to be informed of his circumstances.

Mr. Brittan: No.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, 24 January, column *480*, whether the French authorities requested that Mr. James Magis should be returned to France; and whether they were advised of the flight on which he returned to France.

Mr. Brittan: There was no request from the French authorities, but they were informed about Mr. Magis' return to France.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *15*, whether during Mr. James Magis's detention in the United Kingdom, there were

communications between Her Majesty's Government and the Governments of Austria, France or the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: I understand that the Metropolitan police were in touch with the police in Austria, France and the United States of America. However, there was no contact between Her Majesty's Government and the Governments of those countries.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his replies of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *15*, and 24 January, *Official Report*, column *480*, what was the country of origin of the passport on which Mr. James Magis was travelling when he was detained in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brittan: Mr. Magis was travelling on a Canadian passport issued in the United States of America.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *480*, whether his Department informed the Austrian authorities that Mr. James Magis was temporarily detained in the United Kingdom; and whether any request was made by them for his extradition from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brittan: My Department did not inform the Austrian authorities of Mr. Magis' detention. We received no request for his extradition.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *480*, whether Mr. James Magis, during his detention in the United Kingdom, specifically requested to be allowed to go on to Canada; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: I understand that Mr. Magis stated that it had been his intention to travel to Canada, but he made no request during his dentention to be allowed to go there.

Civil Defence

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to which local authorities have established civil defence volunteer organisations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following 20 county councils have established civil defence volunteer organisations:

Berkshire	Lincolnshire
Buckinghamshire	Norfolk
Cumbria	Northumberland
Devon	North Yorkshire
East Sussex	Nottinghamshire
Essex	Oxfordshire
Hereford and Worcester	Somerset
Hertfordshire	Surrey
Humberside	Warwickshire
Kent	Wiltshire

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those local authorities which have agreed to provide emergency control centres as required under the civil defence regulations; and what expenditure has been allocated for each local authority for this purpose.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Comprehensive information regarding local authority provision is not available; but no local authority in England and Wales has refused to provide an emergency centre. Grant-aid at the rate of 75 per cent. is available for adaptation of existing premises and the provision of essential emergency equipment. Each application is considered on its merits, but in present circumstances approvals are likely to be limited to schemes costing not more than £30,000.

Immigration

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average waiting time prior to gaining permanent admission to the United Kingdom for applicants from the Indian subcontinent in 1979 and each subsequent year for which figures are available; to what he attributes the changes in the time over that period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The waiting times shown in the published information to which I referred in my reply to my hon. Friend on 6 February, at columns 575-76, reflect the number of new applications received, the resources available for interviewing applicants and the queueing arrangements for the different categories of applicant. Many applicants are put in a priority queue and attend their first interview much sooner than those in the main queue.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* murderers of police and prison officers, *(b)* sexual or sadistic murderers of children and *(c)* people who have committed murder by shooting in the furtherance of theft were in prison on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 February 1985, c. *374*]: Central records are held in such a way that the relevant cases cannot be readily identified and provision of the figures specified would be time-consuming and costly. The figure has nevertheless been compiled for those sentenced for the murder in England and Wales of a police or prison officer, of which there were 17 in prison department establishments in England and Wales on 31 December 1984; none of these was serving sentence for the murder of a prison officer.

WALES

Tourism

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the amounts of financial assistance to tourist development in Wales for each of the past 10 years under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The expenditure by the Welsh Tourist Board was as follows:

	£
1974-75	428,000
1975-76	626,000
1976-77	843,000
1977-78	790,000
1978-79	1,618,628
1979-80	1,696,000
1980-81	1,696,000
1981-82	1,911,000

	£
1982-83	1,515,000
1983-84	1,209,000
1984-85	1,800,000

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the capital and current expenditure of each local authority in Wales on tourism and tourist-related projects for the latest year for which figures are available in cash and per-capita terms.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Local authority financial returns submitted to our Department do not separately identify expenditure on tourism and tourist-related projects. However, details of revenue expenditure on certain relevant services, including tourism promotion, leisure centres, cultural facilities and country parks, are available for all local authorities in "Leisure and Recreation Statistics," published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. In addition, authorities' annual reports may identify expenditure on specific tourist-related services and projects.

Farmers (Capital Grants)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many complaints his Department has received over the past three months about delays with the payments of capital grants to farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Thirty-two written complaints have been received.

New College, Cardiff

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications have been received for grants from his Department for New College, Cardiff; what amounts of grants he has sanctioned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him on 13 December 1984, at column *549*, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much money has been allocated by his Department for *(a)* combined heat and power pilot projects and *(b)* solar and wind power pilot projects in the last three years.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's R, D & D expenditure on combined heat and power/district heating, solar and wind energy in the last three years was as follows:

	£ million 1981-82	*£ million 1982-83*	*£ million 1983-84*
CHP/DH	0·64	0·48	0·14
Solar	0·7	1·4	0·9
Wind Energy	0·9	2·5	2·5

In addition, my right hon. Friend announced on 25 January, at column 547, commitment of a further £750,000 in grant aid to combined heat and power consortia. This is likely to be taken up in the next two years.

Gas and Electricity Industries

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the impact on prices for domestic consumers of gas and electricity is taken into account by Her Majesty's Government when fixing financial targets and external financing limits for those industries.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Decisions on electricity and gas prices are a matter for the industries. Consequences for pricing are taken into account along with other relevant factors in agreeing financial targets and external financing limits.

Gas

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will publish his estimate of the anticipated cost of gas which is expected to be produced from future exploitation of offshore oilfields.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Production costs for associated gas from offshore oilfields vary widely between different developments depending upon factors such as flow rates, gas-oil ratios, transportation modes and requirements for gas processing or reinjection. It is not therefore possible to give a meaningful estimate.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if it is his intention to ensure that all gas from United Kingdom fields will be landed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Government see no reason at present for changing the requirement that gas produced from the United Kingdom continental shelf should be landed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the level of gas demand by the year 2,000.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My Department's latest projections of gas demand are given in its proof of evidence for the Sizewell B public inquiry, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy in which year he expects the United Kingdom will cease to obtain sufficient natural gas from its own resources to meet home demand.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Production of natural gas from the United Kingdom continental shelf has never been sufficient to meet home demand fully, particularly since the import of Norwegian Frigg gas started in 1977.

I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement on Monday 11 February at column 23.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the estimated United Kingdom gas requirement he expects to be provided from United Kingdom reserves in five, 10 and 15 years time.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The results of recent record levels of exploration and appraisal activity indicate that the United Kingdom should be able to supply a substantial majority of its requirements for gas in the 1990s from United Kingdom reserves.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what European regional development fund non-quota aid payments have been made in the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Trippier: The last month for which statistics are available was December 1984, during which the Department of Trade and Industry made payments under the non-quota section of the European regional development fund totalling £8,848.36 to small firms in eligible steel and shipbuilding areas in England.

Pit Closure Areas (Employment)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he intends to make for the purpose of providing alternative sources of industrial employment in regions affected by the coal pit closures proposed by the National Coal Board.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *747*]: The location of any pit closures that may occur is a matter for the National Coal Board. Furthermore, the NCB has repeatedly said that there will be no compulsory redundancies during the current restructuring. The particular problems which may face areas affected by colliery closures are recognised by both the Government and the National Coal Board. The Government therefore welcomed the establishment by the board of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd to support and initiate job creation efforts in coal industry areas where unemployment is already substantial.

In addition, there is available the wide range of special employment and training measures operated by the Manpower Services Commission and, according to the area concerned, regional or national schemes to encourage new or extended industrial investment and thus more jobs.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Eritrea

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Ethiopian Government to ensure that relief supplies destined for Eritrea are not impeded from reaching there.

Mr. Raison: We are in regular contact with the Ethiopian authorities about the relief operations, and will continue to urge them to ensure that relief supplies reach victims of the famine in all areas, including Eritrea.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the overseas aid from *(a)* the British Government and *(b)* the European Community is being directed to Eritrea.

Mr. Raison: The relief aid being provided by the Government and the European Community to help victims of the famine in Ethiopia is not specifically directed to particular provinces, but is intended to help victims of the drought in Ethiopia wherever they may be.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Terrorists (Evidence)

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General how many people have been charged on the basis of converted terrorists' evidence; and in how many cases this is the only evidence upon which the person stands accused.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply, on the assumption that this question relates only to Northern Ireland.

A record of the number of persons charged in Northern Ireland wholly or partially on the basis of evidence given by an alleged accomplice witness was not maintained before 1982. Since then, 593 persons have been so charged in Northern Ireland. The remainder of the information sought is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

Wheathampstead

Q18. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the parish of Wheathampstead.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Teachers (Scotland)

Q36. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the negotiations on teachers' pay in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has responded positively to the teachers' request for a review of pay by proposing that both pay and conditions of service should be looked at by the Scottish joint negotiating committee for teaching staff in school education. I understand that, at a meeting of the SJNC on 7 February, the management side outlined proposals for following up my right hon. Friend's suggestion. I very much hope that Scottish teachers will now agree to take this way forward and will call off their damaging and pointless industrial action.

UN Decade for Women

Q109. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Prime Minister what measures have been taken by her to implement articles 82, 83 and 86 of the 1975 world plan of action for the United Nations Decade for Women; and if she will appoint a Minister to co-ordinate inter-departmental initiatives and to implement a legislative programme in accordance with the United Nations convention on the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister whether she will appoint a Cabinet Minister to co-ordinate inter-departmental initiatives in improving the status of women and implementing a legislative programme in accordance with the United Nations convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

The Prime Minister: The Government have made it clear that the education service should provide genuinely equal opportunities for boys and girls. The educational

provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 have played a significant part in encouraging schools and teachers to offer such equal opportunities. The detail of teaching materials and approaches are, however, for local determination.

I do not intend to appoint a Minister to co-ordinate initiatives. The Home Secretary has general responsibility for equal opportunities, but it is right that, if action is needed in any area, it should be carried out by the Minister with the relevant departmental responsibility.

Engagements

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 February.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 February.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 February.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 12 February.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I will be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Radiation (Experiments)

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister whether experiments were carried out to assess the effects of radiation using humans at Harwell and elsewhere during the 1940s and 1950s.

The Prime Minister: Medical investigations into the beneficial effects of ionising radiations involving humans have been carried out since the early 1920s. No experiments to assess the adverse effects of ionising radiation using humans were conducted at Harwell during the 1940s and 1950s, and I have no reason to believe that such experiments were conducted under United Kingdom auspices elsewhere.

Sterling

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what criteria Her Majesty's Government use in deciding whether the pound sterling is overvalued in relation to other currencies.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. It is the dollar that is overvalued in relation to other currencies, as the United States current account payments deficit of over $100 billion would suggest.

Inflation (Definition)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's definition of inflation.

The Prime Minister: A persistent rise in the general level of prices.

Museums and Galleries Commission (Chairman)

Mr. Faulds asked the Prime Minister what consultations Her Majesty's Government are having about the appointment of a chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission.

The Prime Minister: The consultations are confidential.

Student Awards

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister what is her latest estimate of the United Kingdom price cost in 1983-84 of student awards, distinguishing between mandatory and discretionary awards and between awards for fees and for maintenance, and including an estimate of the administrative costs involved.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

1983-84 Financial Year

	£ million
Mandatory awards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland Students ' allowances in Scotland	872·4
Discretionary Awards—United Kingdom	*146·0

* provisional

Full information which would enable a distinction to be made between awards for fees and maintenance is not available for the financial year 1983-84. No estimate of the administrative costs is available.

School Meals

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister what is her latest estimate of the United Kingdom current price cost in 1983-84 of free school meals, distinguishing between those for pupils and those for teachers and supervisors.

The Prime Minister: "Free" meals are, of course, paid for through rates and taxes. The information requested is as follows:

United Kingdom	*1983-84 Estimated Cost (cash terms) £ million*
"Free" meals for—	
pupils	245
teachers	38
mid-day supervisory assistants	14

Note: The estimated gross expenditure on all meals has been apportioned to each of the groups shown pro rata to the number of meals taken by each group.

Rates

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister if she will publish a table showing United Kingdom revenues from local authority rates in each year since 1978-79, including an estimate for 1984-85, and distinguishing between commercial and domestic rates.

The Prime Minister: The following is the available information:

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I recently met delegations from both the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union when we discussed a wide range of agricultural issues including milk quotas and their effects in Wales.

AIDS

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of the pattern of incidence of the cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the United Kingdom and in other countries, he plans any additional safeguards in relation to blood received at the Welsh blood transfusion centre and blood received in Wales from countries overseas, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Action has been already been taken to detect those at risk from AIDS and dissuade them from giving blood. The questionnaire which is completed by potential blood donors has been redesigned to help identify those who should not give blood, and a leaflet has been widely distributed which gives guidance about which groups of people are most at risk. For the near future laboratory tests are being developed to detect contaminated blood.

Buses (Revenue Support)

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out in the *Official Report* a table showing the total amounts paid to bus operators in respect of revenue support for the financial years 1974-75 and 1984-85, together with the total bus route mileage and passengers carried for each of the years in respect of each of the county councils in Wales.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Net revenue support paid to bus operators by each county council in Wales in the financial years 1974-75 and 1983-84 was as follows:

Figures for financial year 1984-85 are not yet available.

Net revenue support to bus operators 1974-75 and 1983-84

	1974-75 £	*1983-84* £
Clwyd	77,113	1,624,592
Dyfed	104,372	1,399,921
Gwent	58,220	849,396
Gwynedd	122,213	1,050,525
Mid Glamorgan	−11,078	1,327,961
Powys	27,669	276,180
South Glamorgan	25,000	1,266,331
West Glamorgan	80,883	1,049,280
Total	*(a) 484,392	*(b) 8,844,186

* Includes small element of support to British Rail.

Details of total bus route mileage and passengers carried for each county in Wales for the years 1974-75 and 1984-85 are not available. Since 1981 the total number of passengers journeys in Wales has been:

Year	*Total* *Million*	*Of which were stage carriage* *Million*
1981	244·1	190·4
1982	227·1	181·5
1983	237·8	181·7

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Mr. Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 21 December 1984, *Official Report*, column *346*, if he is yet in a position to write to the hon. Member for Gower about individuals he has appointed to public bodies.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 6 February 1985.

Polytechnics

Mr. Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to establish a second polytechnic in Wales.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: No.

Roads (Safety Barriers)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications by county councils for the installation of safety barriers on trunk roads have been refused in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I regret that this information is not readily available, but the number of refusals is thought to be very small.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria must be satisfied before safety barriers are installed on trunk roads in Wales.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The criteria for the provision of central reserve safety barriers on trunk roads in Wales are: for dual 2-lane carriageway roads, the anticipated traffic volume 7 years after opening of the road should exceed 20,000 vehicles per day; and in the case of dual 3-lane carriageway roads the figure is 30,000 vehicles per day.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what lengths of safety barriers have been replaced on motorways and on other trunk roads in Wales each year for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Safety barriers are replaced when they are damaged or when they have reached the end of their expected life. No figures are readily available of the lengths that have been replaced.

A483 (Lighting)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to provide lighting for the A483 Ruabon bypass.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Lighting will be provided at the Wynnstay junction, along the Wynnstay link and at the junction at the western end of the link. It will also be provided where the new by-pass joins the Wrexham bypass.

University Hospital of Wales

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Wales why the statement of claim setting our the full details of the amount claimed by the Welsh Health Technical Services Organisation in respect of defects in the construction of the University Hospital of Wales has not been included in the details of the settlement placed in the Library; and whether he will now place the statement of claim in the Library.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information was not asked for but I have now placed a copy in the Library.

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Wales which of the parties to the settlement relating to the defects at the University Hospital of Wales has objected to publication of its terms.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: S. W. Milburn Partnership.

Unlit Roads

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the total cost of accidents on unlit roads subject to a speed limit of *(a)* 60 mph and *(b)* 70 mph.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: In 1983, the total cost of personal injury accidents in Wales in darkness on unlit roads subject to a speed limit of 60 mph is estimated at about £9 millions. The equivalent figures for such roads with a 70 mph speed limit is about £350,000. These figures comprise resource costs and an allowance for pain, grief and suffering.

Roads

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of roads he is responsible for; and what proportion of the total are *(a)* motorways and *(b)* trunk roads with speed limits of (i) 70 mph, (ii) 60 mph and (iii) 50 mph.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: At April 1984, the total mileage of road for which the Secretary of State had responsibility was 1,102. This comprised 6·79 per cent. (74 miles) motorway and 93·3 per cent. (1,028 miles) trunk road.

Information on the length of trunk road with various speed limits is not available.

S. W. Milburn and Partners

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the contracts on which the architects S. W. Milburn and Partners have been employed by his Department or agencies funded by his Department over the past 10 years; and what was the sum paid to them in each instance.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is being sought. I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Private Educational Establishments

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those applications he has received for the payment of industrial development grant or urban development grant in respect of the development of private schools or colleges in Wales for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Our Department has received 3 applications for regional selective assistance but none for urban development grant towards the development of private schools or colleges in Wales. One offer of regional selective assistance has been made. For details of this I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 13 December 1984, at column 549

Cefn Mably Hospital

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those applications he has received for industrial development grant or urban development grant for the conversion or modification of the former Cefn Mably hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department has received an application for regional selective assistance but none for urban development grant towards a project to be located at the former Cefn Mably hospital. It is standard practice to conduct all negotiations about such assistance on a commercially confidential basis and it would not therefore be right for me to provide further information.

DEFENCE

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there will be any collaboration between the United Kingdom and the United States of America on research in connection with the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Butler: At her meeting with President Reagan last December, the Prime Minister told the President of her firm conviction that the strategic defence initiative research programme should go ahead. Any British Government involvement in the programme depends upon future discussions. The involvement of British companies would be covered by normal trading arrangements.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the defence of Western Europe of the United States strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Stanley: The strategic defence initiative is a long term research programme still in its early stages. Its overall aim is to enhance deterrence, the maintenance of which is central to the security of NATO.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if it is now part of NATO defence plans to use ground-launched cruise missiles with non-nuclear warheads.

Mr. Stanley: The NATO staff target for a long-range stand-off conventional missile calls for the evaluation of an air-launched and ground-launched capability. However, work is focussed primarily on an air-launched weapon. The use of conventional ground-launched cruise missiles does not currently form part of NATO defence plans.

AST 404

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce his decision on the AST 404.

Mr. Butler: We are continuing to explore all possible ways of satisfying air staff target 404. A decision will be made when all the options have been evaluated and it is clear that procurement funds are available.

First-strike Weapons

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation weapons which could be used in a first-strike.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many state pensioners receive housing benefit payments.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available in the precise form requested. It is estimated however that in Autumn 1983, the latest date for which information is available, there were 4·1 million pensioner households receiving housing benefit.

Pensioners

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of pensioners who have other incomes apart from state benefit, earned or unearned incomes, within the following categories: *(a)* nil, *(b)* up to £250 per year, *(c)* up to £500 per year, *(d)* up to £750 per year, *(e)* up to £1,000 per year, and *(f)* up to £1,250 per year.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the revenue effect *(a)* of abolishing the upper ceiling on payments to the national insurance fund broken down into employee and employer contributions and *(b)* of converting the present lower earnings exemption limit into an allowance on the same rules as used for income tax broken down between employee and employer contributions.

Mr. Whitney: Using the assumptions set out in his report on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) (No. 2) Order 1984 Cmnd. 9386, the Government Actuary calculates that were the upper earnings limit for contributions to be abolished, but the ceiling for the contracted-out rebate retained, the additional contributions revenue in a full year at 1985-86 rates accruing to the national insurance fund would be:

(a) £625 million from employees.
(b) £720 million from employers.

There would also be a proportional increase in Treasury supplement and interest on investments accruing to the fund.

Because the rules for the assessment of liability for national insurance contributions are substantially different from those for income tax, it is not practicable to estimate the financial implications of converting the Lower Earnings Limit for contributions into an allowance as used for tax purposes. However, were all weekly earnings below the lower earnings limit exempt from contributions liability as earnings up to the amount of the annual allowance are exempt from tax, the loss to the national insurance fund on the same basis as above would be:

(a) £2·6 billion in respect of employees.
(b) £3·4 billion in respect of employers.

"Counter Benefits"

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received a copy of the Scottish Consumer Council report, "Counter Benefits"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have received a copy of the Scottish Consumer Council report "Counter Benefits".

The Department recognises the need continually to monitor and improve its quality of service, indeed this has been a management priority for the past three years. We have always welcomed comment particularly from agencies who have a close interest in the Department's work.

We do not accept that the report is fully representative in view of the methods of sampling and research employed. The report itself recognises the possibility of bias in the research findings to some extent. However we remain committed to improving service and will continue to welcome constructive criticism.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will amend the "S manual" procedure for paying the special allowance for exceptionally severe weather so that all supplementary benefit claimants in eligible areas will receive the allowance.

Mr. Whitney: No. It is for the independent adjudication authorities to decide whether claimants are entitled to benefit under the supplementary benefit regulations, and if so how much. Some claimants in areas where the weather has been exceptionally severe will not be entitled to payments under the relevant regulation, because, for example, they have not spent more on fuel than they budgeted for or because they have savings over £500 sufficient to pay for the extra fuel they have used. In each case the amount payable if any must be established from information provided by the claimant when he receives his fuel bill for the relevant period.

The help which is available has been publicised in the areas in which the chief adjudication officer has advised local adjudication officers that the 'exceptionally severe weather' condition in the regulation has been satisfied and leaflets explaining how and when to claim are available from all local social security offices in these areas.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the terms of reference of his review into the formula for exceptionally severe weather payments made under Single Payments Regulation No. 26; and who is to sit on the committee reviewing the allowances;

(2) if he will list the organisations he is inviting to give evidence to his review into the formula for calculating exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Whitney: The formula to which the hon. Member refers is contained in guidance issued by the chief adjudication officer rather than my right hon. Friend. In reviewing that guidance in the light of experience this winter he will no doubt take account of views expressed by hon. and right hon. Members and will seek such expert advice as he thinks necessary. More generally, as explained in my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member on 18 January at column *261*, the Government are looking at the provision for meeting special expenses of this sort in the context of the supplementary benefit review which received evidence from over 600 organisations and individuals.

Head and Neck Injuries

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been admitted to

hospitals in each year since 1979 with skull fractures, lesions of the head and neck and injuries to the lumbar region resulting from non-accidental wounds.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the external cause of injury of patients admitted to hospitals is not collected centrally.

Venereal Disease

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of venereal disease in girls under the age of 16 years have been reported in each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The available information is given in the table. Information on the age of patients is not available for sexually transmitted diseases other than the two listed.

Year	*Primary and secondary syphilis*	*Post pubertal gonorrhoea*
1979	2	303
1980	3	305
1981	—	265
1982	4	314
1983	—	199

Children (Sexual and Physical Abuse)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been taken into care by local authorities in the West Midlands region after being sexually abused in each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally. Relevant records will be maintained by individual authorities in the West Midlands.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what resources he intends to make available to local education authorities to enable the level of provisions for treating and rehabilitating sexually and physically abused children.

Mr. John Patten: It is for local health and social service authorities to provide, in collaboration with education departments, relevant services to help abused children, in the light of locally perceived needs and the priority that can be given to them.

Heart Replacement Surgery

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the length of time that the 68 patients requiring heart replacement surgery had been waiting in the Harefield hospital or the Papworth hospital prior to death; and if he will list the range of their age groups.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has given any financial or other help to groups or individuals seeking to assist people who have become addicted to prescribed sedatives or tranquillisers.

Mr. John Patten: A number of voluntary organisations receive grants for services to problem drug takers and some of these include the users of prescribed sedatives and tranquillisers among their clientele. In addition grants have been made under the Central Funding Initiative to the following organisations which cater specifically for the needs of people addicted to prescribed sedatives or tranquillisers.

Voluntary organisations	*Description of Project*	*Cost (£)*
Tranx	Self-help group—tranquilliser misuse—Harrow	89,183
Tranx Release (Northampton)	Advisory and self-help service —tranquilliser misuse	29,892
West Cumbria MIND (Copeland)	Self help group and other services for tranquilliser misusers.	85,442

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research has been carried out by or for his Department into the extent and seriousness of addiction to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives.

Mr. John Patten: There has been no research specifically into the extent of addiction to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives.

The Department has funded two studies into the prevalence of drug misuse generally (including tranquillisers and sedatives). One which was carried out under the direction of Dr. A. Thorley, St. Nicholas hospital, Newcastle-upon-tyne was completed in 1982. The other has taken place in Camden and Islington under the supervision of Dr. M. Mitcheson of the University College hospital drug dependence clinic. A draft manual produced by the project for the use of health authorities in identifying drug misuse problems is currently being considered by the Department.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from groups and individuals seeking to further the interests of people who have become addicted to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives.

Mr. John Patten: Six voluntary organisations concerned to assist people who have become addicted to prescribed tranquillisers and sedatives have applied to the Department for grants for local projects under the central funding initiative. Three have been approved to date and are listed in another reply to the hon. Member today. The others are under consideration.

Girocheque Frauds

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate the extent of social security girocheque frauds, in which clients cash cheques for furniture and other specific grants with shopkeepers rather than exchange them for the goods arranged, in some circumstances being charged for doing this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: While single payments of supplementary benefit are usually made by girocheque payable to the claimant, payments in respect of furniture or other major items of household equipment are normally made out to the supplier on the basis of previously obtained estimates, the girocheque being sent to the claimant. If there is any doubt that the payment will be properly spent the claimant

LEA	Percentage with five or more higher grade passes at O-level or CSE*
Redbridge	25·6
Kent	25·6
Northumberland	25·5
Bexley	25·4
Berkshire	25·4
Croydon	25·3
Cornwall	25·3
Havering	25·2
Cheshire	25·1
Warwickshire	25·1
Hampshire	24·9
Dudley	24·7
Merton	24·5
Wiltshire	24·2
Kirklees	23·9
Cumbria	23·9
Essex	23·7
Hereford and Worcester	23·5
Lincolnshire	23·5
Shropshire	23·5
Bolton	23·2
Calderdale	23·2
North Tyneside	23·0
Enfield	22·9
Wigan	22·9
Avon	22·9
Cleveland	22·7
Leicestershire	22·7
St. Helens	22·6
Leeds	22·6
Devon	22·3
Hounslow	22·2
Lancashire	21·9
Coventry	21·7
Derbyshire	21·5
Hillingdon	21·4
Bedfordshire	21·2
Suffolk	21·0
Humberside	20·6
Staffordshire	20·6
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	20·5
Somerset	20·5
Sheffield	20·4
Isle of Wight	20·1
Isles of Scilly	20·0
Walsall	19·6
Ealing	19·4
Norfolk	19·3
Durham	19·2
Tameside	19·1
Nottinghamshire	19·0
Birmingham	18·8
Sunderland	18·8
Northamptonshire	18·8
Bradford	18·6
South Tyneside	18·5
Liverpool	18·3
Rotherham	18·2
Rochdale	18·0
Brent	17·8
Doncaster	17·5
Gateshead	17·4
Salford	16·9
Wakefield	16·9
Wolverhampton	16·6
Waltham Forest	16·3
Manchester	15·8
Barnsley	15·8
Haringey	14·8
ILEA	14·4
Barking	13·5
Sandwell	13·2
Oldham	12·8
Knowsley	12·5
Newham	11·4
Total	22·7

* O-level grades A-C, CSE Grade 1.

LEA	Percentage with 2 or more A-levels
Barnet	22·4
Harrow	21·2
Sutton	20·2
Kingston-upon-Thames	17·8
Buckinghamshire	17·4
Surrey	17·4
West Sussex	15·5
North Yorkshire	15·3
Hertfordshire	14·9
Sefton	14·6
Bromley	14·4
Redbridge	14·1
Solihull	14·1
Stockport	14·0
Wirral	14·0
Cheshire	13·9
Leicestershire	13·8
Oxfordshire	13·7
Dorset	13·6
Kent	13·6
Gloucestershire	13·5
East Sussex	13·4
Trafford	13·3
Enfield	13·1
Berkshire	13·0
Kirklees	12·7
Warwickshire	12·6
Bolton	12·4
Cumbria	12·3
Hounslow	12·3
Leeds	12·2
Havering	12·1
Croydon	12·0
Calderdale	11·9
Bexley	11·8
Northumberland	11·8
Bury	11·6
Hampshire	11·6
Isle of Wight	11·6
Hillingdon	11·4
Merton	11·4
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	11·4
Cornwall	11·1
Avon	11·0
Essex	11·0
Cleveland	10·9
Lincolnshire	10·9
Wiltshire	10·9
St. Helens	10·8
Cambridgeshire	10·8
Dudley	10·7
Sheffield	10·6
Hereford and Worcester	10·5
Ealing	10·4
Walsall	10·4
Rochdale	10·2
Staffordshire	10·1
Humberside	10·0
Nottinghamshire	10·0
Derbyshire	9·9
Lancashire	9·9
Bedfordshire	9·8
Shropshire	9·8

LEA	Percentage with 2 or more A-levels
Liverpool	9·5
North Tyneside	9·5
Coventry	9·4
Doncaster	9·4
Suffolk	9·4
Bradford	9·3
Northamptonshire	9·3
Durham	9·1
Brent	8·8
Birmingham	8·7
Norfolk	8·7
Salford	8·5
Wigan	8·5
Devon	8·4
Haringey	8·2
Rotherham	8·1
Waltham Forest	8·0
Manchester	8·0
Gateshead	7·5
Tameside	7·3
Sunderland	7·3
Wolverhampton	7·0
Barnsley	6·9
ILEA	6·8
Barking	6·7
South Tyneside	6·7
Sandwell	6·2
Somerset	6·1
Wakefield	6·0
Oldham	5·9
Newham	4·9
Knowsley	4·8
Richmond-upon-Thames	—
Isles of Scilly	—
Total	11·1

Comprehensive and Selective Systems

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all local education authorities in England, indicating in each case whether *(a)* a fully comprehensive system operates, *(b)* a fully selective system operates, or *(c)* whether some combination of selective and comprehensive system operates.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1985, c. *7*]: Information is not available in the form requested. Some local education authorities, while not maintaining any grammar schools, do maintain some schools which fall into the category of "other secondary" schools and cannot therefore be regarded as being fully comprehensive. The table shows those authorities which at January 1984 maintained no grammar schools and those which maintained at least one grammar school. All authorities maintained at least one comprehensive school.

System of secondary education in England—January 1984

LEA	No Grammar Schools	No. of Grammar Schools maintained by LEA
Barking	•	—
Barnet	—	2
Bexley	—	2
Brent	•	—
Bromley	—	2
Croydon	•	—
Ealing	•	—
Enfield	—	1
Haringey	•	—
Harrow	•	—
Havering	•	—
Hillingdon	•	—
Hounslow	•	—
Kingston-upon-Thames	—	2
Merton	•	—
Newham	•	—
Redbridge	—	2
Richmond-upon-Thames	•	—
Sutton	—	4
Waltham Forest	•	—
Inner London	•	—
Birmingham	—	8
Coventry	•	—
Dudley	•	—
Sandwell	•	—
Solihull	•	—
Walsall	—	2
Wolverhampton	—	1
Knowsley	•	—
Liverpool	—	2
St. Helens	•	—
Sefton	•	—
Wirral	—	4
Bolton	•	—
Bury	•	—
Manchester	•	—
Oldham	•	—
Rochdale	•	—
Salford	•	—
Stockport	•	—
Tameside	•	—
Trafford	—	8
Wigan	•	—
Barnsley	•	—
Doncaster	•	—
Rotherham	•	—
Sheffield	•	—
Bradford	•	—
Calderdale	—	7
Kirklees	—	1
Leeds	•	—
Wakefield	•	—
Gateshead	•	—
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	•	—
North Tyneside	•	—
South Tyneside	•	—
Sunderland	•	—
Isle of Scilly	•	—
Avon	—	2
Bedfordshire	•	—
Berkshire	—	6
Buckinghamshire	—	14
Cambridgeshire	•	—
Cheshire	•	—
Cleveland	•	—
Cornwall	•	—
Cumbria	—	1
Derbyshire	•	—
Devon	—	10
Dorset	—	7
Durham	•	—
East Sussex	•	—
Essex	—	8
Gloucestershire	—	11
Hampshire	•	—
Hereford and Worcester	—	1
Hertfordshire	•	—
Humberside	•	—
Isle of Wight	•	—
Kent	—	28

LEA	No Grammar Schools	No. of Grammar Schools maintained by LEA
Lancashire	—	5
Leicestershire	•	—
Lincolnshire	—	15
Norfolk	—	3
North Yorkshire	—	7
Northamptonshire	•	—
Northumberland	•	—
Nottinghamshire	•	—
Oxfordshire	•	—
Salop	—	2
Somerset	•	—
Staffordshire	•	—
Suffolk	•	—
Surrey	•	—
Warwickshire	—	5
West Sussex	•	—
Wiltshire	—	2

SCOTLAND

Tree-felling Licences

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to transfer responsibility for issuing tree-felling licences in cases concerning small farm woodlands from the Forestry Commission to the county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce such legislation. The Forestry Commission is the only body which has both the qualified staff and the countrywide organisation to implement a fair and uniform policy with regard to the issue of felling licences. The views of local authorities on proposed fellings are expressed through the consultation procedures operated by the commission.

Class Sizes

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many children are taught in composite classes in each region and island authority;

(2) what is the average class size in the primary schools of each education authority in Scotland; and what were the equivalent figures for 1979-80.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is not readily available. I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Ambulance Cover (Strathclyde)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the ambluance cover in the Strathclyde area at night, giving area breakdowns, population and number of ambulance crew members.

Mr. John MacKay: The informaion is not available in precisely the form requested. The ambulance service is divided for management purposes into areas which are not conterminous with local authority boundaries, and there is some overlap of coverage, particularly round Glasgow. The population figures, therefore, are only approximate. The available information is as follows:

Ambulance area	Approx population	Back-Shift (2 pm—10.30 pm)	Night-Shift (10 pm—7.30 am)
Glasgow area	1,000,000	15 double-manned ambulances	9 double-manned ambulances
Argyll and Clyde Area			
i) Paisley	210,000	4 double-manned ambulances	3 double-manned ambulances
ii) Greenock and Gourock	105,000	2 double-manned ambulances 1 single-manned ambulance	2 double-manned ambulances
iii) Vale of Leven	80,000	2 double-manned ambulances 1 single-manned ambulance	2 double-manned ambulances 1 single-manned ambulance
iv) Argyll	65,000	On call duty system operated by two men at each of the four larger stations with one man on call at each of the smaller stations.	
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Area			
i) North Ayrshire	220,000	4 double-manned ambulances 7 single-manned ambulances	3 double-manned ambulances 8 single-manned ambulances
ii) South Ayrshire	160,000	3 double-manned ambulances 6 single-manned ambulances	2 double-manned ambulances 7 single-manned ambulances
Lanark and Forth Area			
i) Lanarkshire	520,000	11 double-manned ambulances 3 single-manned ambulances 1 on call	10 double-manned ambulances 2 single-manned ambulances 2 on call
ii) Cumbernauld	60,000	1 single-manned ambulance (backed by assistance from Falkirk Station)	On call duty system operated (backed up by assistance from Falkirk Station)

The on call duty system is operated by ambulance staff standing by at home outside normal working hours.

Free School Transport

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of the number of pupils for whom education authorities in Scotland provide free school transport.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) on 23 January, at column *420*.

Education Costs

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the per capita cost per pupil in primary and

secondary schools in each local authority in Scotland *(a)* at the latest available date and *(b)* in 1977-78 expressed (i) at current prices and (ii) in 1977-78 prices in each case.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is shown in the following table:

Net expenditure per pupil in primary and secondary schools in Scotland

	Primary schools				*Secondary schools*			
	1983-84		*1977-78*		*1983-84*		*1977-78*	
Region	*At 1983-84 out-turn prices* £	*At 1977-78 prices* £	*At 1983-84 prices* £	*At 1977-78 out-turn prices* £	*At 1983-84 out-turn prices* £	*At 1977-78 prices* £	*At 1983-84 prices* £	*At 1977-78 out-turn prices* £
Borders	915	441	778	375	1,170	564	1,105	533
Central	834	402	676	326	1,294	624	1,253	604
Dumfries and Galloway	824	397	664	320	1,267	611	1,234	595
Fife	874	421	724	349	1,298	626	1,253	604
Grampian	870	420	759	366	1,371	661	1,356	654
Highland	846	408	n/a	n/a	1,307	630	n/a	n/a
Lothian	841	406	707	341	1,423	686	1,280	617
Strathclyde	910	439	697	336	1,377	664	1,238	597
Tayside	827	399	674	325	1,397	674	1,263	609
Orkney	n/a	n/a	956	461	n/a	n/a	1,101	531
Shetland	1,189	573	n/a	n/a	1,905	919	n/a	n/a
Western Isles	1,010	487	856	413	1,646	794	1,491	719

n/a=Not available.

Improvement Grant (Rateable Values)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present rateable value limit for improvement grant purposes; and what proposals he has for increasing it in the light of revaluation and any other factors.

Mr. Younger: Different rateable value limits are fixed for different local authority areas. They range from £225 in Orkney and the Western Isles to £465 in Bearsden and Milngavie. It is proposed to increase these limits as from 1 April in the light of the general revaluation of property.

EMPLOYMENT

Notifiable Installations

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the most recent available date for each metropolitan and non-metropolitan district the number of notifiable installations constituting a major hazard.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have set out in the *Official Report* the numbers of installations notified to the Health and Safety Executive under the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982 for each county in Wales in my replies to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 17 January, at column 214, and on 29 January at column 89; in England in my reply to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) on 7 February, at columns 641-42, and for each regional or island council in Scotland in my reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 7 February, at column 641. An analysis by districts could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HGV Tests (Unemployed Persons)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Employment what financial provision is made by the Manpower Services Commission for the unemployed to take heavy goods vehicle tests.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the current financial year the Manpower Services Commission has made provision to train 369 people in heavy goods vehicle driving under its training opportunities scheme, at an estimated cost of £331,500.

Retail Industry

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Employment what funds are available for training in the retail industry; and how much has been spent on this training by the Distributive Industries Training Trust in each of the financial years since 1979-80.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information on the amount of public-funded assistance available to the retail industry can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the Manpower Services Commission makes a wide range of grants available to all employers within the industry including for computer skills training, the adoption of redundant apprentices and the industrial placement of sandwich course students as well as for new industry-wide initiatives concerned with the training of managers, trainers, women and ethnic groups. In addition, funding under the youth training scheme and the adult training strategy is available for training school leavers and adults respectively.

The Distributive Industries Training Trust is an independent organisation which was established last year and is registered with the Charity Commission. I understand that the trustees have decided that, for the first two years, training should be funded from the interest accruing from the trust's invested capital. Some training funds have been approved recently and further applications will be considered.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of notified vacancies at each jobcentre in Lancashire by standard industrial classification for the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is only available at disproportionate cost; but will be readily available later this year and in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Burnley travel-to-work area have never had a job by age, group and sex.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the old Burnley travel-to-work area is available in the House of Commons Library. Information by age group and sex for the new Burnley travel-to-work area will be available in the House of Commons Library later this year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the monthly increase and the total number of persons employed by community industry in west Cumbria during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In January 1985, 100 young people were employed by the community industry unit in west Cumbria, a decrease of one compared with the previous month. In addition, 16 adult staff are employed at the unit.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what proportion of *(a)* unemployed males and *(b)* unemployed females in the Workington travel-to-work area had been out of work for (i) one year, (ii) two years and (iii) three years at the latest available date;

(2) what proportion of *(a)* unemployed males and *(b)* unemployed females in the Barrow in Furness, Kendal, Whitehaven, Carlisle, Keswick and Penrith travel-to-work areas had been out of work for (i) one year, (ii) two years and (iii) three years at the latest available date;

(3) what was the total of young people who have become unemployed and who have registered at unemployment benefit offices in each travel-to-work area in Cumbria in the last month for which statistics are available;

(4) how many young persons aged 16 to 18 years were unemployed in the Workington travel-to-work area during the last month for which statistics are available;

(5) how many people in the Workington travel-to-work area have been unemployed for *(a)* up to six months, *(b)* six months to 12 months, *(c)* 12 months to 18 months, *(d)* 18 months to two years and *(e)* over two years during the last month for which statistics are available;

(6) what was the total number of young people under the age of 18 years who were registered as claimants at unemployment benefit offices at the latest date for which statistics are available in each travel-to-work area in the county of Cumbria.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information relating to the old travel-to-work areas is in the House of Commons Library. Detailed information on unemployment in the new travel to work areas will be available in the Library later this year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the unemployment figures for the county of Cumbria, categorised by sex, age and the duration of unemployment, for the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is available in the House of Commons Library.

Trade Unions (Ballots)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many trade unions have amended their constitutions to elect their national officers by secret postal ballot under section 22 of the Trade Union Act 1984 since the Act came into effect.

Mr. Alan Clark: According to recent press reports, the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, the Association of University Teachers, the Association of Professional Executive Clerical and Computer Staff, the General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association are considering changes to their rules so as to bring their electoral arrangements into line with the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984. Enforcement of these provisions is a matter for individual trade unionists, who can complain to the certification officer or the courts if they believe elections have not been conducted in accordance with the rights conferred on union members by the 1984 Act.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps the Health and Safety Executive is taking to publish lists of active ingredients and products used in wood treatment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on active ingredients of wood preservatives is issued in the series "Chemical Compounds Used as Pesticides". These recommendation sheets are available from the Health and Safety Executive. There are no plans to publish this information in list form.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many instances of *(a)* suspected, and *(b)*confirmed poisonings by pesticides used in wood treatment were investigated by the Health and Safety Executive, in each of the last five years for which figures are available; in how many instances the public were involved; and in how many cases a prosecution resulted.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A comprehensive central record is not kept of the information requested.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the oral and dermal acute toxicities, the chronic toxicities, and mutagenic, carcinogenic or teratogenic properties of *(a)* methyl isocyanate and *(b)* methyl isothiocyanate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Methyl isocyanate has been reported to cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea when accidently ingested by humans. It is known to be of high oral toxicity to rats and mice. No data are available on systemic effects following dermal exposure in humans, although tests have shown moderate dermal toxicity in rabbits. When inhaled, methyl isocyanate is a potent

irritant and causes bronchospasm and lung damage which can be fatal both to humans and animals. Skin contact can cause severe burns and methyl isocyanate can seriously injure the eyes. Bacterial mutagenicity tests have been found not to produce genetic damage. There are no available data on carcinogenicity or teratogenicity.

One case of accidental death is known following ingestion of methyl isothiocyanate, caused by severe damage of the upper gastric tract. Methyl isothiocyanate has been known to have caused corneal, liver and kidney damage in rats and mice. Animal tests have shown dermal toxicity low for rats and mice but higher for rabbits. There are no available data on carcinogenicity, teratogenicity or mutagenicity other than a two-year study of rats exposed to methyl isothiocyanate in drinking water which reported no effects at a level of 10 mg/litre.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those pesticide products used in wood treatment which contain *(a)* dieldrin, *(b)* DDT, *(c)* lidanne, *(d)* tributyl tin oxide or similar compounds and *(e)* benzene hexachloride.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

School Leavers

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many students living in the borough of Sunderland and attending state schools in the borough left school in July 1984; how many got places on a youth training scheme; and how many have not yet had any kind of job.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not readily available in the form requested. According to the Sunderland careers service, whose area covers Houghton le Spring, Washington and Sunderland, at 3 January 1985, of the 3,893 young people who left school or college in 1984 and registered with the careers service for employment, 2,690 (69 per cent.) were in the youth training scheme; 585 (15 per cent.) were unemployed; and the remaining 618 (16 per cent.) were in employment. Some of those unemployed had been on the youth training scheme or had a job since leaving full-time education and some of those in employment had also spent some time on the youth training scheme.

Nurses

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many nurses were registered as unemployed in *(a)* the Liverpool travel-to-work area and *(b)* the Merseyside special development area at the latest available date; and what were the figures for each of the last three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested, in respect of registrants at jobcentres, is available in the House of Commons Library. The latest figures relate to September 1982.

UN Decade for Women

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has had with the Equal Opportunities Commission with a view to realising the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend and I have had consultations with the Equal Opportunities Commission about many issues relevant to the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women. For example, we had fruitful consultations about our proposals for legislation on equal pay for work of equal value; we have provided funding to assist it in its excellent current project "Women into Science and Engineering"; and my right hon. Friend has recently approved and laid before the House its draft code of practice on the elimination of sex discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consider publishing a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire giving details of any future plans for extending the range, availability or duration of wider opportunities for women courses.

Mr. Alan Clark: Within existing resources, the Manpower Services Commission is seeking to help more women by making wider opportunities for women courses more cost-efficient and by aligning them more closely with local labour market needs.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce an updated version of Her Majesty's Government's response to the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire taking account of any subsequent available information on the range of courses studied under the youth training scheme by women.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Manpower Services Commission is maintaining its commitment to a policy of equal opportunity for all young people eligible to join the youth training scheme, regardless of their sex, race or disability. The commission is promoting this policy, with measures to ensure that young women have equal access to enter the full range of scheme programmes. Additional steps have been taken with the use of publicity material to encourage young women to enter for training in non-traditional areas of work.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what consultations he has had with the Manpower Services Commission with a view to realising the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since the commencement of the United Nations Decade for Women, the Government have worked and will continue to work through the Manpower Services Commission to improve the range and quality of training available to women, as a direct contribution to the aims of the Decade. The commission has a policy of equal access to all its programmes and encourages women to participate in "non-traditional" courses. The commission also operates a programme of development activities aimed at industry and commerce, to demonstrate the economic benefits which can result from developing women's potential to the full.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he has taken subsequent to Her Majesty's Government's response to the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire to

encourage participation by boys and girls in non-traditional areas of study under the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Alan Clark: From its inception the technical and vocational education initiative has given high priority to the provision of equal opportunities for boys and girls and this is reflected in the criteria set by the national steering group, which advises the Manpower Services Commission running this pilot scheme.

Across the 62 projects now operating, take-up of places has sometimes tended to follow traditional lines, but the schools and colleges involved are actively developing strategies to encourage both boys and girls to take advantage of the opportunities that exist in all subject areas. TVEI advisers are monitoring developments and a programme of national workshops is planned to assist projects in developing strategies further.

We hope that Barking and all other local education authorities not currently participating in the initiative will respond positively to the commission's recent invitation to submit a proposal for a project to begin this year or next.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether any changes will be made to the cash-limited Votes for his Department.

Mr. Tom King: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for Class IV, Vote 17 will be increased from £232,298,000 by £9,000,000 to £241,298,000. There will be no addition to the planning total of public expenditure, since a corresponding reduction will be made in the cash limit for Class IV, Vote 13 relative to Labour Market Services (Department of Employment) which will be reduced from £692,622,000 to £683,622,000. The increase on Vote 17 is required to meet the cost of additional staff in the unemployment benefit service to cover the consequences of revised economic assumptions and of the industrial action by staff at the Department of Health and Social Security at Newcastle.

THE ARTS

Local Authority Investment

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what levels of investment have been allocated by individual local authorities towards activities in respect of the arts *(a)* in London and *(b)* in the West Midlands county in each year since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

UN Decade for Women

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken in relation to article 63(b) of the 1975 world plan of action for the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 prohibits discrimination by the Government in making appointments to public office and by employers in recruiting and promoting employees. The Equal Opportunities Commission, established under the Act with the duty of promoting equality, monitors women's success in achieving public office and their situation in the labour market and advises both public and private sector employers on developing equal opportunity policies. The Government's annual labour force survey provides information about the number of women employed in the public service and their occupations. In regard to that part of the public service which is directly under Government control, the Government announced on 9 February 1984 in both Houses of Parliament a programme of action on women in the Civil Service, consisting of 70 items covering the whole spectrum of equal opportunities issues.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Establishments Office (Equal Opportunities Officer)

Mr. Soames asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what are the duties of the equal opportunities officer in the Establishments Office; and what is his salary.

Mr. Beith: The designated equal opportunities officer in the House of Commons is the Deputy Head of the Establishments Office. He was so designated following publication in January 1984 of the "Report on the Review of Personnel Policies and Procedures in the Civil Service", applied by analogy in the House of Commons Service. As equal opportunities officer he is responsible for advising House Departments on the full scope of equal opportunity matters as they concern both race and sex discrimination. As Deputy Head of the Establishment Office his duties cover the whole range of personnel matters, of which equal opportunities policy is but one part. His salary, linked to the Civil Service grade 6, is currently in the range of £17,529 to £23,134 pa (including £1,300 pa Inner London weighting).

DEFENCE

Submarines

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in view of the representations recently made by the Irish Government to the International Maritime Organisation about the growth in the number of incidents involving fishing vessels and submerged submarines, he will undertake a review of regulations relating to the movement of submarines in coastal waters around Britain and Ireland and in the Irish sea.

Mr. Lee: The level of incidents involving fishing vessels and Royal Navy submarines has not grown in recent years. While I am satisfied at present with the procedures relating to the movement of submarines in the waters around the British Isles, these are, of course, kept under regular review.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if it is North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy to achieve equality in nuclear weapons with those of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Stanley: In the previous negotiations on strategic and intermediate range nuclear weapons, the United States sought to reach balanced, equitable and verifiable agreement with the Soviet Union on the basis of equal limits of nuclear weapons in the same categories.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in Washington on 22 December the purpose of the resumed US-Soviet negotiations on arms control is to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides. The US and Western aim is not to achieve superiority, but to maintain balance, taking account of Soviet developments.

Defence Policy

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the objectives of United Kingdom defence policy, distinguishing between those appertaining to the United Kingdom, British dependent territories, British military alliances and wider British interests, respectively.

Mr. Stanley: The principal objectives of United Kingdom defence policy are to preserve peace with freedom and to ensure the security of the nation and that of our NATO allies through collective deterrence against attack. We also seek to discharge our responsibilities for the external defence of our dependent territories, and to promote our security interests beyond the NATO area by means of exercises, deployments, peacekeeping, military sales and assistance, and the maintenance of a capability for military intervention. Further details have been given in successive "Statements on the Defence Estimates."

Research

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the universities, hospitals or other establishments in the United Kingdom at which research directly or indirectly sponsored by his Department is taking place or has taken place over the last three years.

Mr. Lee: Over the past three years the Ministry of Defence has directly sponsored research at a large number of the United Kingdom universities and polytechnics and some of their associated hospital research departments and institutes. I will place a list of the bodies concerned in the Library of the House. It is not our practice to give details of research contracts.

Information on indirect involvement could not be extracted without disproportionate effort.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the purpose of the research carried out on behalf of his Department at the university of Glasgow involving the toxins from anthrax basilli and cholera organisms;

(2) if he will make a statement on the purpose of the research carried out on behalf of his Department at the university of Kent at Canterbury involving tricothenes.

Mr. Lee: It is not the policy of this Government or their predecessors to give information of this nature concerning research contracts.

VX Gas

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what stocks of VX gas are held by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Stanley: There are no chemical weapons declared to NATO. Details of limited United States national stocks are a matter for that Government.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of jobs in the United Kingdom which are directly or indirectly dependent on trade in defence equipment and services with Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to estimate the number of jobs in the United Kingdom which are directly or indirectly dependent on trade in defence equipment and services with Sri Lanka. Details of such trade are, of course, confidential between the two Governments, but the volume of business of this kind is not large.

Remotely Piloted Vehicle

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is any nearer reaching a decision on the remotely piloted vehicle for the British Army.

Mr. Butler: Yes. I expect to be in a position to make an announcement on this matter shortly.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what obstacles exist to the conclusion of an international agreement to end underground nuclear testing; and what effort Her Majesty's Government have made in the past year to overcome them.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

As I said to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 11 December, at column 450, current techniques of seismic verification require significant improvement as a first step towards a comprehensive test ban. We were disappointed that there was no discussion at the conference on disarmament at Geneva last year of the paper on verification problems tabled by the United Kingdom in 1983. However, we took part last year in a worldwide experiment to test methods for exchanging seismological data.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa (Nuclear Capability)

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will consider introducing controls or regulations to require British citizens to obtain authorisation before providing expertise which could enhance South Africa's nuclear capability on the same basis as those enacted in the United States of America in February 1983.

Mr. Luce: No. We adhere to our policy of no collaboration with South Africa in the development of its nuclear programme, but do not intend to restrict the freedom of private individuals to work in, or for, South Africa.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the working of the high commission in Sierra Leone; and if he will make a statement.

£ billion

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Domestic*	2·4	2·8	3·7	4·5	5·1	4·8	5·1
Commercial	1·7	1·9	2·5	3·1	3·5	3·8	4·0
Industrial	0·7	0·9	1·0	1·3	1·4	1·4	1·5
Other	1·1	1·3	1·6	1·9	2·2	2·3	2·5
TOTAL	5·9	6·9	8·8	10·8	12·2	12·3	13·1

* Net of domestic rate relief grant and rate rebates.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister what is her estimate of the United Kingdom current price costs of rate rebates in 1982-83 and in 1983-84, showing the cost of rate rebates paid with supplementary benefit as separate sub-totals.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

Rate Rebate Expenditure at 1984-85 Prices
United Kingdom

£ million

	1982-83	1983-84
Certificated*	701	770
Standard	484	572
TOTAL	1,185	1,342

* Housing benefit was introduced during this period. The figures include both certificated rate rebates and the equivalent provision formerly made in the supplementary benefit scheme as appropriate.

European Stamp

Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister what instruction has been given to the United Kingdom delegate to the Committee for a People's Europe regarding the proposal for a European stamp without the picture of Her Majesty the Queen.

The Prime Minister: The Committee on People's Europe has not at any time discussed the inclusion or non-inclusion of the Queen's head on any stamp, nor has the United Kingdom representative made any proposal on this point in the committee.

Committee for a People's Europe

Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister what were the criteria for appointing the United Kingdom delegate to the Committee for a People's Europe; and to which Ministers he will report.

The Prime Minister: A wide experience of Community affairs and a commitment to simplifying its rules. The United Kingdom contribution to the committee's work falls within the general responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Ministerial Cars (Parking Regulations)

Dr. Marek asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer, 1 February, *Official Report*, column 327, in what circumstances, other than for reasons of emergency, may drivers of ministerial cars not obey the parking regulations.

The Prime Minister: Government car service drivers are under instruction to meet the requirement of their passengers as they arise, including requirements imposed by security. Ministers may on occasion require cars to stand by because of urgent parliamentary and other business. As a result of arrangements recently made, the extent to which GCS cars have to wait in restricted areas will significantly reduce.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Remanded Persons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, of people who are in prison because of supergrass evidence, how many have been remanded in prison for *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* nine months, *(d)* 12 months, *(e)* 15 months, *(f)* 18 months, *(g)* 21 months, *(h)* 24 months, *(i)* 27 months and *(j)* 30 months; of these people, how many have been convicted, acquitted or have actually gone to trial; and what was their period of detention or remand.

Mr. Scott: Information on remand times for those at present on remand in custody, charged on the basis of evidence from alleged accomplices, is not separately available and could be obtained only by a special exercise at disproportionate cost. Nor is it possible for the same reason to provide information directly comparable to that provided in my reply to similar questions from the hon. Member on 21 March 1984, at column *497*, and 19 July 1984, at column *283*.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, for each year since 1980 what is the number of prisoners refused bail; and what is the average period of remand without bail for persons accused and charged either wholly or partially on the basis of accomplice evidence in each of the following categories *(a)* the top decile of prisoners awaiting trial for the longest period, *(b)* the top quartile of prisoners awaiting trial for the longest period, *(c)* the second quartile of prisoners awaiting trial for the longest period; and what is the average period of remand for all prisoners charged on the basis of such evidence.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1985, c. *71*]: The number of applications for bail which were refused in each year since 1980 was as follows:

	Number
1980	728
1981	951
1982	990
1983	855
1984	849

Information on remand times for those at present on remand in custody who have been charged on the basis of evidence from alleged accomplices is not separately

available and could be obtained only by a special exercise at disproportionate cost. Nor is it possible for the same reason to provide information directly comparable to that provided in my reply to a similar question from the hon. Member on 31 July 1984, at column *136*.

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many dairy farmers in Northern Ireland have a herd size of less than 150 cows;

(2) how many dairy farmers in Northern Ireland have a herd size in excess of 150 cows;

(3) how many dairy farmers in Northern Ireland have a herd of less than 40 cows;

(4) how many dairy farmers in Northern Ireland have a herd size of less than 80 cows;

(5) how many dairy farmers in Northern Ireland have a herd size of less than 120 cows.

Dr. Boyson: The statistics are not readily available exactly as requested. The available statistics from the June 1984 agricultural census are as follows:

Size of dairy herd	*Number of farms*
Less than 40 cows	5,207
Less than 70 cows	7,008
Less than 100 cows	7,704
Less than 200 cows	8,061
100 cows and over	379
200 cows and over	22
All sizes	8,083

Hydrocarbon Licences

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when applications for hydrocarbon licences will be invited in Northern Ireland; and what steps are being taken to promote such applications.

Dr. Boyson: I am placing in the Library the text of a notice which will appear in the London and Edinburgh *Gazettes* and in the Belfast *Gazette*. It indicates that the Department of Economic Development will accept applications for landward petroleum licences in Northern Ireland from 4 March 1985. The areas on offer for licensing are in East Antrim and in adjacent parts of East Tyrone/South Londonderry. From 4 March 1985 the Department is also making available for purchase a package of information, prepared by petroleum consultants and the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland on the potential of the area on offer for licensing. The Department will also be pleased to arrange, on request, subsequent discussions with its advisers for all those companies which purchase this information. In order to give time for corporate analysis of the information being released, and discussions with departmental advisers, the closing date for the receipt of licensing applications is 28 June 1985.

Hijacked Vehicles

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each of the years 1983 and 1984 the following details: *(a)* the number of vehicles hijacked or taken and *(b)* the number not recovered at the end of each year, in each of the following police districts, separately: Musgrave street, Springfield road, Tennent street, North Queen street, Mountpottinger, Castlereagh, Newtownards, Newry, Portadown, Armagh, Enniskillen, Omagh, Strand road, Coleraine, Ballymena and Antrim.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *714*]: The available information is as follows:

Vehicles Taken or Hijacked by RUC Divisions

Division	*Divisional headquarters*	*Vehicles taken or hijacked*	*Vehicles not recovered*
1 January—30 September 1983			
A	Musgrave street	969	55
B	Springfield road	950	54
C	Tennent street	370	25
D	North Queen street	409	49
E	Mountpottinger	159	22
F	Castlereagh	641	53
G	Newtownards	234	37
H	Newry	213	53
J	Portadown	139	26
K	Armagh	38	8
L	Enniskillen	12	6
M	Omagh	24	5
N	Strand road	99	8
O	Coleraine	40	3
P	Ballymena	92	15
R	Antrim	358	30
	Totals	4,747	449
*1 October—31 December 1983**			
A	Musgrave street	559	66
B	Springfield road	355	30
D	North Queen street	362	43
E	Strandtown	94	14
G	Newtownards	37	11
H	Armagh	80	21
J	Portadown	145	21
K	Cookstown	13	3
L	Enniskillen	5	0
N	Strand road	40	4
O	Coleraine	20	3
P	Ballymena	39	7
	Totals	1,749	223
1984			
A	Musgrave street	1,890	180
B	Springfield road	1,370	108
D	North Queen street	1,540	125
E	Strandtown	558	56
G	Newtownards	187	25
H	Armagh	236	57
J	Portadown	554	84
K	Cookstown	69	5
L	Enniskillen	30	6
N	Strand road	164	14
O	Coleraine	78	9
P	Ballymena	229	34
	Totals	6,905	703

Note:

* On 1 October 1983, the number of RUC divisions was reduced from 16 to 12 and divisional boundaries were reorganised. As a result there were no longer divisions with headquarters at Tennent street, Castlereagh, Omagh or Antrim.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

"Home Defence and the Farmer"

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the visits outside the United

Kingdom made by members of his Department in the course of their work to revise "Home Defence and the Farmer", in the last five years.

Mrs. Fenner: No such visits have been made.

Nuclear Defence

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the seminars and conferences held in the United Kingdom relating to the problems of nuclear defence and agriculture which representatives of his Department have been invited to attend.

Mrs. Fenner: Invitations were received to conferences on the land and defence at Oxford in March 1984 and on the nuclear winter at Exeter in September 1984.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a Green Paper on pesticides and environment policy review.

Mrs. Fenner: No. Part III of the Food and Environment Protection Bill, which has just received its First Reading in the House, seeks powers to ensure the safe and efficient use of pesticides, taking full account of environmental concerns. It was drafted after wide-ranging consultation with interested organisations. The Government are committed to a second round of consultation on the detailed content of implementary regulations, and a discussion document will be issued for that purpose, as soon as possible.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give a timetable for the drawing up of regulations, consultations with interested parties and the issuing and implementation of regulations for the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*.

Mrs. Fenner: Subject to the views of Parliament on part III of the Food and Environment Protection Bill, I hope that the Government will be in a position to circulate a new consultation document detailing the proposed regulations and the administrative arrangements which will accompany them in the late spring. The consultations on these proposals will continue for as long as necessary, but our aim is to lay the regulations in Parliament this autumn, with a view to their entry into force early in 1986.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he intends making to allow observers to attend the meetings of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides; and what steps he is taking to make public its proceedings, apart from publication of an annual report.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government believe that the discussions of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides should be conducted in such a way as to allow them to take place with frankness and informality. Furthermore, the committee is dealing with information, some of which is commercially sensitive and valuable and which, therefore, cannot be made public. For these reasons, I and my right hon. Friends believe that an annual report containing safety assessments and the recommendations of the ACP is the right way of informing the public of its work.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those pesticide products cleared under the pesticides safety precautions scheme containing methyl isothiocyanate, or liberating methyl isothiocyanate when used.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what study he has made in the context of the preparation of the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]* of the United States system of rebuttable presumptions against registration issued as a revokable injunction against the use of pesticides suspected of causing a serious environmental, safety or health hazard; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I am aware of the system of review of approval of pesticides employed in the United States. In the UK, the pesticides safety precautions scheme already includes provision for the clearance of any pesticide to be reviewed in the light of new scientific evidence on risk. Where appropriate, clearance can be revoked and the pesticide withdrawn from use. In addition, we are proposing, under the Food and Environment Protection Bill, reviews of the registration status of *all* pesticide products approved for use in this country at regular intervals. I am satisfied that these arrangements provide the necessary controls.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has made any studies and if it has any forecast or estimates available to it of the number of pesticides expected to be approved, and of the volume of pesticide active ingredients expected to be used, in 1986, 1990, 1985 and 2000.

Mrs. Fenner: No. It is not possible to predict how many new chemicals will be developed and how many of those will achieve approval for use in the UK. For similar reasons, we do not make estimates of future pesticides usage. However, it is our declared policy aim to reduce usage to the minimum consistent with efficient agricultural and horticultural production.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many pesticide clearances or approvals he expects to revoke or suspend as a result of the powers he is seeking under the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*, in its first year.

Mrs. Fenner: If the Food and Environment Protection Bill is approved the Government intend to review existing clearances, but it is too soon to anticipate the result.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of occasions in each of the past five years in which Ministers failed to act on a recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides regarding the safety clearance of a pesticide.

Mrs. Fenner: During the last five years, Ministers have accepted and acted upon all the final recommendations of the advisory committee for pesticides regarding safety clearances.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the members of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and of each of its sub-committees, giving in each case occupation and qualifications for membership.

Mrs. Fenner: Current members of the advisory committee on pesticides are:

Chairman:

Professor R. Kilpatrick, CBE, MD, FRCP(Ed), FRCP(Lond) — Dean of Faculty of Medicine, University of Leicester School of Medicine.

Members:

Professor C. L. Berry, MD, PhD, FRCPath—Professor of Morbid Anatomy, The London Hospital Medical College (Chairman, Scientific Sub-Committee)

R. L. Carter, MA, DM, DSc, FRCPath — Reader in Pathology and Consultant Pathologist, The Haddow Laboratories, Royal Marsden Hospital.

L. E. Coles BPharm, PhD, CChem, MPhA, MChemA, FPS, FRSC, County Analyst, Agricultural Analyst, Mid and West Glamorgan County Council.

Professor E. B. G. Jones, PhD, DSc, Professor of Microbiology, Director of Research, Department of Biological Sciences, Portsmouth Polytechnic.

Professor J. Knoweldon, CBE, MD, FRCP, FFCM, DPH, JP, Professor of Community Medicine (Semi-retired), Department of Community Medicine, University of Sheffield Medical School.

Professor R. I. McCallum, MD, DSc, FRCP, FFOM, Head of Occupational Health and Hygiene, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Professor G. R. Sagar, MA DPhil (Oxon), Head, School of Plant Biology, University College of North Wales.

R. S. Tayler, BSc (Agric), Dip Agric, NDA, Senior Tutor, Crop Production, Department of Agriculture and Horticulture, University of Reading.

Professor M. J. Way, MA, DSC, Professor of Applied Zoology, University of London, Imperial College Field Station.

Assessors from the following Government Departments and Agencies also attend:

Agriculture and Food Research Council
Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland
Department of Education and Science
Department of the Environment
Department of Health and Social Security
Department of Trade and Industry
Health and Safety Executive
Laboratory of the Government Chemist
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Medical Research Council
Natural Environment Research Council
Nature Conservancy Council
Scottish Home and Health Department
Welsh Office Agriculture Department

Membership of its Scientific Sub-Committee is as follows:

Chairman

Professor C. L. Berry, MD, PhD, FRCPath, Professor of Morbid Anatomy, The London Hospital Medical College.

Members:

Dr. D. C. Abbott, BSc, PhD, CChem, FRSC, Formerly Deputy Director, Government Analyst (Retd.), Laboratory of the the Government Chemist.

Mr. P. J. Attwood, BSc, Assistant to Senior Agronomist, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. J. A. R. Bates, BCc, Chem, FRSC, Head of Pesticides Registration Department, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food.

Dr. B. M. Buckley, MB, MsC, DPhil, FRCPI*, Consultant Chemical Pathologist, Department of Clinical Biochemistry, Sandwell General Hospital.

Dr. H. D. Burges, BSc, PhD*, Head of Insect Pathology Section, Glasshouse Crops Research Institute.

Dr. A. S. Cooke, BSc, PhD, MIBiol*, Toxic Chemicals Specialist, Chief Scientist's Directorate, Nature Conservancy Council.

Dr. D. Gall, BM, Clinical Toxician, Medical Division, Ministry of Defence, Chemical Defence Establishment.

Mr. H. J. Gould, BSc, Head of Entomology Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Dr. M. J. Griffin, BSc, PhD, Regional Plant Pathologist, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. G. A. Hamilton, CChem, FRSC, Head of Chemistry Section, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland.

Dr. J. W. W. Morgan, BSc, PhD, FRSC, FIWSc, Head, Timber and Protection Division, Department of the Environment, Building Research Establishment.

Professor D. I. H. Simpson, MD, FRCPath, FIBiol*, Professor of Microbiology, Department of Microbiology and Immunobiology, The Queen's University of Belfast.

Dr. P. I. Stanley, BSc, PhD, Head of Pest Control Chemistry Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. F. M. Sullivan, BSc*, Senior Lecturer, Department of Pharmacology, Guy's Hospital.

Mr. J. Summerscales, NDA, MIAgrE*, HM Department Chief Agricultural Inspector, Health and Safety Executive, HM Agricultural Inspectorate.

Professor D. R. Turner, MB, BS, PhD, FRCPath, Head of Department of Pathology, University Hospital, Nottingham.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those pesticides which are cleared for aerial spraying and which are also classified as poisonous substances.

Mrs. Fenner: The Poisonous Substances in Agriculture Regulations 1984* prescribe the precautions to be taken when using specified substances in agriculture. Products containing the following substances specified in the regulations have clearance for aerial application:

azinphos-methyl
chlorfenvinphos
demephion
demeton-S-methyl
dichlovos
fentin acetate
omethoate
oxydemeton-methyl
phorate (granules only)
phosphamidon
thiometon

With the exception of phorate, all these products fall in the lowest risk category (schedule 2, part III) of the regulations, which require certain protective clothing to be worn when handling the product in concentrated form, or when acting as a ground marker during aerial application. There is no statutory requirement for users to wear protective clothing when handling the product in dilute form. Phorate falls into a higher risk category (schedule 2, part II), but is only cleared for aerial application in granular form.

Wartime Farm Wardens

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) from what sources wartime farm wardens would be recruited;

(2) if he will publish his contingency plans to appoint wartime farm wardens;

(3) what criteria would govern the establishment of groups of farms to be supervised by wartime farm wardens; and what alternative criteria have been considered by his Department;

(4) if he will list the duties and responsibilities of wartime farm wardens.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 7 February at column *694* to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas).

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm wardens would be appointed by his Department in the event of threatened hostilities.

Mrs. Fenner: On the basis of one warden for about 20 farms there would be about 6,000 wardens.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish details of the organisation, structure and composition of the proposed wartime local control organisation for agriculture, fisheries and food.

Mrs. Fenner: Details of the local agricultural control organisation were published in Home Office circular ES 1/79 sent to local authorities in January 1979 and are repeated in section 11 of the new consolidated circular on civil defence sent to local authorities in draft for comment in July 1984.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a map showing the areas to be served by each wartime farm warden.

Mrs. Fenner: No.

"Home Defence and the Farmer"

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange a press conference for the launch of the new edition of "Home Defence and the Farmer".

Mrs. Fenner: Arrangements for the launch of this booklet will be decided when a date for publication has been set.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inquiries were received during 1984 about a new edition of "Home Defence and the Farmer"; and how long it is since stocks of the previous publication ran out.

Mrs. Fenner: Many oral inquiries are made about this booklet but these are not recorded. Thirty one written inquiries were received in 1984. This includes 15 parliamentary questions. Stocks of the booklet ceased to be available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office in June 1974.

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Eggar asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the nationalised industries, non-governmental organisations and agencies for which his Department either has responsibility or provides funding, as well as those sections of his Department, which provide services to the general public or to private organisations; and if he will indicate separately those which at present *(a)* charge no fees, *(b)* charge fees which do not fully cover the costs of providing those services, *(c)* charge fees which exactly cover the costs of providing those services and *(d)* charge fees which more than cover the costs of providing those services.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985, c. *558*]: A list of the public bodies sponsored by my Department together with information on levels of Government funding is given in pages 5-8 of a booklet prepared by the Management and Personnel Office of the Cabinet Office entitled "Public Bodies 1984" and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. My Department sponsors no nationalised industries.

Public Bodies sponsored by my Department are funded in a variety of ways which include payment by way of statutory levies and charges for individual services. Comprehensive information on specific services is not collected on a regular basis and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

As far as services provided by my Department are concerned, under the provisions of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1944 advice is provided free by my Department's agricultural development and advisory service. Information on services costing over £100,000 is collected annually for inclusion with other Departmental returns in the statement on fees and charges prepared by Treasury for submission to the Public Accounts Committee. The table sets out the information requested:

Service	*Responsible section*
(a) No Fees charged	
Export certification of meat products and furred and feathered game	Animal Health
(b) Fees not fully covering costs	
Agricultural Services Schemes	Agricultural Development and Advisory Services (ADAS)
Crop trials undertaken on behalf of National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB)	ADAS
Plant Breeders Rights	Plant Variety Rights Office (PVRO)
Applications for addition to United Kingdom National List of Agricultural and Vegetable Species	PVRO
(c) Fees fully covering costs	
Commercial Artificial Insemination Service	ADAS
Production of vaccines and diagnostic re-agents	ADAS
Services to National Coal Board re restoration of open cast coal land	ADAS
Aviation Bird Unit	ADAS
Seed certification, seed testing and related services for England and Wales	PVRO
(d) Fees more than covering costs	
None	

TRANSPORT

Motorway Lighting

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if there have been any instances where lighting has been installed on a motorway to alleviate fog hazards; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes. Fog was a consideration in providing lighting on the following motorways:

	Junctions etc.
M1—	Junction 3 to Junction 14 inclusive and Junction 24 to Junction 26 inclusive.
M5—	Junction 15 to Junction 19 inclusive.
M6—	Junction 10 to Junction 11 inclusive and Junction 20 to Junction 27 inclusive
M54—M6	Interchange to Junction 2.
M58—	Junction 4 to Junction 6 inclusive.
M62—	Junction 21 to Junction 24 inclusive.
M65—	Junction 6 to Junction 10 inclusive.

We have instituted new studies to identify any stretches of the M25 and M42 motorways liable to fog.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total expenditure on road construction and improvement for the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Chalker: Expenditure in England on road construction and improvements in 1983-84 was as follows:

	(£ million cash)
Motorways and trunk roads	514
Local authority roads, including new town roads	*453
Total	967

* (provisional).

Roads (Lancashire)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total mileage of *(a)* trunk motorways and *(b)* other trunk roads opened in Lancashire in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Year	*Trunk Motorway (miles)*	*Other Trunk Roads (miles)*
1980	Nil	Nil
1981	Nil	2·5
1982	Nil	Nil
1983	4·5	1·0
1984	2·2	Nil

M62 (Capacity Requirements)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has now completed the assessment of the capacity requirements of the steeper sections of the M62 motorway in the Pennines as announced in the 1983 "Roads" White Paper.

Mrs. Chalker: No, but I expect to receive the consultants' report fairly shortly.

Roads (Lancashire-Yorkshire)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to improve road connections east to west between Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Mrs. Chalker: The 1983 roads White Paper lists proposed bypasses on the A616 and A65 routes which carry Lancashire to Yorkshire traffic. In addition, I am awaiting the results of studies into the capacity of the steeper sections of the M62 and into possible improvements to the A65 between Gargrave and the M6.

Motorways

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest position with regard to improvements in the motorway network in the north-west.

Mrs. Chalker: We propose to extend the motorway network by completing the Manchester outer ring road (M63/M66) and building the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass. Our proposals for widening the two-lane section of M63 west of Manchester (including Barton bridge over the Manchester ship canal) are well advanced. Studies are currently being carried out into the future capacity of some sections of the M62 and M6 motorways.

Roads White Paper

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the next roads White Paper to be published.

Mrs. Chalker: I am currently reviewing the trunk road programme. I cannot yet say when the results will be published or in what form.

Road Maintenance Condition Survey

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the report of the 1984 national road maintenance condition survey will be published.

Mrs. Chalker: Final figures are in the course of preparation, and publication is expected around the end of February.

Dial-a-ride Service

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the discussions he has had with London borough councils about the future status and funding of the dial-a-ride service.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall answer this question shortly.

Wintex-Cimex '85

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the involvement of his Department in Wintex-Cimex '85.

Mr. Ridley: One of the objects of Wintex-Cimex '85 is to test procedures intended for use in times of tension and war. My Department plays its part in testing those procedures in which we have an interest.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Medical Students

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current cost of training a medical student from commencement to qualification; and how many medical students are currently in full-time education.

Mr. Brooke: The current cost of an undergraduate medical course — including home tuition fees but excluding maintenance awards — is approximately £110,000. In 1983-84 — the latest year for which statistics are available — there were 19,225 home and overseas, full-time undergraduate students studying medicine in Great Britain and 2,503 postgraduates.

Student Unions

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has had on introducing voluntary membership of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Since I replied to my hon. Friend on 22 January, at column 375, around a dozen representations on this subject have been received from hon. Members and from student organisations. As was stated in another place on 6 February, at column 1059, by my noble Friend the Earl of Swinton, the Government propose to consult higher education interests about student unions. In doing so they will take into account the representations they have received.

High Energy Physics

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence has been submitted by his Department to the Kendrew committee's review of high energy physics.

Mr. Brooke: The high energy particle physics review group is an independent review commissioned jointly by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Science and Engineering Research Council. The Department has not offered evidence to the group: the ABRC will in due course advise my right hon. Friend on the group's conclusions. The Department has indicated its willingness to help the group in any way it can and has provided some background financial information.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the total cost of meeting the National Union of Teachers current pay claim in full.

Sir Keith Joseph: The gross cost in 1985-86 of meeting the teachers' claim of a flat-rate increase of £1,200 for all teachers from 1 April 1985 would be some £600 million.

Burnham Committee

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to include the Professional Association of Teachers on the negotiating sub-committee of the Burnham committee.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend very much regrets the obstacles that have been placed in the way of the Professional Association of Teachers making an effective contribution to the sub-committees of the Burnham committee. But the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 does not give him powers to specify the committee's working arrangements or the composition of its subsidiary bodies. This matter is to be the subject of judicial review, with PAT's application expected to come before the court on 18 March.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of members of each of the teaching unions represented on the Burnham committee in each of the last 12 months and each of the last five years.

Mr. Dunn: The number of members belonging to the teacher associations represented on the Burnham committees in each of the five years ending 1983 was as follows:

Name of Association	*Membership* Figures* 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Primary and Secondary Committee					
Assistant Masters' & Mistresses' Association (AMMA)	85,026	87,762	85,097	87,021	82,783
National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)	23,063	23,160	23,472	23,086	23,339
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NAS/UWT)	142,533	146,298	145,844	146,729	146,064
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE)	68,782	70,444	71,785	74,031	72,657
National Union of Teachers (NUT)	289,311	271,707	261,747	259,162	249,478
Professional Association of Teachers (PAT)	19,205	21,346	22,612	23,452	21,843
Secondary Heads Association (SHA)	4,353	4,413	4,433	4,456	4,839
Further Education Committee					
Association of Agricultural Education Staffs (AAES)	936	914	981	1,066	1,086
Association of Polytechnic Teachers (APT)	2,756	2,932	2,829	2,184	2,800
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE)	68,782	70,444	71,785	74,031	72,657
National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD)	2,432	2,153	2,049	2,063	2,109

* Great Britain

Details are supplied annually by the teacher associations to the certification officer and include all

categories of membership as at 31 December except for AMMA (30 June) and NSEAD (30 September). Such figures are not available for 1984 or for each of the last 12 months.

National Environment Research Council

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet the chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council to discuss its proposals for substantially cutting the numbers of its scientific staff.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council. I have recently met him twice to discuss the council's corporate planning intentions, which amongst other matters, address the question of the number of scientific staff who might be employed by the council in future.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions he has had with teachers' representatives on the Burnham committee concerning teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: None. Schoolteachers' pay is negotiated in the Burnham Primary and Secondary Committee and is not a matter on which I normally hold direct discussions with the teacher unions.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies are being made or have been made of school attendance in areas where pesticide spraying is at a high level to investigate possible links between spraying and illness in children.

Mr. Dunn: None, so far as I am aware.

Teachers (Strike)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest strike by teachers in the maintained sector.

Sir Keith Joseph: I understand that the National Union of Teachers has called on its members to refuse to provide cover for absent colleagues, undertake lunchtime supervision and school activities outside timetabled school hours, or handle school meals payments. I am greatly concerned that the union should have called for this action which is designed to disrupt the education service and I hope individual teachers will think very carefully about the implications of heeding this call.

Rotherham Borough Council

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the level of educational capital expenditure that Rotherham borough council is to be allowed to undertake in 1985-86; and how this compares with the allocation in each of the last four years and with the other metropolitan education authorities.

Sir Keith Joseph: The education block allocation for Rotherham borough council for 1985-86, announced in January 1985, is £481,000; the total of allocations for the 36 metropolitan districts is £75,807,000. Equivalent information for the preceding four years is as follows:

	1981-82 £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £
Rotherham	1,021,400	*406,112	*515,300	471,000
All Metropolitan Districts	96,939,680	74,654,028	67,880,380	77,084,000

*Supplementary allocations were made in the course of 1982-83 and 1983-84 of £1,086,000 and £150,000 respectively.

Dental Health

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources he proposes to make available to enable local education authorities to expand provision for dental health sessions in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The level of resources for the provision of dental services and education about dental health in schools is a matter for health authorities, local education authorities and schools themselves to determine, within the total resources available to them.

Exchange Visits (Emergency Hardship Money)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will continue to monitor the exchange rate of the pound sterling against the United States dollar, and take into account all future changes of the rate, when allocating emergency hardship money to the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges for assistance to British teachers on exchange contracts in the United States of America.

Mr. Brooke: Responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of its hardship fund for exchange teachers — British and foreign — and allocations from it are entirely matters for the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges.

Secondary Schools and Industry (Liaison)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to encourage greater liaison between secondary schools and industry.

Mr. Dunn: Local liaison arrangements between secondary schools and industry are essentially matters for local education authorities and local employers. The Government wish to encourage such activities and are themselves providing direct financial help through, for example, the technical and vocational education initiative and the lower attaining pupils' programme. The Government already support, in some cases financially, the activities of the school/industry link organisations and they are also giving their full backing to Industry Year 1986. This will, amongst other things, encourage local

firms and schools to develop new links and strengthen those which already exist. There are, therefore, no plans for further central initiatives at present.

Young and Disabled Children (Microcomputers)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources he will make available to local education authorities to enable them to provide schools with suitable machines for young and disabled children who have difficulty in operating microcomputers.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave her on 5 February at column 515.

UN Decade for Women

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what consultations he has had with local education authorities to discuss ways of achieving the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women;

(2) what guidelines he has issued to local education authorities in order to achieve the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Brooke: The goal of the United Nations Decade for Women which is most relevant to the education service is the achievement of equality for women. My right hon. Friend has had no recent consultations with local education authorities specifically to discuss ways of achieving this goal, but equality of opportunity has been an important theme in consultations and guidance issued in relation to policy areas where this is a relevant consideration.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the University Grants Committee about ways of achieving the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has had no discussions with the University Grants Committee about the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women but he and the committee welcome the fact that the number of female undergraduate home new entrants to university has increased, as a proportion of the total, from 39·8 per cent. in 1979-80 to 41·3 per cent. in 1983-84.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has made since Her Majesty's Government answered the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire to ensure that equal curricular opportunities are available to both boys and girls.

Mr. Dunn: The Government had already made clear prior to their response to the United Nations questionnaire in February 1984 that genuinely equal curricular opportunities should be provided for boys and girls at all stages in the educational process, and have continued to support that view.

Mental Illness

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the research being sponsored by his Department in the field of mental illness.

Mr. Brooke: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. I understand that the MRC is currently supporting a great deal of research work in the field of mental illness. Details can be found in the council's handbook 1984-85, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Research work relevant to mental illness is also being conducted in universities and medical schools. Much of this is financed from the block grant allocated for teaching and research on advice from the University Grants Committee. Information on such medical research work can be found in "Research in British Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges, Volume 2, Biological Sciences", published by the British Library, a copy of which is also available in the Library.

Medical Research

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science in determining support for medical research in any particular field, what account is taken of the likely effect of any breakthrough to the National Health Service.

Mr. Brooke: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. It is for the council to decide on the distribution of the resources available to it between the various areas of medical research. I understand that, in assessing applications for research support, the council always considers the possible relevance of the research to patient treatment. The council's membership includes members representing the health departments, and nominees of the health departments are on its three main research boards. The council's health services research panel, which includes representatives from health authorities, general practice and elsewhere, advises the council and its boards on research with special relevance to the health services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the Medical Research Council's budget is directed to supporting studies of the nervous system and neurological and mental illnesses.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that approximately 10 per cent. of the Medical Research Council's budget is spent on projects primarily relevant to the nervous system including vision, hearing and anaesthetic agents. A further 7 per cent. of the council's budget is spent on projects primarily relevant to mental health, psychiatric disorders, behaviour and psychology. Details of the council's expenditure by subject heading are set out in its annual report, copies of which may be found in the Library.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what support is being provided by the Medical Research Council for clinical and laboratory research in the field of schizophrenia.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer on 25 January, at columns *558-59*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

Youth Options Menu

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the purposes of a project

sponsored or funded by him entitled Youth Options Menu; where, and by what methods, it operates; what financial or other arrangements have been made for its administration by the organisation Inter-Action; and for what period.

Mr. Brooke: The purpose of this project is to help youth service agencies extend their work with young people, especially the young unemployed. The project aims to collect and evaluate examples of good practice from several parts of the country, from which youth agencies can select relevant programmes. The project is administered by Inter-Action, subject to conditions of grant laid down by this Department, which include a steering group on which the Department is represented. Funding of the project by the Department is due to cease in September 1985.

Handicapped Pupils

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to the reply of 29 January, *Official Report*, column 82, he will make known in the form of a circular to local authorities his view that local education authorities have a duty to provide full-time education for young people aged 16 to 19 years, who seek it, including those with special education needs.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have affirmed my view on this subject repeatedly and I am not persuaded that there is any need to restate it in a circular. I have, however, said that I intend to offer advice to the education system later in the year about the role of further education colleges in providing for young people with special educational needs. Such advice will clearly rest upon my view of the duty of local education authorities to secure provision for those aged 16 to 19.

University Grants

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what announcement the University Grants Committee has made to universities about grants for the academic year 1985-86.

Sir Keith Joseph: The University Grants Committee has announced universities' recurrent grant for the academic year 1985-86 as shown in the table following.

UGC grant distribution for 1985-86

University or college	*Recurrent grant*	*Earmarked capital in recurrent allocations including*		*Other additions**
		General	*Shared medical*	
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
Aston	14·79	0·155	—	0·409
Bath	12·99	0·145	—	0·231
Birmingham	37·43	0·258	0·153	0·570
Bradford	14·51	0·150	—	0·121
Bristol	28·85	0·230	0·110	0·571
Brunel	12·84	0·108	—	0·353
Cambridge	43·00	0·395	0·040	0·902
City	11·49	0·086	—	0·066
Durham	17·36	0·153	—	0·495
East Anglia	14·71	0·123	—	0·512
Essex	8·31	0·076	—	0·239
Exeter	15·31	0·153	—	0·136
Hull	14·23	0·137	—	0·154
Keele	8·38	0·078	—	0·049
Kent	10·37	0·104	—	0·193
Lancaster	13·49	0·126	—	0·149
Leeds	42·18	0·332	0·149	0·578
Leicester	17·83	0·141	0·050	0·261
Liverpool	37·29	0·248	0·142	0·319
LGSBS	1·90	0·008	—	0·033
London University	231·27	1·074	1·074	3·113
(of which Imperial College)	(29·78)	(0·201)	—	(0·539)
Loughborough	18·16	0·184	—	0·424
MBS	1·11	0·004	—	—
Manchester	46·40	0·329	0·195	0·627
UMIST	16·15	0·134	—	0·495
Newcastle	31·89	0·231	0·155	0·943
Nottingham	27·37	0·236	0·065	0·651
Oxford	44·28	0·370	0·056	0·820
Reading	18·84	0·186	—	0·288
Salford	12·77	0·122	—	0·322
Sheffield	31·66	0·246	0·115	0·282
Southampton	24·68	0·206	0·080	0·592
Surrey	12·78	0·111	—	0·087
Sussex	13·99	0·128	—	0·350
Warwick	17·64	0·158	—	0·867
York	10·99	0·111	—	0·288
Total England	937·24	7·036	2·384	16·490
Aberystwyth UC	10·09	0·095	—	0·148
Bangor UC	10·95	0·088	—	0·089

University or college	Recurrent grant	Earmarked capital in recurrent allocations including		Other additions*
		General	Shared medical	
	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million
Cardiff UC	17·02	0·164	—	0·127
St. David's Lampeter	1·94	0·019	—	—
Swansea UC	13·26	0·125	—	0·121
UWCM	6·62	0·005	0·114	0·044
UWIST	8·49	0·091	—	0·121
Welsh Registry	2·18	—	—	—
Total Wales	70·55	0·587	0·114	0·650
Aberdeen	22·14	0·177	0·063	0·204
Dundee	14·90	0·078	0·106	0·165
Edinburgh	44·10	0·306	0·156	0·801
Glasgow	43·37	0·311	0·177	0·683
Heriot-Watt	10·46	0·103	—	0·171
St. Andrews	11·27	0·107	—	0·138
Stirling	8·07	0·067	—	0·117
Strathclyde	22·62	0·228	—	0·298
Total Scotland	176·93	1·377	0·502	2·577
Total Great Britain	1,184·72	9·000	3·000	19·717

* Other additions specified in Annex B for each university or college.

The UGC will be writing further to universities about equipment and furniture grant for 1985-86.

Following is the text of the general letter of guidance which the chairman of the UGC has sent to all universities. Copies of the annexes relating to grants for individual universities will be placed in the Library of the House.

RECURRENT GRANT 1985/86

I am writing to give the Committee's decisions about the distribution of recurrent grant for the academic year (AY) 1985/86 (August 1985 to July 1986). The figures for all universities are given in Annex A. Annex B gives details of grants specific to your own institutions.

THE LEVEL OF RECURRENT GRANT FOR 1985/86

2. Recurrent grant for 1985/86 was announced by the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 12 November 1984. He said:

> "Subject to Parliamentary approval, the total of recurrent grant for universities in the UGC list for the 1985/86 academic year will be £1,309m. This total has been set at a level consistent with previously planned economies and with the Government's 3 per cent. assumption for pay. To the extent that the academic year falls partly in the 1986/87 financial year the grant is subject to review in the normal way.

3. The grant of £1,309m. includes provision for the third year of the programme of support for new blood and IT posts. It is £7m. less than the cash figure which underlay the provisional grant distribution for 1985/86 which was announced in Circular Letter 14/84. The reason for this is that the Government has now adopted an assumption that provision for increases in expenditure on pay in the financial year 1985/86 (April 1985 to March 1986) should be limited to 3 per cent. The provision for increased expenditure on non-pay items in that financial year remains at 4 per cent. The provision for cost increases from FY 1985/86 to 1986/87 has not been made explicit but is thought to be nearer 3 per cent. than 4 per cent.

DISTRIBUTION OF RECURRENT GRANT FOR 1985/86

4. The Committee has decided to apply the £7m reduction in year which results from the Government adopting a pay factor of 3 per cent. for FY 1985/86 to the provisional distribution of grant announced in October. The grants of all universities have therefore been reduced on a pro-rata basis.

5. From the total recurrent grant the Committee is making provision for the following:—

	£m
(a) rates: provision for the October 1985 and June 1986 instalments of local authority rates grant (assuming a 6 per cent. increase in each of the financial years 1985/86 and 1986/87)	84
(b) capital-in-recurrent grants (see para 13)	6
(c) new blood and IT appointments to be made in 1985	5
(d) the cost of the Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme and of the Universities' Statistical Record etc.	5
(e) computer facilities for teaching	3
(f) items still under consideration (see para 9)	21

6. The amount to be distributed is therefore £1,185m. This includes provision for:—

(a) restructuring initiatives and new developments approved over the last two years or so, which are additional to those for which provision is now included in the baseline distribution: details are given in Annex B; and

(b) all new blood and IT posts approved by the Committee in the first two years of these programmes, provision being at the rate of £22,000 for each new blood (science) and IT post and £16,500 for each new blood (arts) post; universities are reminded that in addition to covering the full salary costs of the post holders, the annual grant for each new blood and IT post (which is added to the baseline recurrent grant although not separately identified after the first year) is also intended to contribute to the general research costs and overheads of the departments in which the appointments are made (see Circular letter 1/83).

7. Rates grant will continue to be paid separately because the increases in local authority rates still have an unpredictable and differential effect on individual universities. I expect to announce the Committee's decision on the rates grant before the end of July. Assistance in 1985-86 with the financing of capital projects costing less than £1m will again be made in the form of an allocation of recurrent grant additional to the block distribution, earmarked for capital purposes (see paras 10-12 below).

8. The sum of £3m set aside for computer facilities for teaching in universities will supplement the support being given by the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils under an initiative begun by FY 1984-85 and continuing in 1985-86. The Committee will be consulting the Computer Board on the use of the £3m and more details will be given about this in due course.

9. The Committee is concerned about the effect on universities' financial circumstances, both of the continuing squeeze on recurrent grant and of the variety of demands from Government for increased expenditure in particular areas. In the face of these pressures, the Committee has decided to distribute on a selective basis the uncommitted balance of £21m. (£4m of

the £25m referred to in Circular Letter 14/84 have now been committed, mainly for computer facilities for teaching.) It is not yet ready to take final decisions about the disbursement of this sum but the following are among the possibilities which it is considering:

(a) start-up expenditure to provide for an increase in the number of students in computer science and some aspects of engineering, if the Committee can obtain assurances that the level of grant in future years will be adequate to sustain such an initiative
(b) once-and-for-all expenditure (for example on library automation) which will lead to recurrent savings in future years
(c) encouragement of post-experience vocational education
(d) encouragement of industrially-sponsored research
(e) an increase in the amount already allocated for computer facilities for teaching
(f) an increase in the unit of recourse for particular subjects.

I shall be writing to give further details later in the year.

10. The same arrangements will be made for paying monthly instalments of recurrent grant in 1985-86 as in 1984-85.

CAPITAL IN RECURRENT ALLOCATIONS

11. In their replies to Circular Letter 16/83 of 1 November 1983, universities made clear that they valued the allocations of capital funds in recurrent grant for projects costing less than £1m, but would find them more useful if they could plan on a regular sum being available for the purpose. The Committee has therefore decided in future to allocate the greater part of the available funds with the rest of the recurrent grant. The amounts included are shown in Annex A.

12. The total (including the earmarked allocation) up to which universities may fund new capital projects from general income has been increased to 4 per cent. of recurrent grant, plus any part of the 3 per cent. allowance that was not used in any of the three preceding academic years. Expenditure in excess of this requires the prior agreement of the Committee.

13. The Committee has retained £6m from which to support specific projects costing less than £1m. Special allocations will in future be limited to large projects (normally costing not less than £200K) of exceptional urgency which universities could not reasonably be expected to finance from general income under the arrangements set out in the preceding paragraph. In general the Committee will be prepared to consider making special allocations to large projects only where the university is already committing a significant sum from general income to such projects. By "significant" the Committee means a sum equivalent to at least 2 per cent. of the university's annual recurrent grant for two years, including the year in which the special allocation is sought. Priority will be given to projects which show a saving in recurrent expenditure.

STUDENT NUMBERS

14. In its Strategy Advice the Committee described the financial difficulties which the universities were facing because the level of grant was not being maintained in real terms. The main reason for this was that the Government's pay factor had been less than the actual increases in salaries and wages, but there had also been cuts and unexpected new commitments. All the evidence since then is that, if anything, the universities' difficulties will increase. Although the Committee will review the position again when the Government has produced its Green Paper on the future development of higher education it considers that student numbers must continue to be restrained in line with the existing targets. However the relaxation applied to postgraduate student numbers which was announced in para 16 of Circular Letter 2/84 will continue; and universities' offers to admit additional undergraduates in 1984 and 1985 in response to Circular Letter 19/83, without additional grant, remain acceptable.

OTHER POINTS

15. The Committee is concerned about the decline in the provision of courses in building and related subjects at a time when the demand from industry for graduates in this area is increasing. It would not wish this decline to continue and invites universities to explore ways of securing the viability of such departments through a more comprehensive integration of the discipline with associated subjects such as architecture and building services as well as civil engineering. It further believes that, given the importance of the construction industry in the national economy and its increasing demands for graduates, universities might also try to divert some of the resources now available to civil engineering into the broader field of building engineering.

Yours sincerely

SIR PETER SWINNERTON-DYER

ENCS:

Educational Maintenance Grants

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many school children have received educational maintenance grants for each of the last five years; and what has been the value of those awards in each of the local authorities.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 December 1984, c. *85-90*]: The value of educational maintenance allowances for the London borough of Sutton for the last five years should read as follows:

	£
1978-79	12,192
1979-80	11,462
1980-81	5,457
1981-82	3,430
1982-83	3,964

A and O-level Passes

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list local education authorities in England in order of achievement according to *(a)* the percentage of school leavers obtaining two or more A-level passes and separately *(b)* the percentage of school leavers obtaining five or more O-level passes.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1985, c. *7*]: The information requested is shown in the tables:

Leavers from Maintained Schools in England
Examination attainments of School Leavers averaged over the academic years 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83

LEA	*Percentage with five or more higher grade passes at O-level or CSE**
Harrow	37·2
Barnet	35·7
Sutton	33·5
Buckinghamshire	33·1
Surrey	33·0
Kingston-upon-Thames	31·5
West Sussex	31·2
Hertfordshire	30·6
Bromley	28·8
North Yorkshire	28·5
Sefton	28·1
Richmond-upon-Thames	27·7
East Sussex	27·6
Gloucestershire	27·4
Stockport	26·9
Dorset	26·8
Oxfordshire	26·5
Solihull	26·3
Bury	26·3
Trafford	26·3
Wirral	25·8
Cambridgeshire	25·8

Mr. Renton: Yes.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date the British high commission in Sierra Leone received a letter from the Liverpool Eight law centre concerning an application on compassionate grounds for an entry clearance certificate; and when a reply will be sent.

Mr. Renton: The British high commission in Sierra Leone has been unable to trace any recent correspondence from the Liverpool Eight law centre.

UN Decade for Women

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the non-governmental organisations which will be consulted about the national statement to be prepared for the United Nations End of Decade for Women conference.

Mr. Renton: A list of non-governmental organisations which have participated throughout the work of the groups set up in 1982 in liaison with the Women's National Commission will be published with the groups' reports. These reports will be taken into account in preparing our national statement to the conference.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the financial and administrative support made available to each of the United Kingdom's working groups on the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Renton: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has made £200 available to each of 13 working groups to help meet the administrative costs of preparing their reports.

The Cabinet Office, through the Women's National Commission, has provided conference facilities and support services and has undertaken research work for the groups.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the grants made available to groups, individuals and research organisations to enable them to provide research necessary to answer the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire.

Mr. Renton: The work needed for the United Kingdom's response to the United Nations questionnaire was undertaken by the Government. Consequently, no such grants were made.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures have been taken within his Department to implement articles 91, 98, 101 and 105 of the 1975 world plan of action for the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Renton: *Article 91*

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is an equal opportunity employer. There are no barriers to employment on the grounds of sex or marital status and this is reflected in our recruitment literature. At the end of 1984 women formed 36 per cent. of the total complement of the Diplomatic Service.

Article 98

This article is not strictly applicable to the Government. Nevertheless, both male and female officers within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are treated in exactly the same way as regards work and promotion in all sectors, including management and policy-making.

Article 101

On 9 February 1984 we announced a programme of action on women within the Civil Service consisting of 70 items covering the whole spectrum of equal opportunities issues and including measures for part-time work and flexible working hours. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has appointed equal opportunities officers to provide a focal point for the promulgation of these policies. The equal opportunities officers are in regular contact with the trade unions.

Article 105

This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office follows national practice in such matters.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to promote policies designed to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: and what budget has been allocated for this.

Mr. Renton: We are fully committed to elminating discrimation and to promoting equal opportunities for women which we see as the most important objectives of the United Nations Decade. We have taken a range of initiatives during the Decade which contribute to these objectives. No fixed proportion of public funds has been allocated for this.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to evaluate the extent to which the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women have been achieved in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We are evaluating progress made in the achievement in this country of these goals as part of our preparations for the world conference of the Decade for Women, to be held in July in Nairobi. We shall be presenting a full report to the conference.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what research Her Majesty's Government commissioned prior to Her Majesty's Government's answering the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he has any plans to evaluate the extent to which the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women have been achieved; and if he will publish his findings;

(2) what steps he is taking to promote policies designed to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women; and what budget he has allocated to this;

(3) what research he commissioned prior to Her Majesty's Government answering the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire.

Mr. Renton: The United Nations questionnaire sought essentially factual information, which was obtained from the relevant Government Departments.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Revenue Departments (Enforcement Powers)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is yet in a position to announce the publication date of the final volume of the report of the committee under the chairmanship of Lord Keith of Kinkel which has been inquiring into the enforcement powers of the Revenue Departments; and when a decision will be made on the implementation of the proposals made in that volume.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have received volume 4 of the report, dealing with customs, excise duties and car tax. It will be published on 13 February 1985.

I welcome volume 4 of the report and I am grateful to the committee for its thorough examination of the enforcement powers of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and for the full consideration it has given to the representations and evidence which it received. The report will require careful study and I shall want to allow time for full discussion of the important issues that it has raised. A decision on implementation will be taken in the light of the views expressed on the committee's proposals for change and I would now like to invite interested parties to submit their comments on volume 4 direct to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. I would hope that they will do this by 30 September.

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures comparing the estimated net costs, after savings on means-tested benefit expenditure of *(a)* raising tax thresholds for married couples to equal the supplementary benefit scale rate for a family with four children aged four years, six years, 12 years and 15 years, plus £25 per week to allow for housing costs and *(b)* raising tax thresholds for married couples to equal the supplementary scale rate for a married couple, plus £25 to cover housing costs, and simultaneously increasing child benefit to equal the supplementary benefit scale rates for children, assuming in each case that the other personal income tax allowances are moved up in line.

Mr. Moore: If income tax allowances for 1985-86 were set, as specified, in relation to the supplementary benefit scale rates now current, the net costs in a full year at forecast 1985-86 levels of income are estimated at *(a)* £15 billion and *(b)* £4¾ billion. These costs are relative to indexation of allowances and thresholds by 4·6 per cent. and assume that relief for mortgage interest would continue on the present basis. The level of the married man's allowance in each case would be *(a)* £6,165 and *(b)* £3,675.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate, for each financial year since 1979-80, the costs of raising *(a)* the tax threshold and *(b)* the tax bands above the rate of inflation;

(2) if he will estimate the loss to the Exchequer in each year since 1979-80 resulting from the abolition of the higher-rate bands for income tax;

(3) if he will estimate the costs to the Exchequer each year since 1979-80 of the reduction in the basic rate from 33 per cent. to 30 per cent.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 January 1985, c. *310*]: If the 1978-79 income tax allowances and thresholds were indexed to 1984-85 levels by reference to the statutory formula and applied to the 1984-85 income tax base, the direct revenue effect would be an additional yield of about £4·3 billion in a full year.

The levels of the main allowances and thresholds, compared with the actual 1984-85 values, would be:

Personal allowances	*Indexed 1978-79 regime* £	*1984-85* £
Single and wife's earned income allowance	1,795	2,005
Married man's allowance	2,795	3,155
Additional personal allowance	1,000	1,150
Aged single allowance	2,370	2,490
Aged married allowance	3,785	3,955
Aged income limit	7,300	8,100

Rate of tax (percentage)	*Bands of taxable income (£)* *Indexed 1978-79 regime*	*1984-85*
25	0— 1,370	—
30	—	0—15,400
33	1,371—14,600	—
40	14,601—16,500	15,401—18,200
45	16,501—18,400	18,201—23,100
50	18,401—20,300	23,101—30,600
55	20,301—23,100	30,601—38,100
60	23,101—25,900	over 38,100
65	25,901—29,600	—
70	29,601—34,200	—
75	34,201—44,300	—
83	over 44,300	—

Investment Income Surcharge: Indexed 1978-79 regime

Bands of net investment income (£) *Non-aged*	*Aged*	*Rate of Surcharge (percentage)*
0—3,100	0—4,600	Exempt
3,101—4,200	4,601—5,600	10
over 4,200	over 5,600	15

Investment income surcharge was abolished in 1984-85.

Taking the 1984-85 income tax base as given, the direct revenue effects of reinstating the indexed 1978-79 tax regime can be broken down, as follows:

	Yield(+)/ Cost(−) *£ million*
Reductions in personal allowances	+1,590
Reintroduction of reduced rate band at 25p	−1,550
Increase in basic rate of 3p	+2,410
Reduction in basic rate limit of £800	+60
Changes in higher rate thresholds up to 60 per cent.	+400
Reintroduction of higher rates above 60 per cent.	+660
Reintroduction of investment income surcharge	+730
Total	4,300

In the table above, the effect of each change has been calculated on the assumption that each of the changes which precede it has already been made.

It is not possible to determine what incomes in 1984-85 would have been if the 1978-79 tax allowances and thresholds had been in force (after indexation) over all the intervening years.

The provision of similar information for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

HMSO Bookshops

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it remains Government policy to try to maintain a comparable standard of service at each of Her Majesty's Stationery Office bookshops in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes, as far as practicable. In particular, the tight time scales applying to the printing and publishing of many parliamentary papers means that they are usually available at Her Majesty's Stationery Office's bookshop at High Holborn sooner than at their other bookshops. In addition, the London bookshop serves a much bigger market than the other bookshops and can therefore maintain much larger stocks.

Tax Yields

Mr. Mudd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give *(a)* the actual yield in 1983-84 and *(b)* his latest estimate of the 1984-85 yield from the following (i) fuel duty, (ii) vehicle excise duty, (iii) car tax, (iv) value added tax on vehicle sales and *(v)* value added tax on sales of petrol and derv.

Mr. Hayhoe: Estimates are as follows:

	(£ million)	
	1983-84	*1984-85*
Road fuel duties	5,414	5,850
Vehicle excise duty	1,997	2,130
Car tax	703	700
VAT on vehicle sales	1,450	1,550
VAT on petrol and derv	875	1,000

Development Land Tax Act 1976

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to permit agreements under section 18 of the Development Land Tax Act 1976 to be revocable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: No legislation is necessary, for the existing notification procedure is not irrevocable. An owner who wishes to notify a further project within the qualifying time may already do so.

VAT (Live Theatre and Music)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what sums have been collected by the Treasury resulting from the imposition of value added tax on live theatre and music in each single year since 1979; and what considerations he has given as to its abolition.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is estimated that the revenue from VAT charged on admissions to theatres, concerts and similar live entertainment was of the order of:

	£ million
1979	15
1980	25
1981	25
1982	30
1983	35
1984	35

The Government considered the VAT treatment of the theatre and other live entertainment in the context of the third report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee (published March 1982) but concluded that it would be inconsistent with their policy for the tax to introduce a special relief in this area.

Pensions and Publications (Taxation)

Mr. Winnick asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received concerning *(a)* any tax changes in pension arrangements and *(b)* the possible imposition of value added tax on publications.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Economic Policies

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the economic indications by which he judges the success of his economic policies.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Budget Rebates)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any part of the rebates payable to the United Kingdom by the European Economic Community under the Fontainebleau agreement will be in the form of project finance.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. Under Fontainebleau, the United Kingdom's EC contributions will be reduced by abatement of our VAT payments.

Investment Income Surcharge

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* his latest estimate of the costs to the Exchequer of the abolition of the investment income surcharge in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 January 1985, c. *314*]: The direct revenue cost in respect of liability to investment income surcharge which would have arisen for 1984-85 is estimated at £30 million in 1984-85 and £280 million in 1985-86.

Child Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what level per week child benefit could be raised if the married man's tax allowance were reduced to the rate of a single man's for men below retirement age and the savings allocated to raising the levels of child benefit.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985, c. *592*]: If the changes had applied in 1984-85, the increase in child benefit would have been about £5·50 per week. It has been assumed that scale rates of supplementary benefit for dependent children would also have been increased by a similar amount.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Gas and Electricity Boards (Chairmen)

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairmen of the gas and electricity boards; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Whitney: We maintain frequent contact with the British Gas Corporation and the Electricity Council and electricity boards about ways of helping people on low incomes to avoid disconnection of their fuel supply. Recently I met the financial director of the London electricity board to discuss ways of improving liaison.

Board and Lodging Regulations

13. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the Social Security Advisory Committee to be able to report on the proposed changes in board and lodging allowances.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend received the Social Security Advisory Committee's report on these proposals last week.

21. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has now received about his proposals to change the regulations with regard to board and lodging allowances.

Mr. Newton: We have received a large number of representations about the proposals directly, and the Social Security Advisory Committee has received over 500.

26. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his most up-to-date estimate of the savings he expects to make as a result of the proposed changes in board and lodgings allowances.

Mr. Whitney: I would refer the hon. Member for my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 5 December 1984, at column *226*.

36. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations from charitable organisations providing board and lodging in support of the proposals in the draft regulations.

Mr. Whitney: A large number of representations have been made to us and to the Social Security Advisory Committee about the proposed changes. Many of these supported the general framework of the proposals in respect of residential and nursing homes, whilst expressing concern about particular details.

48. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the light of the representations received, he expects to be able to go ahead on time with the proposed changes in board and lodging allowances.

Mr. Whitney: We do not expect the representations made to the Social Security Advisory Committee to affect the timetable we have proposed.

Nuclear Burst

14. **Mr. Lewis Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect a one megaton nuclear burst at a height of 300 miles would have on the equipment and resources in his care.

Mr. John Patten: The resulting nuclear electromagnetic pulse could damage electronic and electrical equipment.

53. **Mr. Woodcock** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to harden vulnerable equipment in his charge against the effects of nuclear electronic-magnetic pulse.

Mr. John Patten: This is a general issue which is being considered interdepartmentally.

Unemployment Benefit

15. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much unemployed people are allowed to earn per day before losing benefit.

Mr. Whitney: An unemployed person can earn up to £2 per day before losing his unemployment benefit for that day. He can earn £4 per week before supplementary benefit is affected. Any excess over £4 reduces supplementary benefit by an equivalent amount.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons in Wales were debarred, during 1984, from receiving unemployment insurance benefit; and how this compares with figures for each of the five preceding years.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 January 1985, c. *306*]: I regret that the figures for 1984 are not yet available because of the effects of the recently ended Newcastle computer strike. However, the information for 1983 and the five preceding years is given in the table. This shows the numbers of unemployed claimants not receiving unemployment benefit on the day of the count in November each year, except 1981, for which the only available statistics relate to February. Numbers in column B include those claimants whose entitlement had not been determined or who had not completed their three-day waiting period, as well as those whose benefit was initially disallowed because of, for example, the voluntary unemployment provisions; some of these claimants would eventually receive unemployment benefit.

This information is taken from the "Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants", copies of which (from 1980 onwards) are in the Library.

Year	*A Unemployment benefit exhausted*	*B Other reasons*	*C Total*
1983	59,200	55,100	114,300
1982	61,500	50,900	112,400
1981	30,300	32,100	62,400
1980	26,700	33,200	59,900
1979	22,400	22,600	45,000
1978	23,300	25,100	48,400

Supplementary Benefit

16 **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the level of allowances payable for clothing, beds and bedding to pensioners and people on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: The amounts allowable for clothing and bedding are set out in schedules 1 and 2 to the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations 1981 (as amended) which are reproduced as appendix 7 of the supplementary benefit "S" manual—copies of both are in the Library. They are based on the results of an annual empirical study of prices obtaining in national chain stores and high street shops, and mail order catalogues. Awards for beds and mattresses are normally based on the cost of a locally obtainable new item.

40. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any recent

representations in relation to entitlement to single payments of supplementary benefit in the context of an industrial dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have not received any recent representations on this topic.

47. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence he has about the number of students drawing supplementary benefit and studying under the 21-hour or 12-hour rules.

Mr. Whitney: Records are not kept centrally but there are indications that the number has increased since the Youthaid organisation estimated a figure of about 10,000 in 1982-83.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the capital limit at which an individual is not eligible for supplementary benefit; and when the figure was last reviewed.

Mr. Whitney: The capital limit above which supplementary benefit is not payable is £3,000. It was raised to this level from 21 November 1983.

Mental Health Act 1983

17. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the implementation of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Implementation of the Mental Health Act is continuing satisfactorily.

General Medical Practitioners

18. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general medical practitioners there are now compared with 1979; and what difference this has made to the average list size.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At 1 October 1979, in England, the number of unrestricted principals in general medical practice was 21,357 and the average list size 2,286. The corresponding figures for 1 October 1983 are 23,254 and 2,116.

Thornton View Hospital, Bradford

19. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposed closure of Thornton View hospital in Bradford.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend decided in April 1984 that this unsatisfactory building should be closed and its services transferred to other hospitals in Bradford. Bradford health authority has stopped admitting patients and when the weather and other circumstances permit are transferring patients to other hospitals as suitable places can be made available.

Limited List Prescribing

20. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services from how many general practitioners he has received representations over the past three months concerning his proposals to restrict the drugs available on the National Health Service; and, of these, how many have been in support of his proposals and how many opposed to them.

29. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further representations he has received regarding his proposal to introduce a restricted list for National Health Service prescriptions.

38. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of representations his Department has now received in response to his proposals to limit the prescribing of certain drugs and medicines on the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central, (Mr. Fisher) and my hon. Friend the Member fof Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), earlier today.

45. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received from pharmacists concerning his proposals with regard to drug prescribing.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received representations from a wide range of individuals and organisations, including pharmacists and bodies representing the profession. We are considering all these views carefully.

55. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress made in his consultations on his recent proposals on the use of drugs in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The consultation period has now ended and we have received many helpful suggestions and comments from a wide variety of sources. We are now considering these comments and will announce our conclusions and the final content of the limited list as soon as possible.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many complaints he has received about the way in which doctors have represented to elderly patients the nature of his plans for limited list prescribing; and if he has any plans to discuss this matter with family practitioner committees.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Many people share the Government's concern at the way in which some doctors have alarmed their patients, including the elderly, with misleading statements about the consequences of limiting the drugs available under the National Health Service. I have made it quite clear to the British Medical Association that I regard its advice to doctors on this form of campaigning as unethical and falling short of desirable professional standards of behaviour. I have no plans to discuss the matter with family practitioner committees.

Sick Pay Scheme

22. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what method he is consulting employers on the extension of the sick pay scheme to 28 weeks.

Mr. Newton: The Department issued a consultation paper on 20 December 1984. Copies of the paper were sent to the Confederation of British Industry and to other organisations representing employers' interests.

51. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the savings to

employers that will result from them no longer having to pay national insurance contributions on payments under the statutory sick pay scheme.

Mr. Newton: We now estimate that compensation to employers for the cost of secondary contributions on statutory sick pay will amount to some £60 million in 1985-86.

NHS (Efficiency)

23. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the current level of efficiency within the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, but I am satisfied that substantial advances have been made over the past five years which have increased efficiency in the NHS. We are taking steps to ensure that this trend continues and develops, leading to further improvements in patient services.

Elderly Persons (Private Homes)

24. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in relation to registration of private homes for the elderly.

Mr. John Patten: Representations we have received range from criticisms that the new registration procedures are not tough enough to complaints that local authorities are applying them to inflexibly. As the new regulations came into operation as recently as 1 January it is too soon to judge their effectiveness, but we are keeping the position under review.

Draughtproofing Grants

25. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the number of draughtproofing grants he estimated to be unclaimed by individuals who are eligible for them; whether he proposes any publicity to increase awareness of the right to claim this grant; and whether he has any plans to extend the scope or amounts of these grants.

Mr. Whitney: No information is available on the number of unclaimed supplementary benefit single payments for draughtproofing. These payments are publicised in leaflets issued by our Department and by the Energy Efficiency Office and we are currently working together on further publicity material. There are no plans at present to amend the regulations relating to single payments for draughtproofing, although the whole question of special expenses of this type is something which we are looking at following the review of the supplementary benefit scheme.

Social Services Departments (Grant Allocations)

27. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations from local authorities about the effect of the rate support grant allocations to local social services departments upon their ability properly to fulfil their statutory duties.

Mr. John Patten: Although we have received no representations in the exact terms of the hon. Member's question, we have received representations from or on behalf of a few local authorities about the possible effects of limitations in the total resources available to them on their capacity to carry out their statutory duties.

Clothing (Single Payment)

28. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the recent submission by his officers to an appeal tribunal hearing an application for a single payment for clothing which suggested that children could be kept at home if no such grant were made.

Mr. Whitney: Guidance on the interpretation of the supplementary benefit regulations, including advice on submissions to social security appeal tribunals, is a matter for the Chief Adjudication Officer, while decisions on individual claims are made, in the first instance, by local adjudication officers, subject to the right of appeal.

Single payments of supplementary benefit can be made for, among other items, children's clothing and footwear under regulation 30 of the Single Payments Regulations where in the adjudication officer's opinion the absence of such a payment would lead to serious damage or serious risk to health or safety. Guidance on the application of regulation 30 is in paragraph 7546 of the "S" manual—a copy of which is in the Library. This advises that the fact that a child (whatever its state of health) has to stay away from school for a period while steps are taken to obtain the item will not in itself constitute a serious risk to health. It is not the intention that a child should remain at home indefinitely if the means of satisfying the need are not available from another source. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind I would be grateful if he would let me have the details.

Organ Transplants

30. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding organ transplants.

Mr. John Patten: The Government support organ transplantation, which can relieve suffering and prolong life. The transplantation of kidneys and of corneas are well established and very successful procedures, and good results are now also being obtained with heart and with liver transplants. The provision of facilities for organ transplantation is the responsibility of health authorities, but the Department has made substantial grants to the heart transplant programmes at Papworth and Harefield hospitals and to the liver transplant programme at Addenbrooke's hospital; liver transplantation will be funded as a supra regional service from April of this year. The Department also plays a major part in increasing public awareness of the benefits of organ transplantation and in promoting the donor card scheme; a publicity campaign was launched in February last year and has proved very successful. We shall be considering shortly whether further initiatives are needed to maintain its momentum. In the first nine months after the start of the kidney campaign kidney transplants increased by 35 per cent.

Surrogate Motherhood

31. **Mrs. Jill Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reach a conclusion concerning legislation on surrogate motherhood.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 14 January, at column *63*.

Regional Funding

32. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the progress being made to reduce the variations in regional funding as recommended by the Resource Allocation Working Party White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. The gap between the best and worst funded regions has narrowed from 22 per cent. in 1979-80 to 15 per cent. in the 1985-86 allocations announced on 20 December 1984 in the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), at columns *260-61*.

Cot Deaths

33. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he intends to make to the Knowelden report about cot deaths.

Mr. John Patten: I would refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 1 February, at column *361*.

Kidney Patients (Treatment)

34. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how soon he expects there to be commonality in the treatment of kidney patients in all the health regions of England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The levels of treatment facilities provided for kidney patients are a matter for health authorities. As stated in my reply to my hon. Friend on 28 January, at columns *62-63*, all regional health authorities have agreed to accept a target of treating at least 40 new renal patients per million population by 1987, irrespective of their current levels of treatment facilities which vary significantly. I hope, however, that these targets will be exceeded and that levels of service provision will continue to expand after 1987. Services in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Elderly Persons (Health Needs)

35. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision the Government are planning to meet the health needs of the elderly over the next three years.

Mr. John Patten: Over the next three years we shall spend an extra £2·4 billion on the National Health Service, and elderly people will benefit as major users of almost all health care services. The great majority of elderly people live at home and the central objective of all our policies for their care is to enable them to continue to do so for as long as possible. For this they need good community health services backed up by ready access to hospital facilities, especially the geriatric and psychogeriatric specialties. The National Health Service annual report 1984 described steady improvements since 1978 in all these services. As my right hon. Friend said in the foreword to the report, we intend that these improvements should continue.

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital Stanmore

37. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the future of the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital, Stanmore, Middlesex.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Between April and July last year we received 27 letters from hon. Members and approximately 72 letters from orthopaedic surgeons and members of the public expressing concern about the future of the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital, both its London and Stanmore branches. Since November 1984 we have received six letters from hon. Members and one from a member of the public expressing similar concern specifically about Stanmore. My hon. Friend has asked to meet me to discuss this subject and I have agreed to do so.

Abortions

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps have been taken to reduce the delays in the National Health Service which cause late abortions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following the publication last year of research by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists we are acting on its recommendations in several ways. In particular we shall be discussing with the National Health Service how some of the problems identified in the report can be tackled and consulting the Department of Education and Science on its recommendations about more counselling and health education for young people. We also commend the report's recommendations about the importance of early detection of pregnancy. This is one of the important messages in the first report of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee which we published last year and commended to health authorities.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the number of abortions per thousand girls at each age performed in England and Wales to resident girls aged 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 years, respectively, together with the rate of abortions for this age group for the years 1968 to 1984, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The available information is shown in the table:

Legal abortions: Rates per 1,000 population for girls aged 11-16 for 1968-1983, England and Wales, Residents

Year	Age at time of abortion						
	11-16	11	12	13	14	15	16
*1968	0·86	0·01	0·03	0·10	0·70	1·69	2·63
1969	1·34	0·01	0·02	0·12	0·89	2·62	4·47
1970	2·14	0·01	0·06	0·26	1·22	3·86	7·72
1971	2·82	0·01	0·05	0·22	1·58	5·09	10·83
1972	3·38	—	0·02	0·28	1·70	6·29	13·11
1973	3·77	0·01	0·04	0·30	1·96	6·56	15·06
1974	3·90	0·00	0·02	0·31	1·97	7·00	15·39
1975	3·93	—	0·03	0·31	1·97	7·36	15·17
1976	3·79	0·01	0·03	0·31	1·90	6·68	14·81
1977	3·86	0·00	0·03	0·26	2·04	6·93	14·41
1978	3·77	0·01	0·05	0·28	1·75	6·22	14·51
1979	4·02	0·02	0·05	0·29	1·72	6·65	15·21
1980	4·23	0·01	0·04	0·36	1·93	6·67	15·66
1981	4·17	0·02	0·03	0·26	1·81	6·76	15·15
1982	4·45	—	0·04	0·36	2·04	7·44	15·85
1983	4·72	—	0·02	0·35	2·35	8·03	16·45

* 1968 Figures relate to abortions carried out in the period from 27 April to 31 December only, expressed as an equivalent annual rate.

Beds (Single Payments)

41. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice is given to adjudication officers concerning single payments for beds; and whether this advice has recently been changed.

Mr. Whitney: Guidance to adjudication officers concerning single payments of supplementary benefit for beds is contained in paragraphs 7192 and 7195 of the "S" manual — a copy of which is in the Library. Adjudication officers are required to base any award they make for beds or mattresses on the cost of new items (unless the claimant is a squatter) although, if a claimant has already acquired or made arrangements for a secondhand item but not paid for it, the award will be based on the actual cost of the item. The cost of delivery can also be met. I understand that the Chief Adjudication Officer has not issued any new advice recently on this subject.

Heating Costs (Severe Weather Payments)

42. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the way in which single needs payments towards extra heating costs are applied; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: In addition to views expressed in the House we have received about 120 letters and one petition signed by about 100 people this year, including about 45 letters from hon. and right hon. Members, about the way in which payments for extra fuel in periods of exceptionally severe weather are given. As my hon. Friend said in his reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 18 January, at column *261*, the Chief Adjudication Officer will be looking at the guidance he has issued on the interpretation of the regulation governing entitlement to these payments in the light of experience. More generally, we are looking at the provision for meeting special expenses of this sort in the context of the supplementary benefit review.

46. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with this winter's operation of exceptionally severe weather payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 18 January, at column *261*.

Far Eastern Prisoners of War (Pension)

43. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will introduce a service pension or award, irrespective of any disability pension, for surviving far eastern prisoners of war.

Mr. Whitney: Whilst we have the greatest respect and sympathy for those who were prisoners-of-war in the far east, it would not be appropriate to introduce a pension or award for them solely because of that imprisonment. Those who suffered disablement as a result of service in the armed forces, including time spent as a prisoner-of-war, are eligible for a disablement pension under the war pensions scheme. Claims from ex-far eastern prisoners-of-war are given special and sympathetic consideration because of the particular circumstances of their captivity.

Mortgage Defaulters

44. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what special arrangements have been made by his Department to assist mortgage defaulters.

Mr. Whitney: Special arrangements exist to help borrowers who are receiving supplementary benefit. No additional benefit is available in respect of arrears but if a claimant's supplementary benefit assessment includes an amount for mortgage interest that sum, together with £1·45 towards the arrears, may be deducted from his benefit and paid on his behalf to the lender. This may be done if:

the claimant is in arrears because, in the opinion of the adjudication officer, he has failed to budget, and

he has not paid two of the mortgage payments due in the preceding twelve weeks, and

in the opinion of the adjudication officer, it is in the claimant's interests to institute direct payment.

The adjudication officer may also institute direct payment even if these criteria are not satisfied if in his opinion it is in the overriding interests of the claimant or his family to do so. No help may be given with mortgage capital repayments.

Cystic Fibrosis (Manchester)

49. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of treatment for cystic-fibrosis sufferers at the Royal Manchester children's hospital.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 21 January, at column *347*, to which I have nothing to add.

Severe Disablement Allowance

50. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the change of those previously receiving non-contributory invalidity pension and housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension to severe disablement allowance has been successfully accomplished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Yes. I would refer my hon. Friend to my hon. Friend's reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 21 January, at column *325*.

Social Security Reviews

52. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to report to the House the results of his four reviews into provision for retirement, help with housing costs, benefits for children and young people and supplementary benefit, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Members for Coventry, South East (Mr. Nellist) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) earlier today.

NHS (Maternity Units)

54. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it is his policy to support the continuance of the smaller National Health Service maternity units in peripheral areas.

Mr. John Patten: It remains our view that women should be encouraged to have their babies in hospitals which can offer the whole range of services necessary to deal with emergencies that may arise. It is for health authorities to plan the provision of services locally, having regard for the views of users; the social or geographical need for units at particular locations; the use made of different units; the existence of selective booking policies; and the availability of medical, midwifery, and ambulance services. If proposals to close a small maternity unit come to Ministers for decision, we will consider a case on its merits, having regard to all these factors.

Prestwich Hospital, Manchester (Drugs Dependency Unit)

56. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last had discussions with the North-West regional health authority about the drugs dependency unit at Prestwich hospital, Manchester.

Mr. John Patten: We have had no discussions with the North Western regional health authority on this matter. However, officials have had a number of discussions with the drugs dependency unit at Prestwich hospital, where we are funding research and two projects under the Government's central funding initiative on drug misuse.

NHS (Capital Schemes)

57. **Mr. Franks** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many major capital schemes in the National Health Service have been started on site since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: In England, 47 major hospital schemes each costing over £5 million have been started on site since 1979.

Wheelchairs

58. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to supply battery powered wheelchairs on National Health Service prescription for the chronically disabled.

Mr. Newton: I would refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 5 December 1984, at column *221*.

AIDS (Blood Donors)

59. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes in response to an article by Dr. Sheena Meredith in the 10 January issue of *Medical News*, a copy of which has been sent to him, reporting that as recently as 19 December 1984 some transfusion centres were not issuing donors with the leaflet explaining that homosexuals should not give blood; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have told regional health authorities to ensure that our revised leaflet "AIDS—Important New Advice for Blood Donors" is given on an individual basis to all donors. Stocks of this leaflet have been issued to regional transfusion centres.

Health Authorities (Membership)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many members on *(a)* Waltham Forest district health authority and *(b)* North-East Thames regional health authority are women; what proportion this is of the total members of the authority; and whether he is satisfied that the current level of female representation is in accordance with the aims of his Department's circular HC(81)6 of May 1981.

(2) how many ethnic minority representatives are members of *(a)* Waltham Forest district health authority and *(b)* North-East Thames regional health authority; what proportion this is of the total number of members on the authority; and whether he is satisfied that the current level of ethnic minority representation is in accordance with the aims of his Department's circular HC(81)6 of May 1981;

(3) how many members of *(a)* Waltham Forest district health authority and *(b)* North-East Thames regional health authority are over 65 years of age; what proportion this is of the total members of the authority; whether their appointments are exceptional in accordance with his Department's circular HC(81)6 of May 1981; and if he will supply the reasons in each case for such exceptional appointment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Five members of North-East Thames regional health authority are women and one

member is over 65. This represents 31 per cent. and 6 per cent. respectively of the authority's membership. So far as we are aware, no member of the regional health authority is a member of an ethnic minority.

We do not appoint members as representatives of particular groups, but we seek to ensure that members corporately cover the interests of the whole community.

The circular to which the hon. Member refers gives guidance on the appointment of members to district health authorities. My right hon. Friend does not make these appointments. They are the responsibility of the regional health auhority.

Viruses (Genetic Engineering)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the purpose of research into the genetic engineering of viruses at St. George's hospital, London, funded by the centre for applied microbiology and Research, Porton Down.

Mr. John Patten: We are not aware of this research. However, work is being undertaken by St. George's hospital, in collaboration with the centre for applied microbiology and research and funded by the Wellcome Trust, into cytomegalovirus — which is one cause of congenital malformation in children. The long-term objective is to develop an effective vaccine.

Porton Down (Research)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton Down, is involved in research in collaboration with others at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine into the effects of Lassa fever, Congo and Crimea haemorrhagic disease and Rift Valley fever; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: These are serious diseases of international importance, occurring mainly in the Third world. Work relating to the cure and prevention of such diseases is part of the international role of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and of the Public Health Laboratory Service Board, which is responsible for the centre for applied microbiology and research.

Residential Homes (Clothing Allowances)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those local authorities who use the differential between the personal allowance element in the supplementary pension in the local authority homes and the higher sum paid to those in private homes to buy clothing second-hand for their residents; and if he will list those local autorities which have a policy of only providing a choice of new clothing to residents in their residential homes and those local authorities who have no policy on this matter;

(2) if he will list for the latest available year *(a)* those local authorities in England which made budgetary provision for clothing allowances for residents of pensionalble age who are in local authority or private residential care homes, *(b)* how much each of those authorities budgeted and *(c)* the amount this represented per resident in receipt of a supplementary pension.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not held centrally. Under section 21(5) of the National Assistance Act 1948 local authorities are liable to provide all necessary amenities and requisities, including personal clothing, for those residents whom they support in residential accomodation, including sponsored residents in private and voluntary homes. It is for that reason that the personal needs allowance at the part III rate is lower than that for other state supported residents in private or voluntary homes, who are expected to buy their own clothing and footwear.

Women (Ill-treatment)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women seek medical aid each year for injuries which can be attributed to ill-treatment.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information is not available centrally.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many ambulance journeys were undertaken in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage of these were for non-emergency purposes.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of National Health Service patients carried by road in England in 1983 by type of service and distinguishes between emergency cases and other cases. In addition, the ambulance services arranged for the transport of some 18,000 patients by rail or air in 1983 but no information is available on the number of these which were non-emergency cases.

Ambulance services 1983—National Health Service patients carried by road
England

Type of service	*Number of patient journeys* (thousands)*		
	Total	*Emergency*	*Other cases*
Directly provided/ Agency	17,982	1,814	16,168
Supplementary (hospital car and other)	3,130	—	3,130
All road services— Number	21,112	1,184	19,298
Percentage of total		9	91

* "Patient journey" is the carriage of one patiem in one direction.

Children (Poisoning)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each of the last 10 years the number of children who have been fatally poisoned in the United Kingdom; and if he will disaggregate the figures by whatever information on age grouping that is available to him.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is given in the tables:

Number of deaths from poisonings to children aged under 15 years, by external cause of poisoning 1974 to 1983 (United Kingdom)

ICD cause (see key)		1974 Total ages 0-14	1975 Total ages 0-14	1976 Total ages 0-14	1977 Total ages 0-14	1978 Total ages 0-14	1979 Total ages 0-14	1980 Total ages 0-14	1981 Total ages 0-14	1982 Total ages 0-14	1983 Total ages 0-14
E850	Male	23	15	13	10	10	14	11	19	18	9
E869	Female	10	16	10	10	13	14	11	18	13	5
E890·1, 2 +	Male	..	..	..	..	..	36	49	35	34	44
E891·1, 2	Female	..	..	..	..	..	30	44	24	28	44
E950	Male	—	1	1	—	3	4	—	—	1	1
E952	Female	1	2	3	5	1	3	1	2	1	2
E962	Male	7	2	—	5	4	2	2	3	3	2
E962	Female	6	2	5	6	3	2	—	8	2	1
E980	Male	1	1	—	4	1	2	—	1	—	—
E982	Female	3	—	3	3	4	6	4	3	2	1

Numbers of deaths from poisonings to children aged under 15 years, by external cause of poisoning and age, 1974 to 1983 (United Kingdom)

1974

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	1	15	3	4
E869	Female	—	5	2	3
E890·1, 2 +	Male	..	..	..	..
E891·1, 2	Female	..	..	..	..
E950	Male	—	—	—	—
E952	Female	—	—	—	1
E962	Male	—	4	2	1
E962	Female	2	—	3	1
E980	Male	—	—	—	1
E982	Female	—	—	—	3

1975

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	—	11	—	4
E869	Female	1	11	2	2
E890·1, 2 +	Male	..	..	..	..
E891·1, 2	Female	..	..	..	..
E950	Male	—	—	—	1
E952	Female	—	—	—	2
E962	Male	—	1	1	—
E962	Female	1	1	—	—
E980	Male	—	—	—	1
E982	Female	—	—	—	—

1976

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	1	8	2	2
E869	Female	1	6	2	1
E890·1, 2 +	Male	..	..	..	..
E891·1, 2	Female	..	..	..	..
E950	Male	—	—	—	1
E952	Female	—	—	—	3
E962	Male	—	—	—	—
E962	Female	—	—	4	1
E980	Male	—	—	—	—
E982	Female	—	—	—	3

1977

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	—	8	—	2
E869	Female	1	5	3	1
E890·1, 2 +	Male	..	..	..	..
E891·1, 2	Female	..	..	..	..
E950	Male	—	—	—	—
E952	Female	—	—	—	5
E962	Male	—	1	3	1
E962	Female	1	1	3	1
E980	Male	—	1	—	3
E982	Female	—	1	—	2

1978

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	1	6	—	3
E869	Female	—	10	—	3
E890·1, 2 +	Male	..	..	..	..
E891·1, 2	Female	..	..	..	..
E950	Male	—	—	—	3
E952	Female	—	—	—	1
E962	Male	—	2	—	2
E962	Female	—	2	1	—
E980	Male	—	—	—	1
E982	Female	—	—	1	3

1979

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	2	5	2	5
E869	Female	1	5	1	7
E890·1, 2 +	Male	2	17	11	6
E891·1, 2	Female	3	11	8	8
E950	Male	—	—	—	4
E952	Female	—	—	—	3
E962	Male	—	—	2	—
E962	Female	—	1	—	1
E980	Male	—	1	—	1
E982	Female	—	1	—	5

1980

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	2	3	1	5
E869	Female	1	6	1	3
E890·1, 2 +	Male	1	28	14	6
E891·1, 2	Female	5	20	15	4
E950	Male	—	—	—	—
E952	Female	—	—	—	1
E962	Male	—	2	—	—
E962	Female	—	—	—	—
E980	Male	—	—	—	—
E982	Female	1	2	—	1

1981

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	1	6	2	10
E869	Female	1	3	4	10
E890·1, 2 +	Male	3	24	7	2
E891·1, 2	Female	3	15	3	3
E950	Male	—	—	—	—
E952	Female	—	—	1	1
E962	Male	1	2	—	—
E962	Female	—	2	5	1
E980	Male	—	—	—	1
E982	Female	—	—	2	1

1982

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	2	8	1	7
E869	Female	2	1	3	7
E890·1, 2 +	Male	5	18	6	5
E891·1, 2	Female	6	10	6	6
E950	Male	—	—	—	1
E952	Female	—	—	—	1
E962	Male	—	1	2	—
E962	Female	2	—	—	—
E980	Male	—	—	—	—
E982	Female	—	—	—	2

1983

ICD cause (see key)		Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
E850	Male	1	2	—	6
E869	Female	1	1	2	1
E890·1, 2 +	Male	1	26	10	7
E891·1, 2	Female	8	21	13	2
E950	Male	—	—	—	1
E952	Female	—	—	—	2
E962	Male	—	2	—	—
E962	Female	—	1	—	—
E980	Male	—	—	—	—
E982	Female	—	—	—	1

Key:

E850-E869	Accidental poisoning by all solid and liquid substances, gases and vapours.
E890·1, 2	Accidental poisoning by fumes and carbon
E891·1, 2	monoxide from fires in buildings.
E950-E952	Suicide by poisoning.
E962	Assault by poisoning.
E980-E982	Poisonings, undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted.
..	Not available.
—	

Liverpool Area Health Authority (Privatisation)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning proposed privatisation of services by the Liverpool health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received no recent representations on competitive tendering by the Liverpool health authority.

Patients (Treatment Costs)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the cost of unnecessary investigations ordered by doctors, of unnecessary operations carried out by surgeons and the continuing visits to out-patient departments by patients who are seen by junior doctors for no good reason; and if he will take steps to ensure that more patients are treated by senior doctors when they are referred to hospital.

Mr. John Patten: The need for, type and frequency of investigations and any operations considered necessary for the care or treatment of National Health Service patients are matters for the clinical judgment of the doctors responsible for each case. Those decisions will require an individual assessment of each patient and will be dependent on their condition at any one time, their symptoms or illness, and the clinician's requirements for information or diagnosis.

It is similarly for the consultant responsible for each case to determine how any treatment should be carried out;

by whom, and the frequency and timing of any follow-up out-patient clinic attendances. These decisions will also be tailored to the individual needs of each patient seen.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the present hospital waiting lists in the west midlands region for patients requiring operations for cataract, hip replacement, hernia and hysterectomy.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority who may be able to provide the requested information.

Hospital Treatment (Payment)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that road accident victims, private patients and overseas visitors pay for their treatment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 14 December 1984, at column *668*, to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

UN Decade for Women

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he has taken to implement articles 111, 112, 117 and 132 of the 1975 world plan of action for the Decade for Women.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The concepts outlined in articles 111, 112 and 117 are implicit in the organisation of health services in this country, and are reflected in guidance issued by our Department. The implementation of article 132 is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the research he has commissioned on the subject of women's health subsequent to Her Majesty's Government's reply to the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is satisfied with the range of childcare facilities described in Her Majesty's Government's answer to question A3.2.6 of part II of the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will revise Her Majesty's Government's response to question B1.1 of part II of the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire, in view of the deaths recorded among women due to cancer of the breast.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are currently sponsoring a major research programme to evaluate the effectiveness of breast screening for early detection of cancer. The preliminary results of this research are expected in 1988, and it would not be appropriate to revise the response to question B1.1 of part II of the United Nations' questionnaire until then.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the extent of women's participation in decision-making in the health services has altered since Her Majesty's Government's response to questions B4.1 and B4.2 of part II of the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire was sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Doctors (Prescribing Habits)

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, further to the reply to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 7 February, to what percentage level above the local average level the word "significantly" applies; and what is the average saving per general practitioner, at 1984 prices, per annum in each of the next two succeeding years after the general practitioners have received the detailed analyses.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Detailed analyses are prepared on doctors whose prescribing costs are 25 per cent. or more above the local average. These doctors are visited by our regional medical officers who discuss prescribing practice and related topics with them. It is not possible to identify actual savings, but about 80 per cent. of doctors who are identified and visited in this way subsequently keep their prescribing costs below the limit for special investigation.

Unemployed Persons (Statistics)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take in response to the recent publication of statistics from the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys' longitudinal study showing a 20 per cent. excess of death in unemployed men and their wives.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mental Health Foundation (Exhibition)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the Mental Health Foundation to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. John Patten: We are pleased to support such an exhibition and understand that arrangements have been made for 4 to 8 March. We have a high regard for the Mental Health Foundation's work with mentally disordered people.

Birth Statistics

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the number of births per thousand girls at each age in England and Wales to resident girls aged 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 years, respectively, together with the rate of births to this age group for the years 1968 to 1984, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information is given in the table; no detailed analysis of births occurring during 1984 is yet available.

This information on live births cannot be compared to information on the number of abortions performed in

England and Wales to resident girls, according to their age at the date of abortion, as provided in my reply to another question today from the hon. Member. This is because live births occur on average nine months after conception whereas abortions take place on average three months after conception. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has, however, published detailed statistics on abortions and births combined, analysed by the age of the mother at conception, and these can be found in OPCS Monitor No. FM1 84/6 dated 17 July 1984, a copy of which is in the Library.

Live births: Rates per 1,000 population for girls aged 11 to 16 for 1968-83, England and Wales Residents.

Year of occurrence	*Age of mother at time of birth*						
	11	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*11-16*
			Births per 1,000 girls at each age				
1968	—	0·01	0·08	0·60	3·35	16·15	3·34
1969	0·01	0·03	0·10	0·65	3·82	16·83	3·54
1970	0·01	0·03	0·07	0·68	3·65	17·09	3·52
1971	—	0·01	0·09	0·68	3·80	18·28	3·60
1972	—	0·01	0·08	0·70	3·92	18·95	3·72
1973	—	0·02	0·10	0·76	3·93	17·92	3·56
1974	—	0·02	0·06	0·71	3·60	15·94	3·19
1975	—	0·01	0·09	0·61	3·45	13·22	2·73
1976	—	0·01	0·09	0·55	3·08	11·88	2·48
1977	—	0·01	0·05	0·53	2·76	11·49	2·41
1978	0·01	—	0·05	0·48	2·95	11·33	2·44
1979	0·01	0·01	0·07	0·51	2·81	10·86	2·39
1980	0·02	0·02	0·05	0·48	2·59	10·58	2·36
‡1981	0·02	—	0·05	0·48	2·40	10·16	2·29
1982	—	0·03	0·04	0·50	2·42	9·94	2·25
1983	—	0·01	0·06	0·49	2·92	10·25	2·36

* The figures may include a very small number of births to girls whose usual residence was outside England and Wales.
† All rates have been based upon estimates of the resident population revised following the 1981 census. Rates per 1,000 have not been calculated where there is only one recorded birth in the age group.
‡ The 1981 figures are estimates based upon a 10 per cent. sample of births; small numbers are therefore subject to particular uncertainty.

Newcastle Office (Dispute)

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the cost of the dispute at the Newcastle central office of his Department.

Mr. Fowler: We estimate that additional administrative costs in 1984-85 arising from the dispute and the recovery programme will be some £143 million, representing mainly additional payments to the Post Office and the costs of extra manpower and overtime in local and central social security offices and in unemployment benefit offices. These costs will be offset to some extent by administrative savings elsewhere; the excess will be charged to the Reserve.

The greater part of the costs will be recovered from the national insurance fund, and some allowance was made for this in the estimates given in the report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) (No. 2) Order 1984 (Cmnd. 9386). In addition, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for DHSS administrative and miscellaneous services Class XII, Vote 5, will be increased from £720,108,000 by £23,474,000 to £743,582,000.

Postgraduate Hospitals

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how the addition of the specialist postgraduate hospitals to the responsibilities of district health authorities affected the application of the formula of the resource allocation working party to the districts concerned; what will be the position when the protected funding of the hospitals ends; and if he will ensure that there is continued recognition of the national role of these hospitals;

(2) whether any restrictions were placed on the spending of the protected funding of the postgraduate London hospitals now run by district health authorities; whether the protected funding is being fully spent by the hospitals for which it was intended; whether and for which hospitals there has been any borrowing by the district health authority; whether there are plans to maintain the future funding of these specialist hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 December 1984, c. *475*.]: When the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), announced the transfer of the management of four postgraduate hospital groups to district health authorities, he said that for a period of three years their funds would be separately identified in allocations to the regional and district health authorities concerned. The authorities are North-East Thames regional health authority and Bloomsbury health authority for the Royal National Orthopaedic hospitals, the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear hospitals and the St. Peter's group of hospitals; South-East Thames regional health authority and West Lambeth health authority for St. John's hospital.

Funds have been separately identified by both the Department and the regions for the three years 1982-83, 1983-84, and 1984-85. In the case of St. John's, all the separately identified moneys have been allocated to the hospital.

In the case of the three hospital groups transferred to Bloomsbury, I understand that the district health authority has applied its policy of seeking efficiency savings to those hospitals. This has reduced their revenue by about £700,000 up to 1984-85, but these reductions in revenue

have to be considered against the major capital investment already under way for providing the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital with its own discrete accommodation in the Middlesex hospital, the proposed relocation of the St. Peter's group and the proposed development of the Gray's Inn road branch of the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear hospital.

The special arrangements end, as envisaged, on 31 March. Thereafter normal allocation procedures apply and it will be for the responsible authorities to decide on levels of funding taking account of service needs, resources and maintenance of the hospitals' national postgraduate role. I do not envisage any further form of central protection, but the authorities are free to apply to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for supra-regional funding for any part of the hospitals' services if they believe those services meet the criteria for such funding. If the authorities consider that the normal allocation procedures, including those for supra-regional service funding, do not match any special needs of these hospitals, then we will be happy to consider any representations. The overriding aim is to ensure the proper, orderly, integration of the services and management of these postgraduate hospitals into their health authorities in a way that provides maximum benefit to patients and preserves their national role in service, teaching and research. I have every reason to believe that all parties involved will continue to work together to achieve these objectives.

Prescribed Medicines

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the National Health Service budget was represented by the cost of prescribed medicines in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 February 1985, c. *464*]: I regret that the table produced in my earlier reply contained an error. The table should read:

The proportion of total National Health Service expenditure attributable to the cost of drugs (excluding the cost of dispensing) was as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Per cent.*
1965	10·1
1970	10·9
1975	7·8
1980	10·3
1984	10·9

Note: Over the period there were small differences in the way the basic information was assembled.

Mental Patients

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the criteria for private hostels being accepted by his Department for receiving ex-mental hospital patients;

(2) if patients in mental hospitals or their families are consulted about transfers from hospitals to private homes.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1985, c. *530*]: Patients leaving mental illness hospitals have the same right as anybody else to choose where to live. When health and social services authorities are planning rehabilitation and aftercare arrangements for a patient prior to discharge, this should be done jointly and in full consultation with the patient and, where appropriate, his or her family. The full range of community resources, including residential care in homes and hostels, should be considered, as should options for financial support through National Health Service, local authority and social security funding.

The Department is not responsible for accepting or rejecting individual homes, but the Registered Homes Act 1984 has tightened the conditions for the registration and inspection of such homes by local social service authorities. We commended a code of practice for residential care, "Home Life", to registration authorities last year; it contains a section specifically about mentally ill people and their rehabilitation.

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the nationalised industries, non-governmental organisations and agencies for which his Department either has responsibility or provides funding, as well as those sections of his Department, which provide services to the general public or to private organisations; and if he will indicate separately those which at present *(a)* charge no fees, *(b)* charge fees which do not fully cover the costs of providing those services, *(c)* charge fees which exactly cover the costs of providing those services and *(d)* charge fees which more than cover the costs of providing those services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985, c. *607-8*]: The tables list, in relation to the four categories identified, the organisations, agencies and parts of our Department which provide services (table one) to the general public or (table two) to private organisations.

In most instances an entry is appropriate under more than one column in respect of different services provided by the body in question or because a particular service may be provided free or in return for payment.

Table One: Services to Individuals

Body or Bodies	*(a) No fees charged*	*(b) Less than full costs*	*(c) Full costs exactly recovered*	*(d) Greater than full costs recovered*
Health authorities	×	×	×	
Family practitioner services	×	×	×	
Welfare Foods	×	×		
Youth Treatment Centres		×		
Local authority personal social services	×	×		
Polish hostels and resettlement centres		×		
Artificial Limb and Applicance Centres				

Table Two: Private Organisations

Body or Bodies	*(a) No fees charged*	*(b) Less than full costs*	*(c) Full costs exactly recovered*	*(d) Greater than full costs recovered*
Health authorities	×		×	
Public Health Laboratory Service	×	×	×	
National Radiological Protection Board		×	×	
National Biological Standards Board		×		

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 February 1985

TRANSPORT

Bury St. Edmunds (Roads and Rail)

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to evaluate the relative cost-benefits of public investment in *(a)* roads and *(b)* railways between London and Bury St. Edmunds.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department would use cost-benefit techniques to appraise schemes where road and rail are direct alternatives, serving exactly the same need. Such cases are rare.

A38 (Saltash Bypass)

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet reached a decision about the proposed A38 road improvements, Saltash bypass section, following the public inquiry; and when it is proposed work will commence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As my hon. Friend knows, a public inquiry was held last year into this proposal. We have received the inspector's report, and my right hon. Friends hope to be able to announce their decision within the next few weeks.

Dial-a-ride Service

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on the discussions he has had with London borough councils about the future status and funding of the dial-a-ride service.

Mrs. Chalker [*pursuant to her reply* 12 February 1985, c.*114*]: Officials from my Department have had a useful preliminary meeting with a number of representatives of the London boroughs about the future of special services such as dial-a-ride.

It is too early to give details about how the operational and funding arrangements will operate in practice. We shall be holding further discussions with the boroughs on how best to ensure that dial-a-ride develops along the most efficient and cost-effective lines.

ENVIRONMENT

Roancabin Ltd.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total value of the contracts involved in the supply of substandard portable accommodation units supplied to the Property Services Agency in Northern Ireland by Roancabin Ltd.

Mr. Gow: The total value of the 11 contracts placed with J. McAvoy Limited (of which I understand Roan Manufacturing Company and Roancabin Limited to be subsidiaries) for the supply of portable accommodation units between 1 January 1983 and 29 September 1984 was £147,875·00 (plus VAT) for 48 units. The total value of the four contracts involving the supply of substandard units was £31,630·00 for 10 units.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action has been taken against Roancabin Ltd. in regard to the supply of substandard portable accommodation units supplied to the Property Services Agency in Northern Ireland by Roancabin Ltd.

Mr. Gow: The manufacturer was required to replace the units at his own cost. Discussions are taking place as to the circumstances in which the omissions occurred.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide full details as to the number of substandard accommodation units supplied to the Property Services Agency in Northern Ireland by Roancabin Ltd.

Mr. Gow: Ten of the units originally supplied did not meet fully the specification.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new jobs were created at each of the enterprise zones in the United Kingdom during 1984.

Sir George Young: Information on employment in enterprise zones is being gathered but is not yet available.

Appleford and Sutton Courtenay (Land Transfer)

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will confirm the transfer of land from Appleford and Sutton Courtenay to the town of Didcot as recommended by the Boundary Commission.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend received the Local Government Boundary Commission's report on 15 January, and the objection period does not end until 26 February. If my right hon. Friend decides to implement the proposals, the aim would be to bring the new arrangements into effect on 1 April 1986. My noble Friend Lord Avon is writing to my hon. Friend to explain the procedure.

Housing Associations (Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of housing subsidies paid by the Housing Corporation to each housing association in Cumbria for the last month for which statistics are available.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation finances the development costs of housing association projects within an approved development programme agreed by my right hon. Friend. The value of projects in Cumbria which were approved by the Housing Corporation in January 1985, the latest month for which information is available, is as follows:

	£ thousands
Fair rent (rehabilitation)	
Impact Housing Association	24
Low-cost home ownership	
Red Dial Housing Association	49
Major repairs	nil

Paints (Damage to Marine Life)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the evidence of damage to marine life and shellfish culture, he intends to ban the use of tributyl tin anti-fouling paints.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has today published a consultation paper covering draft regulations under section 100 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which would impose controls on the supply and use of such paints. Their general effect would be to prohibit the supply of such paints to private boatowners, and their use by boatbuilders and repairers on boats less than 12 m long. copies of the consultation paper and of the draft regulations have been placed in the Library of the House.

Housing Investment Programme (Allocations)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have made representations to his Department regarding their 1985-86 housing investment programme allocations.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from local authorities about their 1985-86 housing investment programme allocation. The representations have been made in various ways to Ministers and officials—in correspondence, at meetings and during visits. No central record is kept of the number.

North-West Region Emergency Committee

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the powers of the North-West Region Emergency Committee, the names and functions of members of the committee and the circumstances under which the committee would assume these powers.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer to the reply to a similar question which I gave to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyce) on 11 February, at columns 35-36.

Acid Deposition

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any other studies available to him, apart from those being carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, on the relationship between sulphur dioxide emissions and the acidity of rainfall in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom Review Group on Acid Rain, a committee of scientists established by my Department in 1980 to review available data, published a major report on acid deposition in the United Kingdom in December 1983 and continues to meet regularly.

My Department is also funding work at AERE Harwell on chemical reactions producing acid rain and on computer modelling of acid deposition, and at Warren Spring Laboratory on the collection and co-ordination of rainfall composition measurements. In addition, my Department has close ties with the major research programme on acid deposition (both experimental and theoretical) being undertaken by the Meteorological Office and is kept informed of other research results in this field such as the work being carried out by the Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory, Pitlochry on behalf of the Scottish Office.

Pollution

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 20 December 1984, *Official Report*, column 270, he will specify the unusual climatic factors in the winter of 1983-84 involved in damage to spruce trees.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that the winter of 1983-84 was marked by unusually high winds and frequent alternation of cold and milder weather — conditions which, the Forestry Commission advises, would subject spruce trees to stress. However, it is still too early to say how far weather conditions, rather than other factors, were a cause of the damage prescribed in my reply of 20 December 1984.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the assumptions on which are based his estimates of the number of job losses likely to result from the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Sir George Young: The assumptions were set out in my right hon. Friend's statement in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) on 30 November, at columns 611-14.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Telecom

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cases of multiple application for British Telecom shares were reported to the Government; what court action has been initiated; if the same mechanisms were used in the overseas markets to check for multiple applications; how many were identified; and what procedures were applied to avoid multiple applications being made in the form of separate applications in the United Kingdom and on the overseas markets.

Mr. Butcher: The examination of applications for BT shares under the United Kingdom offer for sale led to some 6,600 applications being rejected as suspected multiple applications. We are considering whether further action would be appropriate in respect of certain of these applications. No similar measures to identify multiple applications were adopted in the overseas share issues because of the different way in which the shares were distributed. The shares were not allocated, as in the United Kingdom, on the basis of direct public applications but were sold by the Government to the overseas underwriters who allocated them to selling groups of investment banks, dealers and brokers. In accordance with market practice it was up to the selling groups, rather than the vendor, to effect the sale and distribution of shares amongst their clients.

Steps were taken to ensure that shares available under the United Kingdom offer for sale were not offered to institutional investors or selling groups in overseas markets where separate share issues were being made; and United States and Canadian nationals were specifically prohibited from applying for shares in the United Kingdom offer for sale under the terms of the United Kingdom prospectus.

Fibre Optics and Optoelectronics Schemes

Mr. Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he will make a statement describing the expenditure so far incurred on and the results achieved from the fibre optics scheme and the joint optoelectronics research scheme;

(2) whether he is satisfied that the fibre optics scheme and the joint optoelectronics research scheme are creating an adequate supply infrastructure within British industry;

(3) whether he is satisfied that the firms involved in the fibre optics scheme and joint optoelectronics research scheme have succeeded in creating a set of targeted markets;

(4) whether he is satisfied that the lessons learnt from the failure of British industry to exploit liquid crystal technology have been successfully applied by those involved in the fibre optics scheme and joint optoelectronics research scheme.

Mr. Butcher: Under the fibre optics and optoelectronics scheme £44 million has been committed to 128 projects in 40 companies involving research and development and production investment of £188 million. Most of the projects have yet to be completed, but major successes can already be identified, such as:

the establishment of advanced production capacity for optical fibre and cable to meet the needs of the home telecommunications market and export markets;

the creation of a United Kingdom capability in fibre optic-based under-sea communications;

the establishment of Europe's foremost capability in semiconductor lasers;

the building up of a wide variety of infrastructure activities —special optical fibres, process equipment, instrumentation, lasers, detectors, connectors, and other components;

support for the development of several successful optoelectronic products, eg liquid crystal displays for airports, infra-red imagers for emergency services, intruder alarms;

assistance to a variety of small companies (including four start-ups) many of which have become well established on world markets;

encouragement of several large groups to diversify into optoelectronics.

In the area of display technology, the United Kingdom is a major world supplier of base material. Under FOS, several projects for the development of displays are being supported, most of which lead to commercially successful products, for example, airport displays, large TV displays for outdoor public events. However, I am disappointed that United Kingdom industry has generally not been more successful in world markets. A further initiative on basic research in solid state displays under the joint optoelectronics research scheme, in conjunction with the Alvey programme, has recently been launched and proposals are currently being considered.

Under JOERS £25 million has been made available for pre-competitive, collaborative research. There has been a rapid take up of funds and £9·5 million of DTI's allocation of £10 million has been committed, with industry matching this sum; the Science and Engineering research council has already had to extend its allocation of £5 million to allow a commitment of £5·3 million. Twenty-one projects are being supported involving 15 companies and 26 universities.

Most projects have been running for over a year, but it is too early to assess the results. However, it is clear that considerable momentum has been generated and the very high quality of the proposals indicates that the United Kingdom's research capability in optoelectronics has been substantially strengthened.

As far as the market orientation of the scheme is concerned, under FOS only those projects with a definite market focus and promise of exploitation are considered for support. On the other hand, JOERS involves basic research of a type which it is generally too early to identify the precise products and markets in which the results will be exploited. However, as far as possible, support is tied to evidence of the intention to exploit and the prospects for exploitation have been maximised by giving companies the ownership of the resulting intellectual property.

Bureaux de Change

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce measures to regulate trading practices in bureaux de change.

Mr. Butcher: The Government hope to make an announcement to the House on this matter shortly.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total number and value of offers of regional assistance made to companies in west Cumbria travel-to-work areas, in Cumbria as a whole, in the north-west region and in the northern region for the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Trippier: In November 1984, 20 offers of assistance totalling £1·44 million were made under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 towards projects in the north-west region. Of these one offer totalling £45,000 was made in the west Cumbria travel-to-work area but not other offers were made to companies in Cumbria. 13 offers totalling £2·40 million were made towards projects in the north-east region.

Footcuffs (Exports)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many footcuffs have been exported to Kenya in the last year; and if any orders for such goods for future delivery are known to his Department.

Mr. Butcher: Since the imposition of export licensing control in February 1984 no licences for the export of leg irons (footcuffs) have been issued for Kenya or any other destination. I know of no orders for future delivery of such goods.

Small Firms

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, presently exist in each region of the United Kingdom;

(2) how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, went out of business in each region of the United Kingdom during the course of the last 12 months;

(3) how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, were set up in each region of the United Kingdom during the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Trippier: The information available by region for the years 1980 to 1983 was published in *British Business*,

2 November 1984, page 352. Later estimates by counties within regions for the same years were published in *British Business* on 18 January 1985. Copies of the articles were placed in the Library. Estimates for 1984 are not yet available.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the full list of Government schemes which exist to assist small firms; when each scheme was started; and when it is due to finish.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 22 January at col *367*. Only a small number of schemes are launched with a specific closing date. One such scheme was the small engineering firms investment scheme introduced by this Department on 30 March 1982. Demand was so great that the closing date for the scheme had to be brought forward to 28 May 1982. A second such scheme was introduced on 28 March 1983 and closed on 30 September 1983. The loan guarantee scheme for small firms was introduced on a pilot basis on 1 June 1981 for three years. It was initially extended for a further period until 31 December 1984, and has subsequently been extended for a further year until 31 December 1985. On 26 November 1984 my Department launched a £100 million programme of support from the European regional development fund and the United Kingdom Government to provide aids for small firms in United Kingdom areas affected by the decline of the steel, shipbuilding and textile industries. Depending upon take up of funds, applications will be accepted up to 31 December 1988.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, he has assisted by regional development grant, selective financial assistance or any other financial assistance in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons accused of scheduled offences on the basis of accomplice witnesses' testimony are currently awaiting trial in Northern Ireland; how many persons have been convicted; how many persons have been acquitted of such crimes after having been charged either wholly or partially on the basis of accomplice witnesses' testimony; and how many persons have been released following the retraction of testimony by accomplice witnesses in each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott: On 28 January 1985, 112 persons were on remand or had been returned for trial for scheduled offences in cases in which it was intended that an alleged accomplice would give evidence for the Crown.

The other information is not available in the form requested, but during the period from 1 January 1980 to 28 January 1985, 143 people were convicted in trials where accomplice evidence was tendered, 78 people were acquitted in such trials, and 123 people were released following the retraction of accomplice evidence.

Application Forms (Education Details)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will introduce application forms for all vacancies in the Civil Service and public authority advertised vacancies which will not require information on schools attended at primary and post primary level; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: No. As has already been announced, candidates for posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service are to be invited to record details of their primary education. There will be accompanying advice that answers will be treated as strictly confidential, that the information will be used only for the Civil Service Commission's monitoring of recruitment and that the absence of a response will not be taken into consideration in the selection of candidates for appointment.

Full details of second and third level education will continue to be required where reference to the institutions concerned is a feature of the recruitment process.

Recruitment to posts in public authorities is a matter for those authorities themselves.

Ministers (Overnight Stays)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many overnight stays he and each of his Ministers spent in the Province during the month of January.

Mr. Hurd: The information is as follows:

	Number
Secretary of State	12
Dr. Rhodes Boyson	12
Mr. Nicholas Scott	4
Mr. Christopher Patten	5
Lord Lyell	8

Prescriptions

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the increase in the number of prescriptions issued for all drugs in Northern Ireland in the last 10 years; how much of that increase is attributable to prescriptions for tonics, cough remedies, antacids, laxatives, minor analgesics and vitamins; and what saving is expected to accrue from controlling the issue of prescriptions for such drugs, as outlined in the Government's proposals.

Mr. Chris Patten: The available information is as follows:

Prescriptions issued by General Practitioners (Prescribing Doctors)

	1976	*1983*	*Change*
All Drugs	11,496	13,152	+1,656
Tonics	57	50	−7
Cough Remedies	879	860	−19
Antacids	293	296	+3
Laxatives	181	254	+73
Minor Analgesics	709	843	+134
Thousands vitamins	280	342	+62

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prescriptions for benzodiazepine tranquillisers and sedatives were issued in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years by *(a)* general practitioners, *(b)* hospital doctors, *(c)* appliance contractors and *(d)* dispensing doctors in the National Health Service; if he will publish this information in the *Official Report* tabulated for each health board area; and what is their aggregate net ingredient cost and their total cost, including discount on costs and payments to pharmacists.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is available only in respect of those prescriptions issued by general practitioners for sedatives and tranquillisers and this is as follows, together with details of the net ingredient costs of this group of drugs:

Year	*Number of prescriptions (000)*	*Net ingredient cost (£000)*
1979	793	799
1980	749	863
1981	758	1,002
1982	749	1,099
1983	697	1,079

It is estimated that the net ingredient cost comprises approximately 77 per cent. of the total cost.

The information on a health and social services board basis is not readily available.

Limited List Prescribing

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with organisations, individuals and members of the nursing and medical profession in Northern Ireland to ascertain their views on the Government's proposed regulations on the range of prescribable drugs under the National Health Service.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have discussed the proposals with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland and Galen Limited, of Craigavon, the only two interests who requested a meeting.

Security

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take the necessary steps to sustain the full fabric of its society for the Protestant community in areas close to the frontier with the Irish Republic where the Irish Republican Army's campaign to murder Protestants has disadvantaged it.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1985, c. *70*]: The Government's security, economic and social policies are intended to maintain, and where possible improve the quality of life for the whole community in Northern Ireland. If the hon. Gentleman has any particular suggestions, I hope he will let me know.

Farmers

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has recently considered how farmers, who were living close to the frontier with the Irish Republic and were forced by Irish Republican Army activity to abandon their holdings in the mid-1970s, can now be compensated for loss of earnings in the same way as other businesses were at that time.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1985, c. *70*]: No. Compensation for loss of earnings is payable only to employees.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to assist farmers, who were displaced by Irish Republican Army activity from their holdings close to the frontier with the Irish Republic, to return to their properties; and whether he believes their safety can now reasonably be assured.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1985, c. *70*]: Displaced farmers wishing to reinstate their holdings would be eligible for specialist advice from the Department of Agriculture and priority could be given to applications for farm grants and subsidies. The security forces try to assist everyone at risk; if any farmer has a particular concern about his personal safety the Royal Ulster Constabulary would be glad to advise him.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Employment Schemes

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people are now employed in schemes funded directly or indirectly by his Department; and what is the cost of these schemes;

(2) how many people are now receiving training in schemes funded directly or indirectly by his Department; and what is the cost of these schemes;

(3) if he will list the names of the schemes administered or funded by his Department which provide training; and what is the average cost per head for each person trained;

(4) if he will list the names of the schemes administered or funded by his Department which provide employment; and what is the average cost per head for each person employed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: It is estimated that about 360,000 people were provided with employment and over 330,000 were receiving training on schemes administered by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission at the end of December 1984.

The estimate provision for employment schemes for 1984-85 is £1,045 million and for training schemes it is £1,065 million (excluding administration costs).

The approximate gross costs per filled place or per person supported on the main schemes administered or funded by my Department or the Manpower Services Commission which provide employment or training are:

	£
Full-Time Job Release	3,250
Part-Time Job Release	1,590
Young Workers Scheme	560
Job Splitting Scheme	750
Community Programme	4,290
Community Industry	2,370
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	1,964
Youth Training Scheme	1,850
Training Opportunities Scheme	2,500

Notes:

1. These figures are averages associated with present levels of coverage and present assumptions; the marginal cost of expanding any particular scheme could be substantially different.
2. The figures take no account of the wider impact of the measures on the labour market or the economy more generally.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Manpower Services Commission intends to offer contracts for periods greater than one year to managing agents of youth training schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission is currently considering the possibility of offering contracts for longer than one year to some managing agents. I shall write to the hon. Member when a decision is reached.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training scheme places were identified and supported in the Workington travel-to-work area and the county of Cumbria during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At the end of January 1985 there were 1,353 approved places in the Allerdale and Copeland local authority districts, which largely correspond to the Workington travel-to-work area, and 3,595 approved places in the county of Cumbria.

None of these places were approved during the month of January, as sufficient youth training scheme places to cater for the needs of eligible youngsters in the county of Cumbria for 1984-85 had already been identified and approved before the end of 1984.

Motor Vehicle Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the reduction in real earnings per hour in the motor vehicle industry relative to the economy generally between 1970 and 1979 and between 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available; and what has been the corresponding change in employment in the industry absolutely and as a percentage of the numbers at the beginning of each period.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table sets out the available information on relative average hourly earnings and employment in the motor vehicle industry in Great Britain in 1970, 1979 and 1981.

	1970	*1979*	*1984*
Average gross hourly earnings of full-time adult male manual employees in the motor vehicle industry as a percentage of those in all industries and services*	130·5	112·5	110·8
Employees in employment in the motor vehicle industry†			
Number (thousands)	506	461	294
As percentages of:			
1970	100	91	
1979		100	64

* Based on New Earnings Survey results in respect of a pay period each April. For 1970 and 1979 the figures relate to those aged 21 and over and for 1984 to those on adult rates.

† All employees in respect of June each year. There are minor differences in coverage (less than ½ per cent.) because of changes in the industrial classification between 1979 and 1984.

Benefit Offices

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what reviews have been undertaken by his Department on the separation of employment offices from benefit offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There has been no specific overall review of this arrangement since a decision to make the change in the early 1970s. However, my Department keeps under constant review the effective operation of unemployment benefit offices, as does the Manpower Services Commission in the case of jobcentres and employment offices. The two networks are now managed and organised separately, although some offices remain co-located and the advantages and disadvantages of location in the same building, or close by, are taken into account when any change of premises is considered.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the net change in jobs in Lancashire for the period 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available in the following industries: *(a)* mining, *(b)* chemicals, *(c)* metal manufacture, *(d)* footwear, *(e)* mechanical engineering, *(f)* textiles and *(g)* paper and printing.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information on employment in local areas is from the June 1978 and the following September 1981 census of employment. Net changes in the number of employees in employment in the industries quoted in Lancashire in that period are as follows:

Standard Industrial Classification (1968)	*Thousands*
Order II Mining and Quarrying	−0·6
Order V Chemicals and Allied Industries	−2·6
Order VI Metal Manufacture	+0·4
MLH 450 Footwear	−0·8
Order VII Mechanical Engineering	+1·7
Order XIII Textiles	−16·0
Order XVIII Paper, Printing and Publishing	−1·0

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons, both male and female, were placed in employment by the Workington jobcentre in the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Workington jobcentre placed 69 people in the five-week period ending 4 January 1985, the latest for which statistics are available. Separate figures for males and females are not compiled monthly.

There is likely to have been a substantial number of people who found jobs in the area other than through the jobcentre. Nationally it is estimated that about a quarter of all engagements are made through jobcentres.

Temporary Short-time Working Compensation Scheme

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs in the Workington travel-to-work area were being supported by the temporary short-time working scheme during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: There was no potentially redundant jobs for which reimbursement was claimed under the temporary short-time working compensation scheme in December 1984 in the Workington travel-to-work area.

The scheme closed for applications on 31 March 1984.

Community Programme

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many community programme places were being supported in the Workington travel-to-work area and the county of Cumbria during the last month for which statistics are available; and how many of those places were part-time and full-time places, respectively.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On 14 December 1984, 578 community programme places were being supported on the Workington travel-to-work area, and 1,211 in Cumbria. Of those in Workington 402 were part-time and 176 full-time, and of those in Cumbria 839 and 372 respectively.

Youth Training Scheme and Community Programme

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional places were sponsored by Allerdale district council under the youth training scheme, and the community programme separately for the last month for which statistics are available; and what is the total number of places now being supported by that authority under each scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No youth training scheme places are currently being sponsored by Allerdale district council

The council has a community programme agency for 395 places. Projects with 381 places have been approved and 362 were filled on 14 December 1984.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, by region, the start-up figures under the enterprise allowance scheme at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: At 31 December 1984 the number of people by region who had entered the enterprise allowance scheme since it was introduced nationally on 1 August 1983 was as follows:

	Number
London	5,864
Southern	9,599
South West	5,008
Midlands	10,952
North West	12,075
Yorkshire and Humberside	5,755
Scotland	4,999
Wales	3,984
Northern	3,455
Total	61,691

Accidents at Work

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest available figures reported under the Health and Safety at Work Act on the number of accidents at work involving children under the age of 16 years in paid part-time employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Records available to the Health and Safety Executive of injuries reported to enforcing authorities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act for 1982 (the latest year for which figures are readily available) show 629 injuries to children under 16 reported to be in employment.

Over half of this total refers to children at school. About one-fifth of the total is estimated to involve children actually in employment: the rest arise from misreporting of injuries to non-employed children. Returns from local authorities are incomplete.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Premises (Propaganda)

Mr. Eldon Griffiths asked the Prime Minister if the administrative rules requiring civil servants not to use Government offices for party political or commercial purposes apply to the premises of other statutory bodies financed by the Exchequer; and whether it is the practice of nationalised industries, water authorities and the National Health Service to advise their employees and contractors not to use such public premises for the display of political propaganda.

The Prime Minister: The rules governing the conduct of civil servants do not apply to non-civil servants employed by public bodies, though the bodies may choose to adopt these or similar rules if they consider them appropriate to their particular circumstances. Information is not held centrally on the current management practice of the various nationalised industries, water authorities and NHS authorities.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Prime Minister whether the Civil Service Commission has reported on the terms and conditions of the new Head of Defence Procurement, Mr. Peter Levene.

The Prime Minister: It has been decided that Mr. Levene will join the Ministry of Defence on secondment. The precise terms are still under consideration by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Salmon Netting (Solway Firth)

Mr. Soames asked the Prime Minister which of her Ministers exercises responsibility in respect of the control of the netting of salmon in the Solway Firth.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for control of the netting of salmon in the Solway Firth rests with the north west authority in English waters and the various district salmon fishery boards in Scottish waters. Within the Government, responsibility for these matters rests with my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland respectively.

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the submissions that he received from English cities bidding for lead city status in the development of the combined heat and power programme.

Mr. David Hunt: There is no intention to publish the submissions received from the consortia which sought Government financial assistance towards the cost of preparing prospectuses for combined heat and power development.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of the housing stock is heated by combined heat and power schemes in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Italy, West Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom respectively.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 1 February to the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) at column *341*.

Coal (Domestic Consumption)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many tonnes of coal were burned by domestic households in 1964, 1974 and at the nearest available date in 1984.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on total deliveries of coal for domestic consumption is published annually in the "Digest of UK Energy Statistics", and monthly in *Energy Trends*, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Sleipner Gas Project

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Gas; and if at the meeting he proposes to discuss the Sleipner gas project.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I discussed Sleipner with the chairman of the British Gas Corporation on a number of occasions before the Government reached a conclusion on the project.

WALES

Disabled Persons (Housing Amenities)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that the provision of basic housing amenities required by disabled people are subject to mandatory grants from local authorities.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Mandatory grants are already available for the provision of missing basic amenities in a dwelling and for the provision of additional standard amenities where existing amentities are not readily accessible to a disabled occupant because of his or her disability.

Psychiatric Treatment (Consents)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines his Department has issued to psychiatric hospitals and sub-normality hospitals in Wales concerning the giving of medication or medical treatment in cirumstances where the patient is not in a condition to give meaningful consent for his treatment.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Our Department issued WHN(83)31 in December 1983 which provided guidance to health authorities on the phasing in of the consent to treatment provisions of the Mental Health Act 1983. Paragraph 6 of the circular refers specially to those patients who are not able or capable of giving informed consent to treatment. The explanatory memorandum to the Mental Health Act 1983 also provides guidance for all those working with the Act; paragraphs 189 to 204 are relevant. Copies of WHN(83)31 and the explanatory memorandum are available from the Library of the House.

Tourism

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are his projections of the sums to be made available to the Welsh tourist board to enable the board to undertake an overseas promotion programme.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The Wales tourist board does not itself have resources for tourism promotion programmes overseas. Overseas promotion on behalf of Wales is within the responsibility of the British Tourist Authority and is not separately identified within its expenditure. I announced on 17 November 1983 at column *529-30* further development of the arrangements for Welsh involvement in the authority's marketing programme.

Housing Starts

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of housing starts in 1984 and 1983 in *(a)* the private and *(b)* the public sector.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is:

	Number of dwelling starts	
	Private Sector	*Public Sector*
1983	6,244	2,265
*1984	5,200	1,200

* Provisional estimates.

Welsh Water Authority (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what additional financial assistance he will give to the Welsh water authority to compensate for the effects of the drought in 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no additional financial resouces immediately available to meet the costs of the drought in 1984. The Welsh water authority is responsible for establishing priorities within the overall total of moneys available to meet capital and revenue expenditure, including expenditure during exceptional events such as last year's drought. These moneys are found from charges made to the consumers and through external borrowing on which a limit is set up by the Government.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any changes to his Department's cash limits in the current year in connection with expenditure on transport and industry.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes. The cash limit on class XVI, Vote 1 is being reduced by £10,573,000 from £744,062,000 to £733,489,000. This reduction reflects the fact that spending on the trunk road programme has fallen below provision, mainly on account of protracted netgotiations on land acquisition and a lower rate of spend on schemes under construction than forecast.

Also, the cash limit on class XVI, 5 is being reduced by £1,270,000 from £47,757,000 to £46,487,000. This reduction relates to the provision of the Welsh Development Agency and reflects the agency's success in attracting higher than estimated income, which will allow it to carry out its programmes at a lower net cost to the Government.

Subject to parliamentary approval, these savings will be used largely to offset increases in class XVI, vote 2 and class XVI, vote 8.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Research Scientists and Engineers

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time equivalent research scientists and engineers are employed in higher education in the United Kingdom, West Germany and Japan.

Mr. Brooke: Data are not available to permit this comparison to be made. However in 1983-84 10,720 academic staff were employed full-time on research in United Kingdom universities only. This excludes substantial numbers of staff spending part of their time on research in universities and staff in polytechnics and other institutions of higher education.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to extend the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have been asked to reply because the technical and vocational education initiative is administered by the Manpower Services Commission.

Under the extension plans we announced last November all those local education authorities (education authorities in Scotland) not currently participating in the initiative were invited to submit a proposal with a view to starting a project this year or next.

School Meals

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the estimated total of teachers, meal supervisors and school staff who take school luncheon; and how many of them pay.

Mr. Dunn: The number of meals provided to adults at maintained schools in England on a day in October 1983, the latest date for which information is available, was:

	On payment	*Free*
Teachers	11,853	189,947
Midday Supervisory Assistants	1,961	73,238
Kitchen and Canteen Staff	6,652	114,823
Others	3,316	18,003

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the estimated cost of providing one school lunch and as to how much of this is the actual value of the food.

Mr. Dunn: Local authorities' estimates for 1984-85 show that expenditure on food, net of EEC subsidies, represents 26 per cent. of the total gross cost of providing meals. The Department does not have the information from which to calculate the average cost of a meal.

School Building

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the percentage of capital expenditure on major school building projects started in each of the last 10 years represented by projects at voluntary aided schools; and what is the corresponding percentage in the starts programme approved for the year 1985-86.

Mr. Dunn: The information is not available in the form requested. The percentages of the value of major projects approved by the Department represented by work at voluntary aided and special agreement schools for the years 1975-76 to 1983-84 were:

	Per cent.
1975-76	16
1976-77	13
1977-78	12
1978-79	15
1979-80	14
1980-81	14
1981-82	12
1982-83	16
1983-84	12

Corresponding figures for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are not yet available; and, since allocations to LEAs are unhypothecated and are no longer made on the basis of starts, estimates cannot be made. However, the percentages of allocations for all school capital expenditure in those years represented by the allocation for voluntary aided and special agreement schools were:

	Per cent.
1984-85	12
1985-86	15

Building Grants

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of grants for 1985-86 for school building and modernisation.

Sir Keith Joseph: The annual allocations of prescribed capital expenditure made to local education authorities are not grants but indications of basic permitted spending levels. Grant is paid only in respect of projects at voluntary aided and special agreement schools. On the implications of the 1985-86 allocations, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 10 January 1985 at column *526*.

Primary School (Reception Classes)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children commenced primary school education reception classes in 1985 under the age of four years and nine months; how this figure compares with that in each year since 1979; and if he is satisfied that proper nursery education provision is made for them.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect information on pupils commencing school. Annual returns are made on the number of children in infant classes in maintained primary schools in England on the census day in January. The published figures for under-fives exclude children whose fifth birthday fell between the previous September and December, ie those over four years eight months on 31 August. The annual totals from 1979 onwards are:

	Annual total
1979	218,392
1980	213,469
1981	206,507
1982	201,279
1983	210,372
1984	236,417

It is for the LEAs to make the appropriate provision for these pupils, but there is evidence, for example from what is seen and reported on by HMI, that such provision is not always fully appropriate. In my reply to the hon. Member on 1 February at column *330* I indicated steps which are being taken to disseminate good practice.

Universities and Polytechnics (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the staff-student ratio in each university and polytechnic in the west midlands county for the academic year 1984-85; and how this ratio compares with that in each academic year since 1978-79.

Mr. Brooke: The latest available information is:

Student/staff ratios

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
University						
Aston	10·5	10·2	10·0	10·5	11·0	11·9
Birmingham	8·6	8·4	8·3	8·5	8·7	9·1
Warwick	10·5	10·2	10·6	11·5	11·2	11·4
Polytechnic (advanced level work only)						
Birmingham	9·7	9·2	9·4	8·8	7·8	10·5
Lanchester	9·0	9·6	9·7	10·0	10·7	10·9
Wolverhampton	8·0	9·0	9·7	9·9	10·6	11·5

University student-staff ratios are calculated as the full-time equivalent student load divided by the number of full-time departmental academic staff paid wholly from university funds. Polytechnics student-staff ratios are calculated as full-time equivalent student load divided by the full-time equivalent number of lecturers who are involved in teaching. The university ratios are therefore not directly comparable with those for the public sector, although the polytechnic figures are restricted to advanced level work only.

Unemployed Adults

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the 13 local education authorities on which the study published by his Department entitled "Education for Unemployed Adults: Problems and Good Practice" was based; and how many adults registered as unemployed benefit claimants have enrolled on courses of further or higher education or on adult training education courses since 1981.

Mr. Brooke: Mrs. Joan McDonald's study was carried out on the basis of getting together information which would help the Department's preparations for the REPLAN initiative aimed at improving educational opportunities for the adult unemployed. The local education authorities concerned co-operated freely without any expectation that they would be identified and I do not think that it would be appropriate to name them at this stage. The statistical information requested is not collected by the Department.

Teacher Training

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied that teacher training courses currently being run contain sufficient instruction methods on pupil discipline and control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Most teacher training courses include a course module or unit on classroom management and control. However, this is an area in which there is no substitute for practical experience in the classroom. New criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses issued last year by my right hon. Friend, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, require that in future all courses should include a substantial element of school experience and teaching practice and that this should offer experience of class management and control. The criteria also make it clear that in no case should a qualification carrying qualified teacher status be awarded to a student whose practical classroom work is unsatisfactory.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Offences (Lancashire)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions took place in Lancashire in 1983 against persons alleged to have committed drug offences; and in how many cases such prosecutions were successful.

Mr. Mellor: Three hundred and sixty-four persons were proceeded against in the Lancashire police force area

in 1983 for offences under drugs legislation or for other offences involving controlled drugs, 354 of whom were found guilty.

GLC Police Exhibition

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution was made by the Metropolitan police or his Department to the Greater London council's police exhibition currently touring London boroughs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Neither the Metropolitan police nor the Home Office made any contribution to this exhibition.

Parking Offences (Diplomats)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of parking tickets evaded by diplomats in the Metropolitan police area in each of the last three years for which figures are available; if he will break the figures down by country in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The following table, compiled from figures made available by the Metropolitan Police, gives details of the total number of fixed penalty notices cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity for the three year period 1981-83 (which is the latest period for which complete figures are available) broken down by country and organisation.

These figures are a matter for real concern. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will be covering this subject in his response to the report by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on the abuse of diplomatic immunities and priveleges.

Fixed penalty notices cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity (Metropolitan Police district)

Organisation/Country	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Afghanistan	11	16	11
Algeria	447	647	925
Antigua and Barbuda	0	1	57
Argentine Republic	494	101	0
Australia	17	24	0
Austria	204	231	69
Bahamas	2	10	14
Bahrain	229	173	410
Bangladesh	215	279	327
Barbados	343	375	434
Belgium	250	326	291
Bolivia	174	178	52
Botswana	39	69	110
Brazil	1,468	1,524	3,010
Bulgaria	1,808	1,996	2,671
Burma	81	131	424
Cameroon	712	714	961
Canada	118	145	185
Chile	138	291	524
China	294	275	660
Colombia	439	571	511
Costa Rica	82	56	62
Cuba	1,118	1,535	2,346
Cyprus	1,560	1,525	2,039
Czechoslovakia	263	316	324
Denmark	22	21	13
Dominica, Commonwealth of	9	1	5
Dominican Republic	229	161	81
Eastern Caribbean Commission	5	10	36
Ecuador	230	311	398
Egypt	3,336	4,378	6,294
El Salvador	42	58	41
Ethiopia	280	367	554
Fiji	14	36	73
Finland	746	1,009	910
France	1,128	1,209	1,857
Gabon	290	302	283
Gambia	215	290	373
German Democratic Republic	233	160	182
Germany, Federal Republic of	250	309	286
Ghana	1,610	1,940	2,334
Greece	714	874	1,146
Grenada	24	18	37
Guyana	143	241	263
Haiti	9	4	0
Honduras	107	33	62
Hungary	1,612	1,209	1,127
Iceland	38	53	116
India	2,023	820	597
Indonesia	1,044	1,312	2,100
Iran	323	357	735
Iraq	2,100	2,660	2,863
Ireland, Republic of	253	325	506
Israel	333	322	323
Italy	1,163	1,614	2,118
Ivory Coast	429	456	738
Jamaica	954	771	1,303
Japan	530	781	2,020
Jordon	1,529	1,522	1,850
Kenya	779	1,219	1,974
Korea	713	578	706
Kuwait	1,267	799	940
Laos	10	7	10
Lebanon	189	192	162
Lesotho	84	42	59
Liberia	81	89	130
Libya	2,415	2,611	2,708
Luxembourg	21	2	1
Malawi	22	108	117
Malaysia	946	1,347	2,637
Malta, Republic of	484	344	621
Mauritius	276	217	162
Mexico	472	497	480
Mongolia	11	4	8
Morocco	489	552	1,033
Nepal	52	55	31
Netherlands	63	77	55
New Zealand	7	0	0
Nicaragua	65	66	24
Nigeria, Federal Republic of	5,461	5,483	6,618
Norway	71	138	189
Oman	525	576	848
Pakistan	862	1,246	1,730
Panama	599	581	619
Papua New Guinea	51	73	36
Paraguay	224	206	198
Peru	428	443	714
Philippines	247	232	223
Poland	634	1,187	2,412
Portugal	682	886	1,294
Qatar	885	912	1,016

Organisation/Country	1981	1982	1983
Romania	719	858	662
Saudi Arabia	2,808	3,514	4,871
Senegal	271	365	403
Seychelles	9	0	77
Sierra Leone	209	265	403
Singapore	109	76	49
Somali Democratic Republic	85	185	352
South Africa, Republic of	48	50	30
Soviet Union	1,197	1,084	1,416
Spain	1,164	1,164	1,171
Sri Lanka	191	209	823
St. Vincent, St. Lucia and the Grenadines	5	0	0
Sudan	954	1,253	2,039
Swaziland	61	74	41
Sweden	189	204	205
Switzerland	101	69	77
Syrian Arab Republic	481	530	818
Tanzania	900	851	1,165
Thailand	1,258	1,198	1,535
Togo	120	151	220
Tonga	4	5	12
Trinidad and Tobago	203	281	372
Tunisia	254	208	336
Turkey	674	742	1,069
Uganda	533	809	1,452
United Arab Emirates	1,054	927	1,234
United States of America	239	332	207
Upper Volta	1	0	0
Uruguay	202	320	484
Venezuela	538	549	700
Veitnam	7	7	12
Yemen Arab Republic	275	173	239
Yemen, People's Democratic Republic	191	219	240
Yugoslavia	893	923	1,119
Zaire	437	389	292
Zambia	597	1,268	1,468
Zimbabwe	149	535	489
Commonwealth Secretariat	170	156	224
EEC Commission	2	2	16
International Sugar Organisation	0	1	2
International Coffee Organisation	7	13	7
International Maritime Satellite Organisation	0	2	3
International Cocoa Organisation	10	10	1
Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation	17	16	24
International Wheat Council	0	0	2
Western European Union	14	16	19
United Nations	1	3	0
Apostolic Delegation	1	5	2
TOTALS	68,940	76,223	102,179

Stateless Persons

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) why he does not collect information on the number of stateless people in the United Kingdom; if he will now do so; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether there is any measure available to Her Majesty's Government which would enable him to estimate the number of stateless persons residing in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We do not consider that the demand for information on the number of stateless persons resident in the United Kingdom would justify the costs involved in obtaining it.

There is no source of information collected for another purpose from which an estimate could be made with an acceptable degree of accuracy.

HM Prison, Styal

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what requests he has received since 1 January 1984 from the governor of Her Majesty's prison, Styal, for an increase in staff; and what was his response to those requests.

Mr. Mellor: The only formal bid received in the period concerned requested approval to recruit a prison auxiliary to escort outside contractors engaged to improve the gymnasium facilities at Styal. The bid is under consideration. The governor has also suggested, as one of several possible courses of action, an increase in night staffing levels. This possibility is being examined.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have taken place in night staffing and supervision at Her Majesty's prison, Styal, since 1 November 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Night-time staffing levels at Styal have varied from 10 to 13 staff on duty on any one night. Since November 1984 the minimum number of staff on duty on any one night has been raised from 10 to 11.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what reports his Department has received of night violence and sexual assaults against youth custody prisoners at Her Majesty's prison, Styal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will appoint a judicial inquiry into the organisation, staffing, and facilities at Her Majesty's prison, Styal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: On the 23 November 1984 immediately before the action described in the reply given to a Question from the hon. Member on 1 February at column *332*, the governor of Styal prison and youth custody centre reported his concern about bullying and mentioned that there had been 20 incidents of that kind during the previous 12 months. Three of these (in June, July and October) had been sufficiently serious to warrant being reported to the prison department north regional office at the time. A further incident was reported at the end of November, and another in January 1985. In some of these cases a sexual element was suspected though not substantiated.

The situation at Styal is being very closely watched and we are advised that there has been a marked improvement. My right hon. and learned Friend does not propose to set up a judicial inquiry.

Detention Centres

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new regime for detention centres will come into operation.

Mr. Brittan: On 6 March 1985. The new regime will follow the lines I outlined in reply to a question from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington,

South (Mr. Carlisle) on 24 July 1984 at columns *578-80*. Copies of a note summarising its main features have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether, as a result of the ethnic surveys undertaken in the north-west and county of Avon, respectively, he has asked the key questions specified in the code of the Commission for Racial Equality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government will be taking the key questions into account in considering the data arising from the north-west and Avon and subsequent surveys.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will now take positive action, as recommended in the code of the Commission for Racial Equality, in order to remedy any discrimination revealed by the ethnic surveys undertaken in the north-west and the county of Avon, respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information obtained in the survey of staff in the north-west and county of Avon will need to be considered in relation to that obtained from the surveys of job applicants in these areas, which should be available in the spring.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether as a result of the ethnic surveys undertaken in the north-west and the county of Avon, he is planning any change in methods of recruitment, promotion or training, respectively, or otherwise, so as to counter any possible discrimination.

Mr. Hayhoe: We shall be considering what further steps are necessary in the light of the report on recruitment surveys in the north-west and Avon, to be published in the spring. We have already strengthened the central guidance on recruitment and promotion following the report on the review of personnel policies and procedures as they affect race relations in the Civil Service published in December 1983 in an endeavour to counter possible discrimination. Similar steps are in hand to update guidance on training.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he expects to begin the ethnic surveys to cover all non-industrial staff in the east and west midlands.

Mr. Hayhoe: The surveys are expected to begin this summer in the east and west midlands.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he expects to institute a programme of ethnic monitoring to cover industrial staff in the east and west midlands.

Mr. Hayhoe: An appropriate timetable is still being worked out.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service what necessary arrangements he is making in order to introduce ethnic monitoring to all new entrants to the Civil Service; when he expects such arrangements to commence and to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Discussions between departmental officials are taking place to set up procedures for obtaining the ethnic information from new entrants from the autumn.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service what separate arrangements are being worked out for the ethnic monitoring of industrial staff; and by whom.

Mr. Hayhoe: The working environment and management systems for industrials are different from those for non-industrials. An appropriate method and timetable for the surveys is being worked out by officials from the Cabinet Office, in consultation with employing departments and the trade union side of the Joint Co-ordinating Committee for Government Industrials.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service by whom consideration will be given to further monitoring of recruitment schemes in the light of the results of the recruitment surveys undertaken in the north-west and county of Avon, respectively, and when; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Further monitoring of recruitment schemes will be considered by officials of the Cabinet Office and Her Majesty's Treasury in the light of the results of the recruitment surveys undertaken in the north-west and the county of Avon. A statement will be made when the report on these surveys is published in the spring.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service by whom the recruitment surveys undertaken in the north-west and the county of Avon are being analysed.

Mr. Hayhoe: The surveys are being analysed centrally by officials of the Cabinet Office and Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr. Janner asked the Minister for the Civil Service who is preparing the report on the data from the recruitment surveys undertaken in the north-west and county of Avon, respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe: The report on the data is being prepared by officials of the Cabinet Office and Her Majesty's Treasury.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests (Radiation)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the National Radiological Protection Board's plans for a morbidity study of United Kingdom participants in the British nuclear tests in Australia and the South Pacific in the 1950s; what methods of analysis will be used; and what are the objectives.

Mr. Butler: This is a matter for the National Radiological Protection Board to answer. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the protocol for the study, which has been previously supplied to him.

Mr. Peter Levene

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in his new post as Head of Defence Procurement, Mr. Peter Levene will receive help with pension contributions.

Mr. Butler: The full terms of Mr. Levene's secondment to the Ministry of Defence have yet to be settled.

Rapier Air Defence System

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of manning the Rapier air defence system which is part of the Trident offset arrangement.

Mr. Butler: The estimated cost of pay and allowances for 1985-86 is £4·5 million at current prices.

US Facilities, Kings Bay

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's contribution towards the cost of the United States facilities at Kings Bay.

Mr. Butler: The United Kingdom contribution to the capital cost of the jointly used facilities at Kings Bay, has been agreed at $70 million in fiscal year 1983 dollars. Provision for this payment is included within the current Trident estimate of £9,285 million and is also taken into account in the Department's assessment of the savings of over £700 million at 1984-85 prices arising from the Kings Bay missile processing agreement.

Trident

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what inflation rates were assumed *(a)* for the United Kingdom and *(b)* for the United States of America in the Trident cost estimates published in (i) March 1982, (ii) March 1984 and (iii) January 1985.

Mr. Butler: The estimates to which the hon. Member refers were all expressed at constant prices and made no assumptions regarding future inflation. Between the March 1982 estimate of 7,500 million (at September 1981 prices) and the current estimate of £9,285 million (at average prices for the 1984-85 financial year) price levels in the United States and United Kingdom on Trident have increased on average by 18·8 per cent. and 17·2 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum number of warheads which each Trident D5 missile will be designed to carry.

Mr. Stanley: The design payload of the Trident D5 missile system is classified, although it was stated in defence open government document 82/1 that the missile was expected to be able to carry up to 14 warheads, which is the limit for SLBMs under the terms of the SALT II treaty. We have made it clear that the United Kingdom move to Trident D5 will not involve any significant change in the planned total number of warheads associated with our strategic deterrent force in comparison with the original intentions for a force deploying the Trident C4 missile system.

Wintex 85

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the areas of the north-west region that he expects to be used by ground forces during the Wintex 85 exercises; and what are the flight paths to be used by aircraft affecting the north-west.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 11 February 1985 at column *51*.

Argentina (Military Equipment)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding maintenance clauses in contracts involving British companies and the supply of military equipment and spare parts to Argentina; and if all such maintenance clauses were agreed upon before the Falklands conflict.

Mr. Butler [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 January 1985, c. 186]: Maintenance clauses in such contracts are not subject to approval by Her Majesty's Government, and a number of companies will have legal obligations for maintenance for equipment sold to Argentina before the Falklands Conflict. As far as I am aware no contracts have been signed since.

There has been an embargo on the supply of defence and defence related equipment direct to Argentina since the beginning of 1982. Although this embargo does not extend to certain spare parts, there is no record of any trade in these with Argentina.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Maude asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement setting out the intention and purpose of value added tax control visits made by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officers.

Mr. Hayhoe: The purpose of VAT control visits, which are made by appointment, is to make selective checks on the records and accounts of businesses and so to ensure that they are calculating and paying the correct amount of VAT on all of their taxable activities. For newly registered traders the visit also provides an early opportunity to resolve any practical problems which arise in the first year. During 1983-84 about 350,000 control visits were made to registered traders. Under-declarations of tax discovered as a result of these visits amounted to about £320 million. Over-declarations of tax of about £6 million were also found.

Following a recommendation made in the report of the committee on the enforcement powers of the Revenue Departments, Customs and Excise has now issued a new booklet entitled "Visits by VAT Officers" which explains in simple terms why they are made and what happens during the visit.

Oil Prices

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates his Department has made of the consequences for the pound sterling and for national revenue of a $5 per barrel decrease in the price of oil.

Mr. Moore: No estimates of the effects of a $5 fall in the price of oil have been made. But the Department does of course keep under review the prospects for tax revenues in the light of current and prospective economic developments, including those in the oil market.

Personal Taxation (Statistics)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* personal taxation, including social security contributions and *(b)* all direct and indirect

taxation as a percentage of income for each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states for the most recent convenient year.

Mr. Moore: The information is available only for the following OECD countries and the latest available figures relate to 1982:

Percentage of total personal income, 1982

	*Personal taxation and social security contributions**	*Total direct taxes†*	*Total indirect taxes*
Australia	16·1	19·7	15·6
Austria	27·0	14·8	18·3
Belgium	27·3	18·4	11·2
Canada	18·7	17·8	15·5
Finland	22·1	18·7	17·2
France	24·2	8·9	14·8
German Federal Republic	27·9	12·7	13·1
Italy	23·4	12·9	10·0
Japan	15·7	12·3	8·1
Netherlands	29·9	14·3	10·9
Norway	30·0	24·5	21·2
Portgual‡	13·0	6·5	14·2
Spain‡	17·3	7·4	7·1
Sweden	35·0	22·4	14·8
Switzerland	23·2	15·6	7·2
United Kingdom ‖	21·4	18·4	19·7
United States	20·3	15·1	9·2

* Direct taxes paid by persons plus employer and employee social security contributions.
† Direct taxes paid by persons and enterprises plus taxes on capital.
‡ Percentages relate to 1981.
‖ Based on latest United Kingdom estimates.
Sources: Derived from OECD National Accounts Volume II Detailed tables 1970-82 and Revenue Statistics of OECD Member countries 1965-1983.

It should be noted that total direct and indirect taxes relate to total Government receipts and not only to payments by persons.

Wage and Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the natural effect on the exchange rate of his simulation on the relationship between real wages and employment; whether the assumed relationship between the exchange rate and prices was the same as that set out in Treasury working paper No. 2; and whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the relevant data together with the unemployment figures for manufacturing and for the whole economy.

Mr. Peter Rees: The effect on the effective exchange rate in simulations of lower real wages under various assumptions about fiscal and monetary policy is shown in tables A to D of annex B of the recent paper by Treasury officials entitled "The Relationship between Employment and Wages". The effects on employment in the whole economy are also contained in these tables; the relevant figures for employment in manufacturing, consistent with table A, are:

	Percentage change from base
Year 1	0·2
2	1·2
3	2·0
4	2·2

The relationship between the exchange rate and prices assumed on the Treasury model has altered since the publication of Treasury working paper No. 2. Changes to the model have been set out in successive issues of the technical manual. The most recent results of simulations of the effect of an exchange rate change were published in "HM Treasury Macroeconomic Model Technical Manual supplement 1984" (J. Barber ed.)

Motor Vehicles (Taxation)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total receipts received from the taxation of each class of motor vehicle in the last financial year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The latest year for which statistics of revenue receipts are available is 1983-84. For vehicle excise duty the receipts by category of vehicles were:

Category	*Revenue (£ million)*
Cars and light vans	1,578
Heavy goods vehicles	383
Motor cycles	22
Taxis, buses and coaches	7
Haulage vehicles and agricultural machines	7

Other forms of indirect taxation are not collected by category of vehicle, so the information is not available in the form requested. Revenue from the other forms of taxation bearing on vehicles is as follows:

Tax	*Revenue (£ million)*
Petrol duty	4,340
Derv duty	1,074
VAT on vehicle sales	*1,450
VAT on road fuel	*875
Car tax	703

* Estimate of non-recoverable VAT.

Income Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the current price cost in 1983-84 of administering income tax.

Mr. Moore: The estimated cost of administering income tax in 1983-84 was £680 million in 1983-84 prices.

THE ARTS

Office of Arts and Libraries

Mr. Proctor asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what has been the total cost of the administration of the Office of Arts and Libraries expressed in constant prices in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science gave him on 11 February at column 5.

Nostell Priory (Furniture)

Mr. Faulds asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what consultations

Her Majesty's Government are having to ensure the retention in the United Kingdom of the collection of Chippendale furniture at Nostell Priory made specifically for that house.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and noble Friend met Lord St. Oswald recently to discuss this matter. No formal offer has yet been received regarding the Chippendal collection.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Community (Aims and Objectives)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the principal aims and objectives of the European Economic Community in the coming year.

Mr. Luce: There is no single statement of Community priorities, though we have proposed to other member states that there should be such a statement in future. However, the priorities of the Italian Presidency were set out in the Italian Foreign Minister's speech to the European Parliament on 16 January and M. Delors outlined the thrust of the new Commission's policy in another statement to the European Parliament on 14 January. I would also refer the hon. Member to the conclusions of the European Council of 3 and 4 December. Copies of these texts are in the Library of the House.

Uganda

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Uganda concerning human rights in that country.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend met the Ugandan Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in New York on 28 September 1984 and again on 7 February last. They discussed a number of issues in our bilateral relations, including human rights.

Cyprus

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking actively to assist in concluding an agreement between the two communities in Cyprus.

Mr. Renton: We are continuing to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General to seek a settlement to the Cyprus problem. We have been in close touch with all the parties concerned and have impressed upon them the need to seize the opportunity which the Secretary General's initiative represents. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has met President Kyprianou on several occasions over recent months and my right hon. and learned Friend met the Turkish President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in Ankara during his visit to Turkey this week.

Lebanon

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom policy towards Lebanon.

Mr. Luce: Our policy is to assist efforts to restore the unity, stability and prosperity of Lebanon. We have consistently called for the early, complete and orderly withdrawal of all foreign forces whose presence is not authorised by the Lebanese Government, and we continue to support the efforts of the Lebanese Government to promote national reconciliation.

El Salvador

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with El Salvador.

Mr. Renton: We enjoy good relations with El Salvador. President Duarte's Government are publicly committed to strengthening democracy, ending human rights abuses and seeking national reconciliation. We support those objectives.

Sudan

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received calling for Government representations to the Government of Sudan about violations of human rights in that country.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from various organisations and individuals asking the Government to make representations to the Government of Sudan about violations of human rights there. The Government of Sudan are well aware of our views on human rights, which we have made clear on many occasions both at the United Nations and elsewhere.

European Community (Own Resources)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the main views under consideration in the EEC Council about the timing of the entry into force of the new own resources decision.

Mr. Luce: It was agreed at Fontainebleau that new own resources should

"enter into force as soon as the ratification procedures are completed and by 1 January 1986 at the latest".

The Federal Republic of Germany considers that new own resources should not take effect until 1 January 1986.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Coal Industry Dispute

41. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many people have been prosecuted for offences as a result of picketing during the miners' strike.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In the period to 6 February 1985, 948 persons have been proceeded against by procurators fiscal in respect of offences arising out of the present mining dispute. Owing to the manner in which statistics are compiled, this figure cannot be confined to offences arising directly out of presence on a picket line.

Warrant Sales

42. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has yet received the final recommendations of the Law Commissioners on warrant sales and associated matters.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The recommendations referred to by the right hon. Gentleman will be contained in the report on diligence. The commission intends to complete this report by the middle of this year.

SCOTLAND

Nuclear Burst (Damage)

13. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what effect a one megaton nuclear overhead burst at a height of 300 miles would have on the equipment and resources in his care.

Mr. Ancram: The Government's policy of deterrence is designed to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. If, however, such an explosion were to occur at 300 miles it would generate a nuclear electromagnetic pulse which could damage unprotected telecommunications and electrical and electronic equipment.

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to harden vulnerable equipment in his charge against the effects of nuclear electromagnetic pulse.

Mr. Ancram: We are awaiting the results of current research on this matter before deciding how best to protect vulnerable equipment.

British Leyland, Bathgate

14. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in his discussions with interested parties about British Leyland, Bathgate.

Mr. Alan Stewart: My officials maintain regular and close contact with Marshall Tractors and JCB, the two companies which have expressed interest in the engine plant at Bathgate. Neither company has yet submitted its proposals.

Elderly Persons

15. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will prepare and present to Parliament, for discussion, a White Paper on the care of the elderly in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: I recognise the care of the elderly as a major requirement in the allocation of public sector resources in the fields of health, housing and social work. I see no need at present to revise the strategy for these services set out in the White Paper "Growing Older", which was published in March 1981.

Manufacturing Industry

17. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the loss in manufacturing jobs in Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Manufacturing employment fell by 156,000 between December 1979 and September 1984, the latest period for which estimates are available. There are indications that manufacturing employment stabilised during 1984.

Housing Associations (House Sales)

18. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to ensure that occupants of housing association houses will be permitted the right to purchase under the Tenants Rights (Scotland) Act.

Mr. Ancram: I have asked the Housing Corporation to require all associations which have not already instituted a voluntary sales scheme with discounts to reconsider, and formally report on, their policies. The responses of the associations will shortly be to hand and my right hon. Friend and I shall consider them carefully.

Housing Subsidies

19. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total level of Government subsidy to *(a)* council house tenants through the housing support grant and *(b)* owner-occupiers through mortgage interest tax relief in Scotland in 1980; and what the equivalent figure is expected to be in 1985.

Mr. Ancram: Subsidies to council house tenants include, as well as housing support grant, rate fund contributions and the rent rebate element of housing benefit. Subsidies to council tenants totalled £343 million in 1980-81, including £228 million in housing support grant. For 1984-85 the corresponding figure is estimated at £253 million, including £63 million in housing support grant. Mortgage interest tax relief totalled £122 million in 1980-81 and is estimated to be £210 million in 1984-85.

Teachers (Pay)

20. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teachers have taken strike action in support of the teaching unions' current campaign for an independent pay review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Precise figures are not available because of the selective nature of the teachers' action. It is clear, however, that the large majority of members of the unions involved have taken strike action at one time or another.

21. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received from Ayrshire parents and teachers about an independent review of the teachers' pay.

Mr. Younger: As at 8 February, approximately 300. In addition, on 1 February I met a deputation of parents from each school in my constituency.

24. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has met parents and teachers concerning selected school closures in Ayrshire as a consequence of the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Younger: I met a group of parents in Ayr on 1 February and a deputation of teachers in the House of Commons on 6 February. I made it clear that I strongly deplore strike action by teachers wherever it takes place and that the present selective tactics of the Educational Institute of Scotland are particularly unfair to the pupils concerned.

Scottish Special Housing Association

22. **Mr. Lamble** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an inquiry into the workings of the Scottish Special Housing Association following its decision to increase the average rents of its houses by 10 per cent.

Mr. Ancram: No. In reaching its decision on rents for the coming year, the Scottish Special Housing Association has taken due account of the deficit subsidy and of the range of rent increases advised by my right hon. Friend in December. The association has also made a balanced judgment of the need to maintain the stock in a satisfactory condition and to balance the revenue account. I can see no grounds for an inquiry on the lines proposed by the hon. Member.

Average Earnings

23. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how average earnings in Scotland compared with other economic regions of Great Britain in 1979; and what is the comparable position at the present time.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In both 1979 and 1984, Scotland ranked second in terms of average weekly earnings of males. In the case of average weekly earnings of females, Scotland ranked sixth in 1979 and third in 1984. More detailed information on actual earnings levels in Scotland and other standard regions of Great Britain is available from the published reports of the New Earnings Survey for 1979 and 1984.

Mentally Handicapped Persons

25. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take to place mentally handicapped people in Scotland on a similar basis to those in England and Wales.

Mr. Younger: In Scotland, as in England and Wales, it is the Government's policy to give priority to the needs of mentally handicapped people, whether in hospital or in the community; but it is for individual health boards and local authorities to determine what particular provision is needed to meet the needs of their respective areas.

Hospital Admissions (Cold-induced Illnesses)

26. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many admissions to hospitals have been occasioned so far this winter as a consequence of cold-induced illnesses.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

"Planning in the Countryside"

27. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will withdraw circular 40/1960 on "Planning in the Countryside" and replace it with a more up-to-date version.

Mr. Ancram: Following consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Countryside Commission for Scotland and other bodies, my officials are currently drafting an updated version of the guidance given in circular 40/1960, which I shall issue shortly.

Public Expenditure

28. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the implications for Scotland of the Government's White Paper on public expenditure.

Mr. Younger: I receive a wide range of representations, both formal and informal, about the Government's decisions on public expenditure. Details about the background to these decisions as they affect expenditure on programmes within my responsibility will be published shortly in "Public Expenditure to 1987-88: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme".

Limited List Prescribing

29. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's policy concerning the availability of drugs on prescription under the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on 8 November 1984, column 226.

32. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the representations made to him on his recent proposals on the prescription of drugs on the National Health Service.

34. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has had from the medical profession in Scotland about the proposed restricted list of generic medicines; and how many were *(a)* in support of his proposals and *(b)* opposed to his proposals.

Mr. John MacKay: By the end of the consultation period on 31 January some 1,200 representations had been received on the proposals for a limited list of drugs. Of these, some 290 were from doctors and the remainder from a wide range of individuals and organisations. About 40 of the letters from doctors were simply circular letters supplied by the drug industry. Many doctors were concerned by specific aspects of the illustrative list issued for consultation purposes; more than half of the representations from doctors did not make it clear whether a limited list amended in accordance with their suggestions would be acceptable to them. Of the other representations received, 550 were pro forma type protest notes provided or evidently prompted by the patients' doctors. Most of the remainder expressed varying degrees of concern, in many instances about drugs which will remain available under the limited list proposals.

Inverclyde Training Centre

30. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he is making to the report, "A Future for the Inverclyde Training Centre", compiled by the Centre for Employment Initiatives, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has not received a copy of this report. I understand that it was commissioned by the Scottish Development Agency as part of the studies carried out to determine the potential for an economic initiative for the Inverclyde area. Decisions on the future use of the training centre are a matter for

British Shipbuilders, and I am sure that it will take full account of the views of the agency and the local authorities.

Regional Development Policy

31. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss regional development policy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There have been no recent discussions with the Scottish Trades Union Congress on this issue. The general council did not pursue its suggestion, to which I had agreed, that we should meet to discuss the views they submitted in the course of the regional policy review.

Manufacturing Base

33. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied that the manufacturing base in Scotland is being maintained.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The nature of Scotland's manufacturing base has been changing, and I am satisfied that the newer industries will provide the basis for future growth. Manufacturing output in the first half of 1984 was 5 per cent. up on the first half of 1983, whiie output per employee also continued to increase. The latest CBI and Scottish business surveys suggest that the recovery in manufacturing continued in the second half of 1984, with business confidence, orders and output all reported to be increasing.

Health Care

35. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies his Department has carried out into the projected new demands for health care until 1988.

Mr. John MacKay: New demands for health care result from developments in medical technology, and from epidemiological and demographic changes. The Scottish Home and Health Department, in collaboration with the other United Kingdom Health Departments, keeps these various factors under continuous review. Studies of Health Service provision in relation to need are also undertaken by the Scottish Health Service Planning Council; and the council already has in mind a review of its report "Scottish Health Authorities' Priorities for the Eighties", published in 1980, to take account of all relevant changes in circumstances.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the proportions of land bought from the Forestry Commission since the passing of the Forestry Act 1981 by category of purchaser.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission does not maintain central records that carry this information, which could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Forestry Commission expects to report on the survey on the health of Norway spruce, Sitka spruce and Scots pine in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Younger: The Forestry Commission expects to be able to report the results of this survey by the middle of next month.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are currently unemployed in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is now available in the House of Commons Library, as was indicated in my right hon. Friend's letter of 22 October 1984 to all Scottish MPs.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table indicating the total number of men, women and young people unemployed in the Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency, showing the numbers unemployed on a ward or other geographical basis and the number who have been unemployed for six months or over, one year or over, and two years and over, respectively.

Mr. Younger: On 10 January 1985, the latest date for which information is available, there were 5,247 males and 1,985 females claiming benefit in the Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency. Unemployment totals on a ward basis will not become available for a few months. Analyses by age and duration of unemployment on a constituency basis will not be available until the middle of the year.

The following table shows the number of unemployed people claiming benefit in the categories requested in the jobcentre areas of Cambuslang and Rutherglen which fall wholly or mainly within the Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency.

	Aged 18 or under			*All ages*		
	Men	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Over 26 weeks	148	76	224	2,214	732	2,946
Over 52 weeks	72	39	111	1,714	440	2,154
Over 104 weeks	9	4	13	1,130	230	1,360
All claimants	399	256	655	3,456	1,437	4,893

Geriatric Patients

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what increase there has been in the number of places available to geriatric patients in hospital day centres in Scotland over the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Younger: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what increase there has been in the provision of beds for geriatric patients in each regional area in Scotland in the last 12 months to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Younger: The following numbers of staffed beds were available in each health board area for elderly patients, including those with mental disability, at 31 March 1982 and at 30 September 1983, the latest dates for which these statistics are available centrally.

	Numbers at 31 March 1982	*Numbers at 30 September 1983*
Argyll and Clyde	1,021	1,021
Ayrshire and Arran	978	1,021
Borders	409	410
Dumfries and Galloway	510	516
Fife	899	991
Forth Valley	553	565
Grampian	1,399	1,466
Greater Glasgow	2,427	2,559
Highland	382	388
Lanarkshire	996	990
Lothian	1,706	1,800
Orkney	—	51
Shetland	87	87
Tayside	1,470	1,491
Western Isles	97	105
Scotland	12,934	13,461

Small Firms

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many small firms were given assistance by the Scottish Economic Planning Department and others of his Departments in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved;

(2) how many small firms in Scotland, falling within the Bolton committee definition, received regional development grants and other forms of financial assistance from his Department; and how much money was involved.

Mr. Younger: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many small firms were given financial assistance by the Scottish Development Agency in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved.

Mr. Younger: The Scottish Development Agency small business division gave financial assistance amounting to £1,666,000 to 143 small firms in the year to 31 December 1984.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many small firms were given financial assistance by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved.

Mr. Younger: During the 12 months 1 January 1984 to 31 December 1984 the Highlands and Islands Development Board approved £18,555,000 of financial assistance to 1,310 small firms (each employing fewer than 200 people).

Mr. Mackenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many small firms, as defined by the Bolton committee, presently exist in Scotland;

(2) how many small firms, as defined by the Bolton committee, were set up in Scotland during the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date;

(3) how many firms, as defined by the Bolton committee, went out of business during the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Younger: Comprehensive information on small firms is not available. However, information for Scotland and other regions of the United Kingdom on the stock of firms registered for value added tax, and changes in the stock by size of turnover, was published in *British Business* on 2 November 1984. A copy of the article has been placed in the library.

Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) who leads the Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee; and who are the other members of this committee;

(2) where the Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee meets and functions;

(3) what powers the Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee has *(a)* under his Department, *(b)* under the Scottish regional commissioner and *(c)* in the event of neither superior authority being effectively operational;

(4) what overlap there is between the composition of the Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee and the composition of the wartime regional government teams.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee (formerly the Scottish Central Co-ordinating Committee) is chaired by a senior officer of the Scottish Home and Health Department. Its members are officials of a number of Government Departments and other public bodies, but those attending at any given time would depend on the nature of the peacetime emergency with which it had to deal. It has not met since 1979 but would do so, when required, in Edinburgh. Its composition and that of the wartime regional government teams reflect broadly the same range of departments and bodies, but the individual representatives would be different. In a period of tension or war its function, as in peacetime, would be to assist the Scottish Home and Health Department to co-ordinate the supply and distribution of essential supplies and services. The committee as such has no powers: its members would exercise such powers as might be delegated to them by their Ministers or employers.

It is not likely to have a role under the Scottish Regional Commission.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures are available to him to show the estimated proportion of electricity generated in Scotland by 1990 produced by *(a)* nuclear stations, *(b)* coal-fired stations, *(c)* hydro-electric stations and *(d)* oil-fired stations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In 1989-90 the approximate proportions are estimated as follows:

	approximate proportions
Nuclear stations	55
Coal-fired stations	35
Hydro-electric stations	10
Oil-fired stations	0

The outturn will, of course, depend on total demand and relative fuel prices.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures are available to him to show estimated all-Scotland electricity demand in the years up to 1990, the maximum simultaneous demand for the year 1990 and the percentage of installed overcapacity in that year.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The preparation of demand forecasts is a matter for the Scottish electricity boards. The estimated all-Scotland electricity demand in the years up to 1989-90 is as follows:

	MW
1985-86	5,803
1986-87	5,871
1987-88	5,978
1988-89	6,046
1989-90	6,121

Notes:

(1) These figures relate to Scottish demand only and do not allow for plant used for trading with England and Wales.

(2) The figures exclude 2,000 MW of oil-fired capacity placed in reserve.

The plant additional to that required to meet the maximum demand in 1989-90 with planned security is estimated to be 21 per cent.

Salmon Netting

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last visited the Solway Firth to review salmon netting practices.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food visited the Solway on 26 July last, where they met representatives of local fishing interests and saw salmon nets in operation. With the co-operation of the Fisheries Departments, the Annan District salmon fishery board and the North West water authority have begun discussions to see whether a system of joint management of salmon and freshwater fisheries in the Solway area might be possible.

Cash Limits

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any changes to his Department's cash limits in the current year.

Mr. Younger: Yes. Two cash limits on Class XV are being reduced by the amounts shown in the table. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the saving of £1·5 million on Class XV, Vote 2 (Agricultural Services and Fisheries) will be used to offset additional expenditure of £5·524 million on agricultural support schemes, which falls on Class XV, Vote 1; and the saving of £1·107 million on Class XV, Vote 14 (prisons, hospitals and community health services) will be used to offset additional expenditure of the same amount on the family practitioner services in Scotland, which falls on Class XV, Vote 20.

£'000

Vote	*Existing cash limit*	*Reduction*	*Revised cash limit*
XV, 2	62,008	1,500	60,508
XV, 14	1,452,569	1,107	1,451,462

SOCIAL SERVICES

Administration Costs

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total cost of the administration of his Department, expressed in constant prices, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Fowler: The real running costs of the Department of Health and Social Security excluding capital expenditure were:

	Cost terms 1983-84 prices £ million
1979-80	1,222
1980-81	1,288
1981-82	1,339
1982-83	1,372
1983-84	1,346

The basis of allocating costs has changed over the period so that figures for different years are not directly comparable.

The corresponding figures for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys are:

	£ million
1979-80	30
1980-81	36
1981-82	*61
1982-83	33
1983-84	30

* Census year.

Home Helps

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of people currently in receipt of assistance from the home-help system.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) on 16 January at column *166*.

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to encourage the training of suitable unemployed applicants to assist home helps.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans for schemes of this kind.

Medication (Costs)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the last year for which figures are available, how much was spent by the National Health Service on *(a)* cough medicine, *(b)* sleeping pills, *(c)* appetite-suppressants, *(d)* vitamins, *(e)* tranquillisers, *(f)* sticking plasters, *(g)* false teeth, *(h)* aspirin, *(i)* free contraceptives and contraceptive counselling, *(j)* free eyesight tests and *(k)* ambulance services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have full information in the form requested. For pharmaceutical services, the following are estimates based on a one in 200 sample of prescriptions dispensed by chemists' establishments in 1983:

Net ingredient cost to National Health Service (England)

	£'000
Expectorants and cough suppressants	14,195
Hypnotics	23,913
Appetite suppressants	468
Vitamin preparations	7,374
Sedatives and tranquillisers	23,050
Plasters	1,458
Anti-inflammatory drugs other than steroids	118,529

We are not able to give corresponding estimates for expenditure in the hospital and community health services.

The cost of false teeth to the National Health Service in England is estimated at £72·2 million in 1983-84. For contraceptive services, fees paid to general medical practitioners, together with the basic ingredient cost of medicines and devices prescribed and the cost of family planning clinics are estimated at some £67 million in 1983-84.

For eyesight tests and ambulance services, the 1983-84 accounts of health authorities in England show expenditure as:

	£ million
Payments to ophthalmic opticians and ophthalmic medical practitioners for testing of sight	72·2
Ambulance services	233·6

Separate figures are not available for expenditure on sight tests carried out in hospitals.

Overseas Volunteers (Benefits)

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when Her Majesty's Government expect to implement proposals that returning volunteers from developing countries should not lose title to contributory benefits simply because of their service overseas.

Mr. Newton: The class 1 (employed persons) contributions which many volunteers are liable to pay for their first 52 weeks abroad count towards the full range of contributory benefits. Those volunteers who satisfy the conditions for paying class 2 (self employed) contributions, and pay them, maintain their basic pension cover as well as earning title to most contributory benefits (but not unemployment benefit). Those volunteers who are not liable to pay class 1, or who do not pay class 2, contributions can usually pay class 3 (voluntary) contributions to maintain basic pension rights. A proposal to give further help to volunteer development workers who are unemployed when they return to this country is being considered but no decision has yet been taken.

Drugs (Side Effects)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about which drugs, prescribed under the National Health Service, are specified in the British Data Sheet as having side-effects significantly at variance with those specified by the United States Food and Drugs Administration.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A record of variations between United Kingdom data sheets and broadly similar documents in other countries is not kept. We are, however, informed by the World Health Organisation of major changes to warnings about medicines. These are considered by the Licensing Authority, which can take advice from the Committee on Safety of Medicines, and which, where appropriate, will seek changes to the United Kingdom data sheets.

NHS (Clearing Bank Services)

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will review the arrangements for the provision of clearing bank services to the National Health Service which presently provide no opportunity for competitive tendering.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A review of National Health Service banking arrangements has just been completed. The report contains a number of recommendations including a proposal to introduce competitive tendering. We will announce decisions on these recommendations in due course.

Retirement Pension

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretay of State for Social Services if he will give the percentage increase in the state retirement pension and the pensioners' price index since *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1974 and *(d)* 1970.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the increase in the retirement pension and pensioner prices indices from the uprating dates in 1983, 1979 and 1974 to November 1984, the latest uprating date. Since there was no uprating in 1970 the figures for 1969 and 1971 have been included.

	Percentage Increase			
	RP Single	*RP Couple*	*PPI Single*	*PPI Couple*
November 1969	616·0	607·4	428·1	423·7
September 1971	496·7	490·7	350·3	348·9
July 1974	258·0	258·1	229·2	226·7
November 1979	53·6	53·6	49·1	48·9
November 1983	5·1	5·1	4·4	4·5

Notes:
RP=Retirement Pension
PPI Single=One-person pensioner household index
PPI Couple=Two-person pensioner household index

Supplementary Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of people, including dependants, who qualify for supplemetary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: 4·3 million people were in receipt of supplementary benefit for themselves and their dependants, together totalling 7·2 million people, at December 1983.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether, following his consultations, he intends to include distalgesic in his limited list of medicines prescribable under the National Health Service;

(2) which of the medicines on his current limited list are antacids having the same balanced action as gelusil, now available on prescription under the National Health Service;

(3) whether, following his consultations, he intends to include gelusil or any other aluminium and magnesium combination antacids in his limited list of medicines prescribable under the National Health Service;

(4) which of the medicines on his current limited list provide the same degree of relief from pain as a combination of dextropropoxyphene and paracetamol.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are currently considering the advice received on our limited list proposals from the Chief Medical Officer's panel of independent experts, who have taken into account the results of widespread consultation. We will shortly be making an announcement on the contents of the limited list to be introduced on 1 April.

Children (Part-time Employment)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures on the number of children under the age of 16 years in paid part-time employment in *(a)* Leeds metropolitan district council area and *(b)* West Yorkshire county council area.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further heating payments for severe weather are to be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Chief Adjudication Officer has advised local adjudication officers that the "exceptionally severe weather" condition in regulation 26 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulation was satisfied in parts of England and Wales in weeks ending 12 and 19 January. Claimants in the areas affected will be able to claim help with fuel bills covering periods including that week or weeks. I understand that, on the basis of the published criteria, the Chief Adjudication Officer has decided not to advise that the "exceptionally severe weather" condition in the regulation was satisfied in any part of Great Britain last week. It is too early to say whether the condition will be satisfied in any part of the country this week.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown of the number of abortions performed in England and Wales on resident women according to the statutory grounds on which those abortions were performed in each of the following years: 1969, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983; and what was the total number of abortions performed on such women in each of those years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 February 1985, c. *367-68*]: I regret my previous answer contained several errors in the captions from year 1974 onward. The revised reply is:

Abortions performed in England and Wales on resident women, 1969, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1980 to 1983 by statutory grounds

Statutory grounds	Year 1969	1970
All	49,829	75,962
1.	1,842	2,163
2.	35,969	57,021
3.	2,281	3,486
4.	1,107	1,225
5.	14	10
6.	31	35
2 with 4	742	823
3 with others	7,843	11,199

Statutory grounds	1974	1978
All	109,445	111,851
1 with/without any other(s)	1,061	679
1 alone	88,130	92,949
3 alone or with others—except 1	18,559	15,855
4 with/without 2	1,686	2,356
5 and/or 6	9	12

Statutory grounds	1980	1981	1982	1983
All	128,927	128,581	128,553	127,375
1. With/without any other(s)	680	752	655	538
2. Alone	110,294	108,100	110,216	108,806
3. With/without 2	16,046	17,897	15,665	16,007
4. Alone or with any other(s) except 1	1,900	1,818	2,006	2,019
5. and/or 6	7	14	11	5

Footnotes to table:
Statutory grounds as listed in Schedule 2 of the Abortion Regulations 1968
1. Risk to life of woman.
2. Risk of injury to physical or mental health of woman.
3. Risk of injury to physical or mental health of existing child(ren).
4. Substantial risk of child being born abnormal.
5. In emergency—to save life of woman.
6. In emergency—to prevent grave permanent injury to physical or mental health of woman.

Information and Statistics

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why he does not collect information on information and statistics known to be collected by regional health authorities;

(2) whether he will list in the *Official Report* the statistics and information he requires regional health authorities to collect but which are not made available centrally.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985, c. *610-11*]: We see no purpose in collecting information about information we do not expect to use.

Benefits and Pensions (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of claimants of unemployment and supplementary benefits and pensions in the west midlands region in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *736*]: Figures showing the number of claimants receiving unemployment and supplementary benefits and pensions in the west midlands region as at May each year from 1980 are as follows:

	May 1980	*May 1981**	*May 1982*	*May 1983*	*May 1984*
Unemployment benefit only	47,200	114,200	85,200	78,200	‡
Supplementary pensions	159,727	161,647	168,302	‖158,900	164,075
Supplementary benefits to the unemployed†	64,988	126,579	190,145	223,384	216,911
Supplementary benefits to persons under pension age but not unemployed	65,418	70,495	87,783	104,530	128,783

* Unemployment benefit figures are for February 1981. Figures for May 1981 are not available.

† These figures include those persons receiving unemployment benefit supplemented by supplementary allowance and those receiving supplementary benefit only through the unemployment benefit offices.

‡ Figures not yet available.

‖ First year of introduction of housing benefit.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 February 1985

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Medical Research Council

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of funding of the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend is advised on the level of funding for the research councils by the Advisory Board for Research Councils. Following their advice, the allocations to the Medical Research Council in recent years have broadly maintained the council's share of the science budget at a constant proportion.

The hon. Member will be aware that for 1985-86 there will be an injection of new money of £11 million into the science budget; the Medical Research Council's share will be £2·1 million.

Oxford University

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average salary of lecturers at Oxford university; and what information he has about the average college stipend received by such lecturers.

Mr. Brooke: The average annual salary of non-clinical academic staff, paid wholly from general university funds, at Oxford university in the academic year 1983-84 was £11,800; my right hon. Friend has no information on the average college stipend received by such staff.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the private endowments to the colleges and the university are taken into account in the calculation of grant from his Department for Oxford university.

Mr. Brooke: The University Grants Committee and the Government both wish to encourage universities to increase their income from private sources. Universities that attract additional income whether by endowment or otherwise do not thereby suffer a reduction in grant. Endowment income has not been a factor in determining the distribution of recurrent grant to individual institutions since the quinquennial system was abandoned, except to the extent that such income is already implicitly taken into account in the historic baseline.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many lecturers are currently employed at Oxford university.

Mr. Brooke: In 1983-84 the latest year for which figures are available, there were 1,318 full-time academic staff at Oxford university paid wholly from general university funds. In addition there were 732 full-time academic staff who were not wholly university financed and 93 part-time academic staff.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many undergraduates are currently attending Oxford university.

Mr. Brooke: In 1983-84 the latest year for which figures are available, there were 9,350 full-time and 104 part-time undergraduates at Oxford university.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the Natural Environment Research Council over its corporate plan; and if he is satisfied that the Natural Environment Research Council is not strengthening its administrative corps to the detriment of environmental and geological survey work.

Mr. Brooke: While my right hon. Friend has not himself discussed the Natural Environment Research Council's corporate plan with the council, I have recently met the chairman twice to discuss it with him. I am satisfied that the council is not acting in the way described in the second part of the question.

Student Unions

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received in favour of the abolition of automatic membership of student unions.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on 12 February, at column *114*.

Teachers (Industrial Action)

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has been asked for any advice by local education authorities concerning their response to industrial action by teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No. A local authority's response to industrial action by its employees will depend on a variety of factors including the nature of the action and the employees' terms and conditions of service. The National Union of Teachers contends that school teachers are not contractually bound to stand in for absent colleagues. What a teacher is contractually bound to do as part of his job depends upon the express and implied terms of the contract of employment between him and his employer. It is for those parties to interpret the contract in the first instance: in the event of dispute it must be for the courts ultimately to decide. The question cannot be resolved, as the National Union of Teachers contend, by reference to a quotation from a letter written by my noble Friend, Baroness Young in 1979. In this letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) dated 1 November 1979 and dealing with the effects on a particular school of a dispute between Surrey county council and the local teachers' associations, my noble Friend concluded that this was not a matter in which the Secretary of State could intervene under the provisions of the Education Act 1944 and wrote that

"the teachers are not contractually bound to stand in for absent colleagues and they are not in breach of any statutory duty in refusing to do so."

However, my noble Friend wrote again on this matter on 2 April 1980. This letter concluded as follows:

"I said in my letter of 1 November that teachers were not contractually bound to stand in for absent teachers. I based this view on the fact that as I understood it there is no written requirement in the contract of teachers in Surrey nor I understand in most local authorities, which specifically requires them to provide cover. I understand that a copy of my letter has subsequently been used by teachers in the Midlands who are seeking to demonstrate that teachers generally are not contractually bound in this way.

Surrey County Council have asked me to make it quite clear that in their view, in certain circumstances, failure on the part of a teacher to provide cover could be regarded as a breach of the teacher's contract despite the fact that there is no specific reference to cover in the written contract. The teacher's liability would apparantly depend on whether the instruction to provide the cover was itself reasonable, given the circumstances in the school at the time and the past practice in the particular school."

We offer this account for the record to avoid risk of misunderstanding based on the limited version apparently circulated by the National Union of Teachers.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has reached a decision on the report presented to him by the Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children on the need for a national advisory committee on special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children has performed a valuable service in preparing the report. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have concluded that it is not necessary to establish an advisory committee in order to safeguard and to promote the interests of pupils with special educational needs. I have written as follows to the Senior Officer of the Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children:

Mrs Philippa Russell
Senior Officer
Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children
8 Wakley Street
London EC1V 7QE

14 February 1985

Dear Mrs. Russell,

Thank you for your letter of 29 June enclosing a copy of the report "A National Advisory Committee for Special Educational Needs?" Nicholas Edwards and I are grateful to the Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children for the valuable service they have performed in preparing this thorough review of the question.

As the report makes clear, most of the organisations consulted by your working party felt the need for some type of national body in this field. So far as the replies were specific however there was considerable variation in the views expressed about the nature and the functions of such a body. It therefore fell to the working party to consider a number of possible options and the report recommends the establishment of a body whose functions would be rather different from those of the former Advisory Committee on Handicapped children. Its main task would abe to monitor the implementation of the 1981 Education Act and the ideas underlying it, to promote interdisciplinary co-operation, and to help to overcome difficulties. The Committee would also offer advice to the Secretaries of State; and would promote research and development, publish reports and hold seminars and conferences. The report estimates the Committee's annual budget at about £150,000.

We have looked very carefully at each of these functions and are not convinced that the case has been made for creating an Advisory Committee. To take first the question of monitoring the implementation of the 1981 Act: this Act imposes certain duties on local education authorities and other statutory authorities and has some implications for voluntary bodies. The responsibility for ensuring that these functions are carried out properly rests firmly with Ministers who have the machinery — their Departments and HM Inspectorates—for obtaining information and advice. Clearly we shall need to draw on other sources from time to time but it is clear that the Secretaries of State do not need an additional national agency for this purpose; and to create one would run the risk of confusing lines of responsibility. It is true that the written evidence submitted to the working party drew attention to problems experienced in the early stages of implementing the 1981 Act. Many of these, however seem to arise from a lack of co-operation at local level between statutory authorities—a problem which the Warnock Committee had identified under the previous arrangements—and it seems to us that a solution to this sort of problem is more likely to be achieved by the efficient working of appropriate machinery at local and regional levels rather than by a national committee. It was inevitable that there should have been some difficulties in the early stages of the implementation of the 1981 Act, particularly in view of the changed obligations imposed on local authorities. As you probably know the Government have commissioned a research project by the University of London Institute of Education on developments following the 1981 Act, which is due to produce its report in 1986. There would, we think, be a real danger of confusion if another Government sponsored body were also looking at the implementation of the 1981 Act.

The second function envisaged for the Committee would be the traditional one of offering advice to Ministers. Although Ministers have their "in house" advisers there are many occasions when we need to sound the opinions of a wider group of people outside the Departments; and when the outside interests feel the need to let us know their views. It is however not clear to us how the creation of a committee, by itself, would add to our ability to obtain advice from our Departments, HM Inspectorates and the voluntary organisations. We already have a great deal of direct contact with the voluntary organisations which I know they value. If the voluntary organisations wish to approach Ministers, either individually, or collectively through organisations such as your own, they know they are welcome to do so. It is not at all clear that the interests of either side would be served by interposing between us a small body of individuals faced with the task of trying to interpret often widely varying views and trying to achieve sufficient common ground to give advice to Ministers.

If the Government needs advice on a particular topic, it is always open to them to establish a committee for a particular purpose. It is perhaps significant that the major reports on handicapped children were made, not by the Standing Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children, but by groups set up for a specific purpose.

The third broad function envisaged for the Advisory Committee would be to promote research and development. Once again the question arises as to what an Advisory Committee could do that is not capable of being done already through other channels. At present the Departments and the voluntary bodies commission research; the Departments, HM Inspectorate, local education authorities and voluntary bodies hold seminars and conferences. At the beginning of this year the Department of Education and Science had allocated over £800,000 for research into children with special educational needs. A further £300,000 has now been allotted for curriculum work. It is doubtful whether an Advisory Committee could argue that a larger share of the research budget should be devoted to this field. Most of these research projects are carried out by university departments or institutes of education since that is where the expertise lies. An Advisory Committee would not be able to carry out the research itself and would need to commission it from other bodies. It would rely heavily, as do the Departments, on reports produced by HM Inspectorate and on seminars held by the Inspectorate to publicise good practice.

Nicholas Edwards and I believe that it was right for the Government to provide financial support to enable this question to be reviewed by an independent body: and I was grateful for the opportunity to discuss the report with Lady Faithfull and others. We are, however, not convinced that the case has been made out for the establishment of an Advisory Committee at this time. This does not, however, rule out the possibility that we may wish to reconsider the position later; given that a number of the initiatives mentioned in this letter are due to produce results in the latter part of 1986, the time for a review might be two or three years from now.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Lady Faithfull, Mr. Hannam MP and Mr. Cooke.

Yours sincerely,
Keith Joseph.

WALES

Psychiatric Hospitals (Detainees)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons in Wales were ordered to be held in psychiatric hospitals under the provisions of the Mental Health Acts during 1984, or the most recent year for which figures are available; and what is the total number of such persons detained under orders in Wales at present.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Figures for 1984 are not yet available. Those for the previous year are set out in the following table. Further information on admissions is to be found in section 7 of the Mental Health Statistics for Wales No. 4 1984, copies of which are in the Library.

Patients Compulsorily Admitted/Detained in Wales under the Mental Health Act 1983 at 31 December 1983

Legal Status	*Total Number of Admissions During 1983*	*Total Number of Patients Detained at 31 December 1983*
Section 2	194	32
Section 3	69	92
Section 4	523	9
Section 5(2)	—	1
Section 37 (without section 41 restrictions)	15	14
Section 37 (with section 41 restrictions)	11	26
Section 46	—	—
Section 47 (with restrictions)	—	1
Section 47 (without restrictions)	—	1
Section 136	15	—
Other Powers*	22	—
Total	849	176

* Other powers refer to other Sections of the Mental Health Act 1983 and other Acts.

Tourism

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the projects of the Welsh Development Agency's service industries division being considered for financial support are related to tourism.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The Welsh Development Agency is not at present considering investment in any companies with projects related to tourism. However, it is considering proposals for a number of special projects which would be designed to use public funds to attract private investment in tourism. These activities would be complementary to those of the Wales tourist board, Mid-Wales Development and local authorities.

Disabled Students

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the facilities for disabled students in those colleges in Wales which come under his Department, and where necessary seek improvements in co-operation with the college authorities.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: It is the responsibility of the education authorities and others providing educational buildings to make provision for disabled students. My right hon. Friend has no plans for undertaking a review of the facilities in all colleges in Wales. However in carrying out inspections of colleges Her Majesty's Inspectors take note of the facilities provided for the disabled and where necessary draw attention to any inadequacies. In such cases the authority responsible for the college is asked to say what improvements it proposes to make in the light of the inspectorate's report.

Housing Starts

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of housing starts in Wales in *(a)* the public and *(b)* the private sector from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information for the period 1979 to 1983 is published in "Welsh Housing Statistics" (Nos. 1-4) copies of which are available in the library. Provisional estimates for 1984 are for 1,200 starts in the public sector and 5,200 in the private sector.

Council Housing

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of council houses to be built in Wales in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is estimated that 1,600 local authority dwellings will be completed during 1985. A reliable estimate for 1986 is not currently available.

M4 (Repairs)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to arrange for repairs to a small area of badly pitted road surface which presently constitutes a danger to traffic on the westbound carriageway between junctions 31 and 32 of the M4 in Wales; if, in the interval before the repair work is completed, he will cause appropriate warning signs to be erected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: There is some deterioration in the surface of the westbound carriageway at a point about three and a half miles east of the Coryton junction (No. 32). Remedial works will take place as soon as weather conditions permit. The present condition of the carriageway does not warrant the use of warning signs, but the situation is being carefully monitored.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many 1960s-built deck-access flats or maisonettes there are in Wales; and *(a)* how many are currently unoccupied due to repairs or renovation work and *(b)* if he will estimate the amount of money needed to repair these dwellings.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are approximately 1,300 deck access dwellings built in the 1960s in Wales. Information on the numbers currently unoccupied is not held centrally.

Homeless People

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many homeless people there are per 1,000 households in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Mid-Glamorgan and *(d)* Clwyd for the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: For Wales, Mid-Glamorgan and Clwyd the rates requested for 1983 were 13, 18 and 7 respectively where homeless people are defined as persons in households accepted by the local authorities as being homeless. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for the comparable figure for England.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the breakdown for each year since 1979 of the numbers of households accepted as homeless by Welsh local authorities; and what type of accommodation was made available for them, giving numbers of those housed in hostels, caravans, council houses or returned to relatives per each year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is give in the following table:

Households accepted as homeless

	Type of action taken by local authority:					
	Placed in hostels	*Placed in caravans*	*Placed in local authority dwellings*	*Placed with relatives/friends*	*Other**	*Total number accepted as homeless*
1979	385	32	1,220	242	2,797	4,676
1980	423	40	1,285	289	3,409	5,446
1981	519	28	941	252	3,722	5,462
1982	702†	31†	825†	227†	3,194†	5,611
1983	666	17	951	242	3,122	6,008
1984 (January-September)‡	500	10	795	209	2,296	3,810

* Including those enabled to stay in or return to previous accommodation, those otherwise placed, those referred to another local authority or to a voluntary organisation, and those given advice or assistance.
† Excludes data for one local authority.
‡ Provisional.

Cefn Mably Hospital

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report,* what is the proposed after use for Cefn Mably hospital in respect of which an application for regional selective assistance has been made.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I cannot add to the answer I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 11 February 1985 at column *50*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mrs. Peacock asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the proposed reforms of the legal aid system; and if he has any plans to extend legal aid to libel cases.

The Attorney-General: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the proposals put forward in the 34th Legal Aid Annual Reports. The Lord Chancellor is grateful to The Law Society and the Legal Aid Advisory Committee for their reports, and to the advisory committee for its review of the principle underlying the eligibility limits for civil and criminal legal aid and of the non-financial criteria for the grant of legal aid in both civil and criminal proceedings, which he referred to them in 1983. The Government will give careful consideration to the recommendations they make in the light of the resource and other implications. The Lord Chancellor hopes that the advisory committee's report will provide the basis for an informed discussion about the financial and non-financial criteria. The Lord Chancellor has no plans to extend legal aid to defamation proceedings.

Judges

Mr. Wainwright asked the Attorney-General what steps the Lord Chancellor takes when assessing persons for appointment as judges, to test the adequacy of their understanding of the British constitution.

The Attorney-General: Judges are selected on the basis of their professional ability, experience and standing. No specific test is appropriate; the Lord Chancellor takes into account the adequacy of candidates over a wide range of legal disciplines.

PRIME MINISTER

Journalists (Briefings)

Q11. **Mr. Madden** asked the Prime Minister if she will now ensure that all briefings to journalists held by her or by her officials are conducted on an attributable basis.

The Prime Minister: No.

York

Q64. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the City of York during 1985.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Auchenshuggle

Q65. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Auchenshuggle.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

North Mymms

Q73. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the parish of North Mymms.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Civil Defence

Q90. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the Government's policy on recruitment for the civil defence volunteers.

The Prime Minister: The Government are well aware of the importance of volunteer effort, particularly at community level. Action by local authorities is supported by grant aid and guidance in order to harness the potential contribution of all those citizens who wish to add their efforts to civil defence on a voluntary basis.

Basildon

Q91. **Mr. Amess** asked the Prime Minister what plans she has to visit Basildon.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 February.

Mr. Flannery asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 14 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 February.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 February.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 14 February.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I will be having further meetings later today including one with the Prime Minister of Italy.

Vice-President Sergio Ramirez of Nicaragua

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her talks with Vice-President Sergio Ramirez of Nicaragua on 9 February.

The Prime Minister: Vice-President Ramirez called on me on 8 February at his own request. I expressed my concern about the substantial build-up of arms, troops and foreign military advisers in Nicaragua and Nicaraguan support for attempts to destabilise democratic Governments elsewhere in central America. I made clear that the Government's future relations with Nicaragua would be determined by progress towards establishing genuine democracy there, scaling down of armaments and the cessation of support for subversion.

Minister of State for the Armed Forces

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister, in the light of the evidence given in the case of R. *v.* Ponting, if she will now dismiss the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley).

The Prime Minister: No.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. David Young asked the Prime Minister if, in view of the acquittal of Mr. Clive Ponting, she will now initiate a revision of the Official Secrets Act to ensure that its scope is limited to matters of national security.

The Prime Minister: Considerable thought has already been given to the possible revision of section 2 of the 1911 Act, leading to the conclusion (accepted by the Franks committee) that legislation would not be adequate if it limited criminal sanctions to matters of national security. The Government will continue to give careful consideration to the views which have been or may be expressed on this issue, but I do not see the hon. Member's suggestion as providing an acceptable way forward.

Second World War (Anniversary)

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Prime Minister what arrangements have been made to commemorate the end of the second world war.

The Prime Minister: It is our intention to hold a national commemoration which will both honour the dead and recall the reconciliation and reconstruction that has been achieved in 40 years of peace with freedom and justice. Her Majesty the Queen has graciously agreed to attend a service in Westminster abbey on 8 May in commemoration of the end of the second world war and of the sacrifices made in all the theatres of war. We shall seek the widest participation from this country of those who contributed to the victory. We shall also invite the ambassadors and high commissioners of all countries represented in London. Further details of the arrangements will be announced in due course. Last year the Government arranged for a party of widows and veterans to visit Normandy, it is also the Government's intention that a party of widows and veterans should be able to make a pilgrimage to the Far East in remembrance of husbands and comrades who died. Dates have yet to be fixed but it is hoped that it can be arranged around Remembrance Day this year. The details will be announced in due course.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Development (North-West)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many steering location

inquiries had been received in the north-west region of his Department; and, of these, how many had been referred to the Cumbria county council industrial development unit during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Trippier: In January 1985 the north-west regional office received 18 steering location inquiries; one of these was referred to Cumbria county council's industry development unit. Close liaison between the regional office and the IDU continues.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is in a position to announce a revised external financing limit for the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: An EFL for BSC of £275 million in 1984-85 was announced in November 1983 and was subsequently reduced following the Budget abolition of the national insurance surcharge to £273 million. Since then, BSC and its partners have terminated an uneconomic arrangement for the production of iron ore in Canada. The total cost to BSC of these arrangements is estimated at £130 million. BSC's EFL is being increased by £70 million to £343 million on this account, the balance to be funded from savings within BSC's existing EFL. Provision for additional grant will be sought in a Spring Supplementary Estimate and the increase in the EFL charged to the reserve.

Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (Merger)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive from the Director General of Fair Trading advice on whether the proposed merger between the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and Sealink is a qualifying merger under the Fair Trading Act 1973.

Mr. Fletcher: The proposed merger does appear to qualify for investigation under the Fair Trading Act, and the Director General will be advising on the question of reference within the next few weeks.

EC (Insurance)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the freedom provided to Common Market-based insurance companies to solicit and secure insurance business in the United Kingdom is in practice provided to United Kingdom insurance companies soliciting and securing insurance business from residents of other member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: In most other Community countries, United Kingdom insurance companies cannot obtain direct insurance business unless they are established in the country concerned. It is because we want a real common market in insurance that we are continuing to press for a liberal non-life insurance services directive and are intervening in support of the Commission in the insurance cases they are bringing before the European Court.

BL (Privatisation)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to employ external advisers on any aspects of BL privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I intend to appoint a merchant bank to advise the Department on possibilities for privatising BL businesses.

BL (Strategic Objectives)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has agreed revised strategic objectives with the BL board.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes. The Board's objectives are:

1. To return BL and its constituent businesses, either together or separately, to the private sector as soon as practical, while satisfying the Board's fiduciary duties. In any case where this objective cannot be achieved, the Board will review the future of that business.
2. To pursue in the Corporate Plan a specifically targeted programme of profitability improvement, within stated limits of public funding, so as to achieve a rate of return that would attract external funds on normal commercial terms without Government support.

Small Firms

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, he has assisted by regional development grant, selective financial assistance or any other financial assistance in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 13 February 1985, c. 174]: The following table sets out the schemes of assistance for which information on support for small firms is available. None of the information requested is available for regional development grants. Except where indicated, the Bolton committee definition of 200 employees has been used. Information on the amount of assistance given by region could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Assistance	*Number assisted*	*Amount £ million*	*Period*
Regional selective assistance (s.7)	†465	27·1	*1984-85
Support for Innovation (General Facility)	†417	23·1	1984
Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme	‡3,347	110 (loan value)	1984
Design Advisory Service Funded Consultancy Scheme (DASFCS)‖	790	3	1984-85
Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS)‖	960	5·5	1984-85
Small Firms Technical Enquiry Service (SFTES)	3,000 (enquirers)	4·4	1984-85
Quality Assurance Support Scheme (QASS)¶	24	0·2	1984-85
Small Engineering Firms Investment Scheme•			

Assistance	Number assisted	Amount £ million	Period
SEFIS I	†175	3·6	1984-85
SEFIS II¶	†2,335	20·0	1984-85

In addition, in 1984, the Small Firms Service handled 279,000 enquiries and 35,000 counselling sessions.

* To December 1984.
† Number of offers accepted/projects assisted.
‡ Number of guarantees given.
‖ Open to firms with 60-1,000 employees; figures given are estimates for firms with under 200 employees (Bolton definition).
¶ Figures given are for firms with up to 500 employees.
• Now closed to applications.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Houses (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals he has for the future occupation of empty prison houses on the Isle of Wight;

(2) how many houses built to provide accommodation for prison officers are at present empty on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Mellor: Of 103 quarters currently vacant, 11 have been allocated to staff, 36 are being refurbished, and 18 are being sold. Thirty-eight are earmarked for future staff needs. As more become vacant they will be sold.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many notices to quit or eviction orders in respect of prison houses have been served on former prison officers or members of a prison officer's family in the Isle of Wight over the past three years.

Mr. Mellor: Fifty-one notices to quit and nine eviction orders.

Remand Centres (Suicides)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides were recorded in remand centres for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The information is as follows:

	Number
1979	Nil
1980	2
1981	Nil
1982	Nil
1983	Nil

Licensing Laws (Scotland)

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he anticipates receiving the independent report on the changes in the licensing laws in Scotland.

Mr. Mellor: This report has been commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I understand that he expects it to be published in the summer.

Spain (Extradition Treaty)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about progress in negotiations with Spain for a new extradition treaty.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question on 11 February from my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) at column 11.

Flats (Lighting)

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has as to the effect of vandal-proof high luminosity lighting on the crime rate associated with big inner city blocks of flats; and if he will call upon his crime prevention unit to recommend local authorities and private blocks to install high luminosity low consumption lighting on all balconies and passageways.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Although there is no conclusive research evidence, a recent report on the Department of the Environment's priority estates project concluded that improved estate lighting can deter crime and reduce tenants' fear of crime.

Last year's joint departmental circular on crime prevention issued to local authority chief executives and others, recognised the importance of improved public lighting in local preventive measures. At the request of the Home Office, the British Standards Institution is preparing a guide for architects and planners on the security of new dwellings, including estates. This is to be published later this year and is expected to include advice on lighting as a crime prevention measure. The Home Office crime prevention unit is in contact with the Institution of Public Lighting Engineers on this subject.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the £1·5 million television and press campaign had on reducing crime in London and the Midlands last autumn.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The results of the campaign are still being evaluated.

Leicester (Rallies)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Leicestershire as to the cost of policing various rallies in Leicester on Sunday 3 February and the number of police being brought in from outside police forces; which forces were involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Leicestershire that assistance was provided by 250 officers from the Metropolitan police. I will write to my hon. Friend about the cost of the police operation as soon as the information is available.

St. Lucia (Police Visits)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis regarding the visit of chief superintendent Ron Hardy and a colleague to St. Lucia; by whom the visit was authorised; and whether the officers returned with the navigational log (helmsman's log) of HMS Conqueror.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that two officers from the Metropolitan police travelled to St. Lucia last week at the request of the Director of Public Prosecutions, to whom they will be reporting on their return.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Douglas Hogg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the most recent figures he has for the total number of persons who have been charged with criminal offences alleged to have been committed in Yorkshire and arising out of the miners' strike.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Up to 5 February the figures were as follows:

(1) Police force area	*(2) Number of those charged*	*(3) Number of charges preferred*
North Yorkshire	141	149
South Yorkshire	1,231	1,477
West Yorkshire	313	437

Note: Where the same person has been charged on different occasions, more than one entry will have been made in column (2).

Multiple Occupation Dwellings (Safety)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to promulgate the draft code of practice relating to means of escape from houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) and my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 28 January at column 21.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning means of escape in case of fire in premises in multiple occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received representations from the Liverpool city council, supported by hon. Members, about the need for early publication of the code of practice on fire safety in houses in multiple occupation. My noble Friend responded to these representations on 11 February.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have lost their lives due to fires in multiple occupied premises in each of the past five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of deaths from fires in dwellings in multiple occupation is published annually in "Fire Statistics, United Kingdom" (table 30 of the 1983 volume and corresponding tables in earlier years). Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Summer Time

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to oppose the European Economic Community recommendation to harmonise summer time throughout the Community, in view of its potential effect on the United Kingdom farming industry.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have decided, following consultation and agreement within the European Community, that for the years 1986 to 1988 the present system shall continue whereby the starting date for summertime at the end of March is common to all member countries of the Community, but the end date, during the fourth week-end in October, is four weeks later than continental member States. A draft order setting out the dates will be laid before Parliament.

Lowdham Grange Youth Custody Centre

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much leave was given to each of the two inmates of Lowdham Grange youth custody centre who were give leave to attend the funerals of friends or relatives in January.

Mr. Mellor: Eight hours and 29 hours, respectively.

Notifiable Drugs

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers identified as taking notifiable drugs in each year since 1975; if separate figures are available for Scotland; and if he will also publish them.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to persons notified to the Home Office as addicted to notifiable drugs, and figures for the United Kingdom and Scotland for the years 1978 to 1983 are given in tables 3.11 to 3.13 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs, United Kingdom, Supplementary Tables, 1983," a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The corresponding figures for 1975 to 1977 are as follows:

	New addicts notified during year	*Former addicts notified during year*	*Addicts recorded as receiving notifiable drugs in treatment of their addiction at 31 December*
United Kingdom			
1975	922	536	1,949
1976	984	541	1,874
1977	1,109	622	2,016

	New addicts notified during year	Former addicts notified during year	Addicts recorded as receiving notifiable drugs in treatment of their addiction at 31 December
Scotland			
1975	35	7	57
1976	57	20	65
1977	38	18	63

Metropolitan Police

Sir Nicholas Bonsor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the total cost to public funds of the Metropolitan Police in 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: As police authority for the metropolis, I have approved estimates which provide for net revenue expenditure (as currently defined) by the Metropolitan police of £747·641 million in 1985-86, an increase of 5 per cent. on the cash limit of £711·8 million which I set for 1984-85.

I have decided, however, that an accounting change should be made to the Metropolitan police estimates to bring them into line with the Supply Estimates presented to Parliament. In future, the net revenue expenditure figure in the Metropolitan police estimates, which is the basis of the cash limit, will be calculated without reference to certain Government grants, which in 1985-86 amount to £15·543 million. Accordingly, the cash limit for 1985-86 will be set at £763·184 million. This is a purely technical adjustment to secure consistency between the two sets of estimates: it has no effect on the force's level of expenditure or on the level of precept levied on the boroughs and districts in the Metropolitan police district.

UN Decade for Women

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement about the reply given by the Government to section D of part II of the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire;

(2) if he will request the British Broadcasting Corporation and Independent Broadcasting Authority to provide him with the information required by question 2.2 of section D of part II of the United Nations End of Decade for Women questionnaire.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his replies*, 12 February 1985, c. *93*]: The Government's reply reflects the constitutional position that editorial and administrative decisions are matters for the broadcasting authorities alone. I shall, however, ask if they can provide the information to which the hon. Member refers and I shall write to her.

ENERGY

CEGB (Coal Purchases)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many tonnes of coal were purchased by the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1983.

Mr. Goodlad: Details of the coal delivered to the Central Electricity Generating Board are published in the board's annual report and accounts. In 1983-84 74 million tonnes of coal were delivered to the board's power stations.

Energy Statistics

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of the energy market in the United Kingdom was held by *(a)* coal, *(b)* oil, *(c)* natural gas and *(d)* nuclear energy in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 and at the nearest available date in 1984.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Energy consumption figures on a primary fuel input basis are set out below. Those for 1984 are provisional.

Percentage shares† (fuel equivalent basis)

	1950	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*	*1984*
Coal	90	74	47	37	25
Petroleum	10	25	45	37	43
Natural gas	—	—	5	22	25
Nuclear electricity	—	*	3	4	†7

* Less than ½ per cent.
† Includes hydro electricity
Sources:
1950-1980 Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics
1984 Department of Energy Press Notice, 6 February 1985

Combined Heat and Power (Newcastle upon Tyne)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give his reasons for not allocating lead city status in the combined heat and power scheme to Newcastle upon Tyne; and whether this decision was based soley on the strength of the submission by that city.

Mr. David Hunt: In the reply of 25 January 1985 to the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) at column 547 my right hon. Friend listed the criteria which were taken into account in arriving at the decision to offer grant support.

North-Eastern Electricity Board

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the reason for the delay in the publication of his Department's report on the investigation by the North-Eastern electricity board into its responsibilities for the accuracy and operation of time switches used in the supply of dual tariff to domestic customers.

Mr. Goodlad: My Department has not been asked to investigate or report on this matter.

Petroleum

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list, for each major grade, imports of petroleum into the United Kingdm for each month in 1984;

(2) if he will list, for each major grade, exports of petroleum from the United Kingdom in each month of 1984 *(a)* in barrels and *(b)* in value.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Information of the type requested is not readily available. Information about the amounts and values of petroleum imported to and exported from the United Kingdom under major category headings is however available in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase or decrease in oil production in Britain for each month in 1984.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The information requested is given in the following table:

United Kingdom production of crude oil and natural gas liquids
Million tonnes

	1984	*Change from previous month*
January	10·8	−0·1
February	10·4	−0·4
March	10·6	+0·2
April	10·2	−0·4
May	10·5	+0·3
June	9·7	−0·8
July	10·5	+0·8
August	9·8	−0·7
September	10·1	+0·3
October	11·2	+1·1
November	10·8	−0·4
December*	11·3	+0·5

* Provisional.

SCOTLAND

Blind and Partially Sighted Persons

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute and maintain an official register of blind and partially sighted persons.

Mr. Younger: The present informal arrangements for the maintenence of information about blind persons by local authorities, or by voluntary agencies acting on their behalf, appear to work satisfactorily. The position remains subject to review, but I see no case for altering the existing practice meanwhile.

Trout Protection

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when a decision will be made on the request for a trout protection order, currently being sought for the Tay system under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976.

Mr. John MacKay: It is not possible to indicate when such a decision may be taken. Draft proposals for a protection order for the River Tay were discussed informally at a meeting between representatives of the proposers and the Consultative Committee on Freshwater Fisheries on 25 September 1984. A formal application has not yet been received.

Fish Stocks

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up a committee of inquiry, under independent chairmanship, to consider the decrease in migratory and indigenous fish stocks and its implications for conservation and the Scottish economy.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend does not consider that there are circumstances to justify the setting up of such a committee of inquiry at this time.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to halt the decrease of migratory fish stocks brought about by excessive exploitation by commercial concerns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Catch statistics published by my right hon. Friend's Department for the period since 1952 show substantial year to year variations in catches of migratory fish. The position varies from year to year but, for the country as a whole, it is the netting catch that has fluctuated; the rod and line catch has been relatively steady. There is no evidence of a decrease in stocks through excessive exploitation by legal netting methods.

A number of measures have been taken to try to improve runs of fish to Scottish rivers. These include a permanent ban on drift netting, increased efforts to reduce poaching and a reduction of the quotas of salmon to be taken in Greenland and the Faroes.

Forestry Policy

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the objectives of national forestry policy.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the statement on forestry policy made to the House by my right hon. Friend on 10 December 1980.

Stephen Anthony Godden

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report on the allegations of ill-treatment made by Stephen Anthony Godden of Orpington, Kent, while in police custody at Perth, as detailed in the letter he has received from the hon. Member for Orpington.

Mr. Ancram: I am making inquiries into the circumstances described in my hon. Friend's letter of 10 February and will write to him as soon as possible.

Hypothermia Thermometers

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) why the hypothermia thermometers issued to old people during the winter of 1983-84 have been withdrawn; what savings have resulted from this; and what plans he has to reintroduce them;

(2) how many Scottish Health Education Group packages, "Keep Warm This Winter", were printed in 1983-84 and 1984-85; and how many are currently available for old people.

Mr. John MacKay: Ten thousand "Keep Warm This Winter" packages were assembled by the Scottish Health Education Group in 1983-84 and in 1984-85. The

packages are made up of leaflets produced by a variety of organisations and are distributed through health boards and other appropriate organisations. I am unable to say how many are still available throughout Scotland.

No hypothermia thermometers have been withdrawn. Supplies were not available in time for inclusion in the packages this year, but some 2,300 were subsequently distributed. The group hopes to issue packages, including thermometers, next winter.

Police (Drug Squads)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the police forces in Scotland which have set up special drug squads.

Mr. Ancram: Of the eight police forces in Scotland, Grampian, Lothian and Borders, Northern, Strathclyde and Tayside have drug squads. Fife constabulary is in the process of establishing a squad and in the remaining two forces — Dumfries and Galloway and Central — designated officers are responsible for collating and disseminating intelligence on drugs matters.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of charges preferred under the Misuse of Drugs Act by each police force in Scotland in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The table shows the number of drugs offences cleared up by the police for the years 1979 to 1983. The classification of crimes and offences used by my Department does not separately identify the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 but includes in the relevant category various other statutes dealing with misuse of drugs.

Drugs offences cleared up by the police.

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Central	38	55	61	74	118
Dumfries and Galloway	25	31	32	32	23
Fife	55	44	53	50	66
Grampian	126	105	123	239	222
Lothian and Borders	181	256	220	631	709
Northern	98	111	121	160	199
Strathclyde	892	655	875	1,072	1,536
Tayside	131	170	125	246	331
Scotland	1,546	1,427	1,610	2,504	3,204

Farm Prices

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the President and Executive of the National Farmers Union of Scotland to discuss the European Economic Community Commission proposals for farm prices for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, together with other Agriculture Ministers, met representatives of the National Farmers Union on 6 February to discuss the Commission's proposals for this year's price fixing. A further meeting is likely to be held in the next few weeks.

Farming (Capital Grants)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the farming industry in Scotland on the cuts in capital grants; and what action he proposes to take on the matter.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State recently met the president of the Scottish National Farmers Union. In addition, representations have been received from a number of branches of the union and from a small number of farmers and agricultural contractors. These representations will be borne in mind in drawing up the scheme to implement the EC farm structures policy, currently being negotiated in Brussels.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now restore to farmers in the less favoured areas the capital grants to their former level for draining, fencing and re-seeding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: No. The Government fully acknowledge the importance of these activities but consider that the revised rates of grant, allied to the good rate of return which, for example, sound drainage provides, still provide a worthwhile incentive.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the loss to farm incomes for the current year of the capital grants cuts made by Her Majesty's Government on the farming industry; if he will estimate the combined effect of these cuts together with the higher level of interest rates on the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The changes in the capital grant schemes announced in December 1984 are expected to provide savings of £5 million in Scotland in 1985-86. They carry no direct implicationfor farm incomes. The overall effect of the changes on future investment levels or costs cannot at present be estimated.

Variable Premium Scheme

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his intention to retain the existing variable premium scheme for cattle and sheep.

Mr. John MacKay: It is our intention to press for the continuation of the beef variable premium in the 1985 CAP price fixing negotiations.

The European Commission is not proposing that we discontinue our sheep variable premium scheme, nor do we envisage the scheme's removal. At the price fixing we will therefore seek to secure improvements in the regime and the removal of elements in the Commission's proposals which would discriminate against our producers.

Annual Ewe Premium

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when Her Majesty's Government and the European Economic Community Commission propose to implement the decision of the Agricultural Council in March 1984 to make an advance payment of 30 per cent. of the annual ewe premium for 1984-85 to producers in less favoured areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The European Commission has not yet published its regulation authorising the 30 per cent.

advance payment of the annual ewe premium for the 1984-85 marketing year. Payments will issue immediately the rate has been confirmed.

I hope that the regulation will be published within the next few days.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases were reported to the Forestry Commission in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date of broadleaved woodland felling being carried out without felling licences when a felling licence was required by law; what was the total area so felled in each period; and how many prosecutions resulted from these cases in each period.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Number of Cases	*Area (hectares)*	*Number of Prosecutions*
Year to 31 March 1983:	19	46	9
Year to 31 March 1984:	37	298	14
Period of 9 months to December 1984:	9	25	1

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for felling licences for broadleaved woodlands clearance were rejected by the Forestry Commission in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date against the advice of the agriculture ministries and departments.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EC (Aid)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total amount of European Community aid received by *(a)* Strathclyde regional council, *(b)* Glasgow district council and *(c)* private organisations in Glasgow, up to the most recently available date.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Drug Abusers (Hospital Beds)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of beds in Scottish hospitals allocated for special use for drug abusers and *(b)* the proportion these beds are of total beds in Scottish hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: No beds in mental hospitals or psychiatric units are designated specifically for drug misuse patients. If a consultant psychiatrist decides that it is necessary to admit a drug misuser to hospital, he will utilise one of the psychiatric beds at his disposal.

Drug Clinics

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of drug clinics in Scottish hospitals; and where in Scotland they are located.

Mr. John MacKay: Hospital-based treatment for drug misusers is usually provided as part of the out-patient service available at all mental hospitals and psychiatric units, but there are three hospital-based clinics in Scotland providing services specifically for drug misusers. These are at the Southern general and Woodilee hospitals, Glasgow, and at Ninewells hospital, Dundee.

Drug Misusers (Services)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the projects in Scotland allocated funds as part of the central initiative to improve services for drug misusers.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) on 9 April 1984 at columns *32-33*.

Dental Undergraduates

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new dental undergraduates were admitted for dental education in Scotland in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of students admitted to the Scottish dental schools in the academic years 1983-84 and 1984-85 were 181 and 161, respectively. The 1984-85 figure is provisional.

Bonnybridge/Denny Morbidity Review

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the report of the Bonnybridge/Denny morbidity review under the chairmanship of Professor Lenihan.

Mr. Younger: I have arranged that the report of Professor Lenihan's independent review group will be published today. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library and will also be available from the Scottish Office.

The outcome of Professor Lenihan's independent review is that the general state of human, animal and plant health in the Bonnybridge/Denny area is normal. In particular, there is no evidence of a raised incidence of cancer nor of unusual morbidity effects which can be attributed to the chemical incineration plant in the area operated by Re-Chem International Ltd. Further investigation of the incidence of congenital eye defects in young children in the area is recommended, but the Lenihan group has found no evidence to suggest that these are individually anything more than the congenital defects of this type which occur throughout the country, albeit in small numbers.

The report's recommendations are being studied carefully and I shall be acting promptly on those that concern me. The public in general should be reassured by the findings of the Lenihan report. I am most grateful to Professor Lenihan and his colleagues for the time and energy they have devoted to this important review and for producing their conclusions with commendable promptness.

THE ARTS

Croxteth Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts how many representations the Minister for the Arts has received about the future of Croxteth hall, Liverpool; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Speke Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts how many representations the Minister for the Arts has received about the future of Speke hall, in Liverpool; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts how many representations the Minister for the Arts has received about the future of the Philharmonic hall, in Liverpool; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Power Presses (Injury Statistics)

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have suffered injury by way of amputation, crushing, or associated injuries from power presses, whether hydraulic, pneumatic, mechanical or otherwise, in each year from 1961 to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is not available in the form requested. In particular it is not possible, without incurring disproportionate cost, to give details about the nature of injuries received. However, using the legal definition for power presses given in the Power Presses Regulations 1965 (which includes mechanical machines with a flywheel and clutch mechanism and mechanical press brakes but excludes hydraulic and pneumatic machines) the following figures for accidents are available.

	Accidents at the tools of machines subject to the Regulations	*Accidents at the tools of fluid powered hydraulic and pneumatic press brakes*
1962	299	—
1963	350	—
1964	498	—
1965	441	—
1966	342	—
1967	230	—
1968	234	—
1969	245	29
1970	203	31
1971	159	28
1972	153	24
1973	152	24
1974	145	15
1975	—	7
1976	—	—
1977	—	—
1978	—	—
1979	48	—
1980	—	—
1981	—	—
1982	—	5
1983	27	3

In addition there were 51 accidents in 1974 and 13 in 1983 at the tools of metalworking hydraulic presses and 28 accidents in 1974 at the tools of metalworking pneumatic presses.

Figures for other years are not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancy notifications were given for each of the last 12 months for which figures are available in the Burnley travel-to-work area.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in the Burnley travel-to-work area†*

January to December 1984

	Number
January	149
February	55
March	82
April	34
May	Nil
June	4
July	52
August	4
September	Nil
October	Nil
November	Nil
December	‡39
Total January to December	‡419

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.

† Groupings of jobcentre areas approximating to Burnley travel-to-work area.

‡ Provisional.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies were notified for the second and third quarters of 1984 in Lancashire.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in Lancashire†*

1984	*Number*
Quarter 2	1,260
Quarter 3	1,474

Notes:

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur

and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.

† Groupings of jobcentre areas approximating to the county of Lancashire.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many redundancies in *(a)* the textile industry, *(b)* machine tool engineering, *(c)* general engineering, *(d)* service trades and *(e)* steel fabrication work were made in the last month for which statistics are available in the Workington travel-to-work area;

(2) how many redundancy notifications were given during the last month for which statistics are available in the Workington travel-to-work area.

Mr. Alan Clark: A provisional total of 40 redundancies were confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur in jobcentre areas approximating to the Workington-travel-to-work area in December 1984, the latest month for which statistics are available. Of these, 32 were in other manufacturing industries (SIC 1980, class 49) and eight were in metal manufacture (class 22). There were no advance notifications of redundancies involving 10 or more workers in December.

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the travel-to-work areas in Great Britain where male unemployment exceeds 25 per cent.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is available in the House of Commons Library.

Income Maintenance

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Emploment what is his latest estimate of the current price costs in 1983-84 and 1984-85 in England, Scotland and Wales of all income maintenance payments and allowances for which his Department is responsible, distinguishing between the different schemes involved, showing the rates of allowance paid in each case, and also showing the full cost of each scheme, with sub-totals for administration.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The income maintenance and allowances in 1983-84 for which the Department of Employment is responsible, together with the costs of each scheme and sub-totals for administration are as follows:

	Income maintenance/ Allowance paid £ million	*Total cost excluding administration £ million*	*Administration cost £ million*
Adult training	77·1	220·0	25·0
Youth Opportunities Programme / Youth Training Scheme	416·1	693·5	58·3
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative	—	7·2	0·3
Temporary Short Time Working Comp. Scheme	27·2	27·2	*0·5
Young Workers Scheme	58·3	58·3	*1·2
Community Industry	12·4	23·6	0·1
Community Programme	346·5	393·8	9·0
Job Release Scheme	258·2	258·2	*1·7
Job Splitting Scheme	0·3	0·3	*0·2
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	23·2	23·2	2·4
Voluntary Projects Programme	—	5·5	0·4

* Estimated—not accounted for separately.

The corresponding figures for 1984-85 are as follows and are derived from printed Estimates:

	Income maintenance/ Allowances £ million	*Total cost excluding administration £ million*	*Administration cost £ million*
Adult training	76·3	261·7	17·8
Youth Training Scheme	480·8	801·4	55·0
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative	—	25·2	0·5
Temporary Short Time Working Comp. Scheme	10·1	10·1	0·3
Young Workers Scheme	56·0	56·0	0·9
Community Industry	13·8	25·6	0·2
Community Programme	496·2	560·6	10·0
Job Release Scheme	314·9	314·9	1·3
Job Splitting Scheme	4·8	4·8	0·2
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	81·1	81·1	3·0
Voluntary Projects Programme	—	9·7	0·4

* Approximate: not calculated separately in Parliamentary Estimates.

The appropriate rates of allowances etc are:

Adult training

£39 pw plus dependants' allowance, mid-day meals, travel expenses etc.

YOP/YTS

£25 pw to 31.8.84, £26·25 pw from 1.9.84 — travel expenses, living away allowance etc.

TSTWCS

Employers are reimbursed for compensating employees with 50 per cent. of their normal wages on days lost because of short time working.

YWS

1984-85: Employers entitled to claim £15 pw for up to 52 weeks for each eligible employee engaged.

1983-84 £15 or £7·50 pw depending on total hours worked.

Community Industry
16 year olds—£29·70 pw.
17 year olds—£33·00 pw
18 year olds—£39·30 pw
19 year olds—£43·90 pw

Community Programme
Maximum average weekly wage of £60 (to 30.9.84): £63 (from 1.10.84).

Job Release Scheme	*1983-84*		*1984-85*	
	Tax free £	*Taxable* £	*Tax free* £	*Taxable* £
Full-time				
Higher rate	57·75	67·20	60·65	70·55
Lower rate	45·70	54·60	48·00	57·35
Part-time				
Higher rate	28·90	33·60	30·35	35·30
Lower rate	22·85	27·30	24·00	28·65

Job Splitting Scheme
£750 payable to employers for each job split.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme
£40 pw.

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Arrangements that accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the draft code are already in hand following the publication on 9 February 1984 of the programme of action on women in the Civil Service.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the number of entrants to the youth training scheme in 1983-84.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During 1983-84, the Manpower Services Commission compiled figures of the number of entrants to the youth training scheme by a manual information system. The monthly figures of the number of entrants produced by this system consisted only of the entrants about whom information was received in the month concerned. These figures, which produced a total of 353,979 entrants for the year, have been published by the commission previously.

The commission has now put the information about entrants into a computer system and has reallocated each entrant to the month in which he or she actually started training. The computer system also includes 16,241 entrants who commenced training in 1983-84 but about whom information was not received until after 31 March 1984 and who had not been included in the figures produced by the manual system. The actual total number of entrants to the scheme in 1983-84 is thus 370,220.

The table shows the monthly cumulative figures of entrants produced by the computer system and the comparable figures produced by the manual system:

Month	*Cumulative recorded entrants* to YTS*	
	Computer System†	*Manual System‡*
1983		
April	11,712	2,572
May	17,100	6,845
June	38,439	21,228
July	65,950	45,874
August	123,074	88,334
September	231,809	169,478
October	280,173	246,817
November	303,598	286,900
December	313,141	304,309
1984		
January	333,150	325,014
February	344,452	342,317
March	352,246	353,979
Total for year (with addition of Construction Industry Training Board entrants to the Computer system total)	370,220	353,979

Notes:
* These figures represent the actual number of scheme starts including some second and subsequent starts where trainees have transferred between schemes.
† The monthly figures do not include 17,974 Construction Industry Training Board entrants who were included in the manual system but who could not be included in the computer system.
‡ These figures do not include information about 16,241 entrants which was not received until after 31 March 1984.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those pesticide products used in wood treatment which contain *(a)* dieldrin, *(b)* DDT, *(c)* Lindane, *(d)* tributyl tin oxide or similar compounds and *(e)* benzene hexachloride.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *136-7*]: The Health and Safety Executive knows of no pesticide products used in wood treatment which contain either DDT or benzene hexachloride. Dieldrin is used in the pre-treatment of timber but is no longer approved for products used by householders or by firms specialising in wood treatment in situ. Lindane is the most commonly used insecticide marketed for wood treatment and tributyl tin oxide is one of the most commonly used fungicides. There are well over 200 products containing lindane or tributyl tin oxide or both, with frequent changes in the names of products and their constituents.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Salaries and Allowances

Mr. McGuire asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the number of officers, officials and staff of the House who are currently being paid a higher salary than a Back-Bench Member of Parliament, if he will give a breakdown of this number by grade or job description in each of the Departments of the House; and if he will give on the same basis details of any allowances being paid, on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis, and the reasons for such allowances.

Mr. Beith: The number and job titles of staff employed by the House of Commons Commission, with an annual rate, or on a salary scale which includes certain points exceeding £16,904, are given in the chart. The rates and scales quoted are those payable from 1 October 1984 except those indicated* which have been payable since 1 November 1984. All scales include £1,300 per annum inner London weighting allowance, except that no such allowance is payable to those indicated.†

The numbers of staff shown include some staff in grades with a salary scale exceeding £16,904 per annum who may individually be receiving an annual salary below that amount. Moreover, there are some staff not shown who receive a basic salary of less than £16,904 per annum but whose total emoluments, including overtime, night work payments or other extra duty allowances, and so on, may exceed that figure. Details of individuals in both categories could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Details of the allowances, in the nature of pay, currently being paid to certain staff in receipt of annual salaries exceeding £16,904 are also given:

Salaries (at 1 October 1984)

Number	Grade	Salary £
Office of the Speaker		
2	Speaker's Counsel	*30,800
1	Speaker's Secretary	21,313 — 25,617
1	Staff Inspector	14,195 — 18,789
Department of the Clerk of the House		
1	Clerk of the House	*†45,500
1	Clerk Assistant	*†36,500
1	Clerk of Committees	*†36,500
6	Principal Clerks Class I	*30,800
3	Principal Clerks Class II	*28,209
16	Deputy Principal Clerks	21,313 — 25,617
25	Senior Clerks	14,195 — 18,789
Department of the Serjeant at Arms		
1	Serjeant at Arms	*30,800
1	Deputy Serjeant at Arms	21,313 — 25,617
1	Assistant Serjeant at Arms	18,297 — 21,893
1	Deputy Assistant Serjeant at Arms	15,100 — 18,789
Department of the Library		
1	Librarian	*30,800
1	Deputy Librarian	21,313 — 25,617
2	Assistant Librarians	21,313 — 24,062
1	Deliverer of the Vote	16,849 — 23,134
8	Deputy Assistant Librarians	17,578 — 21,583
15	Senior Library Clerks	11,149 — 18,789
Administration Department		
1	Head of Administration Department	*30,800
1	Accountant	21,313 — 25,617
1	Head of Establishments Office	21,313 — 24,996
1	Computer Development Officer	19,504 — 24,996
1	Deputy Accountant	17,529 — 23,134
1	Deputy Head of Establishment Office	17,529 — 23,134
1	Senior Assistant Accountant	16,849 — 19,809
1	Internal Auditor	14,195 — 18,789
Department of the Official Report		
1	Editor	24,329 — 25,617
1	Deputy Editor	19,899
2	Principal Assistant Editors	18,666
2	Senior Assistant Editors	18,666
1	Assistant Editor	16,849 — 18,044
2	Deputy Assistant Editors	17,187
Refreshment Department		
1	General Manager	22,980
1	Deputy General Manager	14,195 — 18,789
1	Catering Accountant	14,195 — 18,789

Additional Information

(i) Numbers, categories and pay of their staff and their allowances are published in statement 'C' of the Commission's annual report.

(ii) The salaries of nearly all employees of the Commission are linked to those of Civil Service grades.

Allowances

Grade		Type of Allowance	Details of Allowance
Speaker's Secretary	1	Private Secretary to Mr. Speaker	£2,091 p.a.
Senior Clerk	1	Private Secretary to Chairman of Ways and Means	£3,023 p.a.
Senior Clerks	6	Heads of Night	£3,260 p.a.
Deputy Principal Clerk's / Senior Clerks	5 / 7	Nights	£2,570 p.a.
Deputy Serjeant at Arms	1	Nights	£2,570 p.a.
Assistant Serjeant at Arms	1	Nights	£2,570 p.a.
Deputy Assistant Serjeant at Arms	1	Nights	£2,570 p.a.
Library Clerks	2	Heads of Night	£3,260 p.a.
Assistant Librarians	—		
Deputy Assistant Librarians	2½	Nights	£2,570 p.a.
Senior Library Clerks	4		
Deliverer of the Vote	1		
Deputy Editor	1	Night Duty Pay	Minimum of £48·53 per night for attendance after 10.30 pm
Principal Assistant Editors	2		
Senior Assistant Editors	2		
Assistant Editor	1		
Deputy Assistant Editors	2		

Additional Information

(i) Nights allowances are calculated on an annual basis over a five-year period according to additional hours worked after 6 pm until the rising of the House.

(ii) Head of nights allowance includes an additional sum of £690 p.a. in recognition of additional responsibility undertaken during night work by the staff concerned.

(iii) Night duty pay for *Hansard* staff is paid on a nightly basis for attendance only after 10.30 pm

(iv) The rates of nights allowances and night duty pay quoted are those payable from 1 July 1983 and are currently under review.

(v) Nights allowances are not paid to the two recipients of a private secretary allowance, which includes an element to cover all additional hours of work inherent in duties of the posts concerned.

Trade Union Members

Mr. Rhodes James asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission how many staff of the House are members of trades unions; to which unions they belong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: The six trade unions operating within departments of the House are the Association of First Division Civil Servants, Civil and Public Services Association, Civil Service union, Hotel and Catering Workers' Union — part of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades union — Institution of Professional Civil Servants, and the Society of Civil and Public Servants. About 590 staff out of the total of approximately 920—about 64 per cent.—are thought to be members of these unions.

TRANSPORT

Highway Construction Programmes

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department monitors local authorities' highway construction programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We rely on local authorities' returns to the Department of the Environment for overall figures for their capital expenditure on road construction. Authorities provide information about their road construction programmes to my Department through their transport policies and programmes (TPPs) which they submit annually. These give information primarily about their policies and future programmes. They have, however, also provided information about past expenditure on the progress of individual highway construction programmes, but in a degree of detail which has varied from authority to authority.

With the changes to transport supplementary grant introduced for 1985-86, we shall be seeking more detailed and systematic information about the progress and costs of highway programmes in future TPPs. My Department will be giving authorities guidance on the preparation of TPPs for 1986-87 shortly.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest available daily flow of motor vehicles, showing heavy goods vehicles as a separate category, on the Colchester bypass section of the A12, the Canterbury bypass section of the A2, the Winchester bypass section of the M3, the Severn Bridge section of the M4 and the Oxford bypass section of the A40.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

Average Annual Daily Flow: 1983

	All motor vehicles	*Heavy Goods vehicles*
Colchester bypass section of the A12	12,000	2,500
Canterbury bypass section of the A2	14,000	2,500
Winchester bypass section of the A33*	40,000	5,700
Severn bridge section of M4	34,000	6,200
Oxford bypass section of the A40	38,000	2,500

* The Winchester bypass section of the M3 as not been built.

Minister's Letter (Costs)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *11*, if he will state the estimates sub-head under which the sum of £350 spent on his circular letter of 30 November 1984 was incurred.

Mr. Ridley: All but £7 of the total was spent under Estimates Subhead VI 2 GI(3) — Department of Transport general administrative expenditure. The balance was spent under XIII 22 A3—Stationery and printing supplies to the Houses of Parliament, etc.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any information as to the loss, in volume and sterling value, sustained by British Rail through the miners' dispute to the most recent date available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail estimates that to 9 February 1985 the dispute in the mining industry has reduced its freight receipts by £225 million and rail freight volume by about 70 million tonnes. This is bound to make it more difficult for British Rail to secure the future of its freight business and the jobs in it.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

4. **Mrs. Kellett-Bowman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current projected output of liquid milk in relation to quota in 1985.

Mr. Jopling: It is not this Department's policy to issue projections of production.

31. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to bring forward proposals to permit milk producers to have full interchangeability between their retail and wholesale quotas when the necessity arises.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 17 January at columns *498-99*.

32. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will take to ensure that Britain's milk quota is not further reduced in 1986.

Mr. Jopling: National quotas for 1985-86 and for the following three years are set out in the Community regulations on the milk supplementary levy. A Community reserve quantity exists to deal with special difficulties in implementing the quota system: the size of this reserve quantity and allocations from it are subject to annual decision. Although the quotas are set substantially in excess of Community consumption of milk and milk products, no proposals for reduction in the existing national or reserve quantities have been made by the Commission. I would certainly oppose any changes which discriminated against United Kingdom milk producers.

34. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when it is anticipated that the work of the milk tribunals in dealing with appeals for extra quota will be completed.

Mr. Jopling: I anticipate that the work of the England and Wales quota tribunal will be completed next week, apart from a small number of cases which cannot be resolved until later.

Horticulture Industry

15. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guarantees he is pressing for to safeguard the interests of the United Kingdom horticulture industry on the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government have taken care to safeguard the interests of the United Kingdom horticulture industry throughout the negotiations for the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community, in particular by pressing for an adequate length transitional period.

Food Prices

16. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effect on consumer prices in the United Kingdom of the price proposals for the common agricultural policy recently made by the Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I estimate that overall the European Commission's recent proposals for 1985-86 farm prices would add about one third of 1 per cent. to retail food prices.

Dairy Farmers

17. **Mr. Steen** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent it will be possible to ensure that small dairy farmers will be able to produce up to their 1983 level of output.

Mr. Jopling: My intention is that part of the quota bought up under the outgoers scheme will be reallocated so as to restore small producers whose final quota is 200,000 litres or less to their base year level of production. For most of them this will be their 1983 level.

CAP Intervention System

18. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will propose to his counterparts in the European Economic Community Council of Agriculture Ministers at their next meeting the introduction of the standard quantities concept for leading food items in the common agricultural policy intervention system.

Mr. MacGregor: In March 1984 the Council of Ministers agreed in principle to introduce guarantee thresholds for all products in or likely to be in surplus or on which expenditure is rising rapidly. Guarantee thresholds are in many ways similar to standard quantities.

Agriculture Industry (Subsidies)

19. **Mr. Chope** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures available for public subsidies to agriculture per person employed in agriculture.

Mr. MacGregor: There are problems in the definition of "subsidies", but figures relevant to my hon. Friend's question are given in the 1985 annual review of agriculture White Paper (Cmnd. 9423), in particular, tables 5 and 28.

Agricultural Prices

20. **Mr. Strang** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the European Economic Community Commission's 1985-86 agricultural price proposals.

Mr. Jopling: Since the Commission announced its proposals on 30 January, I have received representations from the farmers' unions in the United Kingdom. I anticipate receiving shortly representations from other interests.

21. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the European Economic Community Commission to make common agricultural policy proposals for the next year.

Mr. Jopling: The European Commission announced its proposals for CAP prices for 1985-86 and related measures on 30 January; the Council of Ministers (Agriculture) is expected to discuss these proposals at its next meeting on 25-26 February.

British Food Products

22. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the scope and quality of the marketing and promotion of British food products by British organisations.

Mr. MacGregor: I am never satisfied that we have reached a stage where further progress cannot be made. The Government attach considerable importance to the marketing of our food, and that is why we set up Food From Britain nearly two years ago with the aim of improving our efforts in this area. During that time encouraging progress has been made. The various organisations which operate in specific commodity sectors also devote considerable resources to marketing and promotion.

Sheep Scab

23. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken by his Department to prevent the spread of sheep scab.

Mrs. Fenner: Early last year the Ministry, with the full co-operation of the industry and local authorities, intensified the programme to control and eradicate sheep scab. As part of this programme two national dipping periods were applied. Consultations are in progress about the measures to be adopted this year.

Sugar

24. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of sugar being used for industrial purposes.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom food processing and chemical industries use approximately 1·4 million tonnes of sugar per year, of which about 25,000 tonnes are used by the chemical industry.

Farming Land (Trusts)

25. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of farming land is owned by trusts.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that no official statistics are available on the ownership of agricultural land.

Farm Capital Grants

26. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the proposed changes in farm capital grants.

Mr. Jopling: By yesterday I had received a letter from the president of the National Farmers Union and correspondence from hon. Members of this House enclosing copies of letters from county branches of the NFU. In addition, 27 other hon. Members have written to me sending copies of letters written by members of the Land Drainage Contractors Association whose chairman and secretary have written to me direct.

Departmental Services (Privatisation)

27. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what current plans he has for privatising services controlled by his Department.

Mr. Jopling: In addition to privatisation that has already taken place, we are currently examining the possibility for the National Seeds Development Organisation. Further, following the Agricultural Holdings Act 1984, responsibility for the appointment of arbitrators under the agricultural holdings legislation will be transferred to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors in January 1986. I regularly review the Ministry's work to assess other possibilities.

National Diet (Improvement)

28. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to introduce programmes to alter food production to provide for a healthier national diet.

Mrs. Fenner: It is the aim of the Government to ensure that consumers are provided with sufficient information about foods to enable them to make the appropriate choices within the diet that they wish to follow. We think it is for the food industry to assess consumer demand for various types of products and supply them accordingly.

Dairy Quotas

29. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the implementation of the new European Economic Community dairy quotas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Most member states have now made the necessary arrangements to implement the supplementary levy system. However, the Commission has initiated infringement proceedings against Italy for its failure to make the required implementing arrangements. Various problems remain with the application of the measures and the Commission has proposed a number of technical amendments designed to help resolve these. Meanwhile, member states are not collecting the interim payments of supplementary levy due before the end of 1984-85. In the United Kingdom most of the work of the tribunals will be completed by next week. We shall then be able to finalise wholesale producers' secondary quota and calculate the total primary and secondary quota for direct sellers.

30. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the progress of the dairy produce quota scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I am glad to say that the main bulk of the England and Wales quota tribunal's work will be completed next week. We shall then be able to finalise wholesale producers' secondary quota and calculate the total primary and secondary quota for direct sellers.

I am satisfied that we are doing everything possible to operate the rules as flexibly and as helpfully as we can and I believe the system is as fair as it could be, given the need to settle quotas quickly.

We are, of course, aware of the need for changes in some areas, without prejudice to the fundamental principles of the quota scheme. The Commission has now put forward a number of proposals which go some way towards meeting our requirements.

Environment Improvement (Financial Support)

33. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ensure that schemes of environmental improvement on farms in the less-favoured areas should receive financial support from his Department.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department already provides assistance through the capital grant schemes to a range of environmentally desirable farm improvements. Moreover, we are pressing for the new EC structures regulation to incorporate wider powers to promote farming practices beneficial to the environment.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

35. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the recommendations in the first report of the Environment Committee on the operation and effectiveness of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as they affect the work of his Department.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government are currently considering the Committee's recommendations and will make their response in due course.

Outgoers Scheme

36. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress made on the outgoers scheme for dairy farmers.

Mr. Jopling: To date invitations have been sent to a total of 3,920 producers. By 8 February, 1,273 producers had decided to go out of production and they will, on a full year basis, surrender a total of 160 million litres. As other producers come to make their decisions, some will no doubt drop out, thereby allowing offers to be made to others. I have no reason to suppose that we will not be able to reach our target of 289 million litres.

Soil Survey

37. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about his announcement on 18 January, *Official Report*, column 248, on the level of financial support for the Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: I have received 25 letters from hon. Members on this subject since my announcement on 18 January.

Drainage

38. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's current policy on drainage grants.

Mrs. Fenner: My hon. Friend the Minister of State explained my Department's policy on drainage in the debate on 23 January in the Fifth Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. Briefly, we recognise the importance of field drainage in good land management, which is why we shall continue to grant-aid it. But drainage grants have accounted for almost one third of grants paid under the agriculture and horticulture grant scheme, and over the last five years about £230 million in grant has been paid for field drainage in the United Kingdom. Approximately 60 per cent. of lowland drainage grants in England go to the specialised cereals and general arable sectors.

Caribbean (Ministerial Visit)

39. **Mr. Barron** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Parliamentary Secretary's recent visit to banana-producing countries in the Caribbean.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 4 February.

Beef and Sheepmeat

40. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement giving Her Majesty's Government's response to proposals by the European Economic Community Commission to abolish variable beef premiums and restrict support under the sheepmeat regime.

49. **Mr. Nicholson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support the retention of the variable premium during the farm price negotiations in Brussels.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

Farm Incomes

41. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the trend in farmers' real incomes over the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Agricultural income inevitably fluctuates from one year to the next. My main concern is over the imbalance between returns to the relatively prosperous arable sectors and those to some livestock sectors. We will take account of this imbalance during the forthcoming CAP price fixing.

Agricultural Research

42. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present research work carried out at the various agricultural research establishments in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: My Ministry maintains a continuous dialogue with establishments carrying out research on its behalf. One of the purposes of this dialogue is to ensure that the work undertaken is of an acceptable quality. The content of the research programme is also kept under regular scrutiny. Agriculture Ministers will be taking account of the advice of the priorities board in determining how Departments' research resources are to be allocated in future.

Dutch Horticulture Industry

43. **Mr. Torney** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest position regarding subsidised fuel by Holland to its horticulture industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe).

Beef Cow Herd

44. **Sir John Farr** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the decline in numbers of the beef cow herd since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: The beef cow herd in the United Kingdom decreased by 192,000 head between June 1979 and June 1984.

Food Products (Contents)

45. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will introduce legislation to extend the range of information required to be displayed by manufacturers on the content of food products.

Mrs. Fenner: The Food Labelling Regulations 1984 which came into operation on 19 September 1984 represents a very substantial improvement in food labelling law. We are, however, considering the recommendation for improved labelling of the fat content

of foods which was contained in the report of the committee on medical aspects of food policy on diet and cardiovascular disease. Industry representatives have also discussed with my officials the possibility of full nutrition labelling of foods. We hope to make an announcement shortly.

Winter Wheat

46. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the intervention price of winter wheat.

Mr. MacGregor: There is no intervention price for winter wheat as such. The current intervention price for feed wheat is £122·59 per tonne.

Fishing Industry

47. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in eliminating national operating aids given to fishing industries in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. MacGregor: The European Commission has undertaken a comprehensive review of all national aids in the fisheries sector and is instituting action where those aids are considered to be incompatible with Community law.

New Zealand Dairy Produce

48. **Mr. Body** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the level of imports into the United Kingdom of New Zealand dairy produce; and if he will make a statement about future levels.

Mr. MacGregor: The trade statistics show that in 1984 the United Kingdom imported from New Zealand 89,749 tonnes of butter, 6,111 tonnes of cheese and 66 tonnes of milk powder. Not all of this will necessarily have entered into free circulation.

For the future the United Kingdom is authorised to import on special terms 81,000 tonnes and 79,000 tonnes of butter from New Zealand in 1985 and 1986 respectively. The quantity of imports in 1987 and 1988 is to be determined by the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers before 1 August of the previous year on the basis of a report and proposal from the Commission. The Council is to decide before 1 August 1988 on the maintenance of the special arrangements after 1 January 1989. In addition, New Zealand may export to the European Economic Community on special terms up to 9,500 tonnes of cheese annually, most of which is expected to come to the United Kingdom.

Hill Farmers (Compensatory Allowances)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1968 the level of compensatory allowances paid to hill farmers for sheep and cattle in terms of current and 1980 prices and the total cost of such allowances to the Exchequer in each of those years.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is as follows:

Rates of Compensatory Allowance in the United Kingdom

	Cattle		Higher Rate Sheep		Lower Rate Sheep	
Year	Rate of allowance £	1980 price equivalent £	Rate of allowance £	1980 price equivalent £	Rate of allowance £	1980 price equivalent £
1968	21·25	85·93	1·22½	4·95	0·70	2·83
1969	22·25	85·41	1·22½	4·70	0·70	2·69
1970	23·75	85·68	1·60	5·77	1·07½	3·88
1971	23·75	78·28	1·65	5·44	1·10	3·63
1972	24·50	75·38	1·75	5·38	1·20	3·69
1973	24·50	69·09	1·75	4·94	1·20	3·38
1974	24·50	59·55	3·00	7·29	2·25	5·47
1975	24·50	47·92	3·60	7·04	2·85	5·57
1976	29·00	48·67	3·60	6·04	2·85	4·78
1977	29·00	42·01	3·60	5·22	2·85	4·13
1978	29·00	38·80	3·60	4·82	2·85	3·81
1979	29·00	34·21	4·10	4·84	2·85	3·36
1980	35·00	35·00	5·50	5·50	4·25	4·25
1981	42·50	37·99	6·25	5·14	4·25	3·80
1982	44·50	36·63	6·25	5·14	4·25	3·50
1983	44·50	34·97	6·25	4·91	4·25	3·34
1984	44·50	33·31	6·25	4·68	4·25	3·18
1985	44·50	31·41	6·25	4·41	4·25	3·00

Notes:

(1) To arrive at the 1980 price equivalent, the rates have been adjusted by the relevant RPI for each year.

(2) For ease of comparison, all rates have been expressed on a decimal basis.

(3) From 1968 to 1975 inclusive payments were made under the United Kingdom Hill Cattle and Hill Sheep Subsidy Schemes. From 1976 onwards payments were made under Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) Schemes.

(4) From 1985, allowances became payable in the new LFA. The rates are: Cattle—£22·25, Sheep—£2·12.

*United Kingdom Expenditure by Financial Year**

	Total† £ million
1968-69	22·1
1969-70	23·9
1970-71	28·0
1971-72	29·6
1972-73	30·9
1973-74	34·3
1974-75‡	67·5
1975-76‡	22·4
1976-77	82·9
1977-78	50·2
1978-79 ‖	36·5
1979-80 ‖	96·4
1980-81	95·0
1981-82	84·5
1982-83	88·3
1983-84	91·5
1984-85¶	97·4

* The total cost per calendar year could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

† The total expenditure figures do not take account of the sums reimbursed from the guidance section of FEOGA, which since 1976 have amounted to 25 per cent. of eligible expenditure.

‡ Expenditure in these two years was distorted by a change in the qualifying date.

‖ Expenditure in these two years was distorted by delays due to industrial action.

¶ This is an estimated figure, which takes into account the extension of the less favoured area agreed in 1984.

Meat (Export Refunds)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the average time which elapsed in 1984 in the payment of advance export refunds on meat under

European Economic Community regulation 565/80 between *(a)* placing of the meat under customs control, *(b)* receipt of the claim by the intervention board and *(c)* issue of the payment by the board; and what steps he can take to reduce the length of these periods in respect of Northern Ireland meat exporters.

Mr. MacGregor: The average time taken between entry of the meat into customs control and receipt of the claim by the intervention board could not be ascertained without disproportionate cost. The average time taken from receipt to payment of the claim was four weeks. Management action has been taken by Her Majesty's Customs to clarify instructions and by the board to strengthen the staff engaged on this work.

Dumping at Sea

Mr. Hill asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, under proposed new legislation for dumping at sea, the United Kingdom will conform to international conventions on sea dumping; and what powers will exist to enforce such conventions.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. Part II of the Food and Environment Protection Bill contains all the necessary powers to implement the international conventions on dumping at sea, including powers of enforcement.

Mr. Hill asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, following his proposed measures for monitoring the dumping of nuclear and toxic waste within United Kingdom territorial waters, he will also include within the Food and Environment Protection Bill [*Lords*] provisions to protect marine life from dumping of all types of waste products.

Mr. MacGregor: Such provisions are included in the Bill.

Mr. Hill asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions exist under European Community law to monitor levels of dumping at sea of waste products, including nuclear and radioactive materials.

Mr. MacGregor: Under the Euratom treaty, member states are required to monitor the level of radioactivity in air, water and soil. There are no provisions in European Community law which require levels of dumping to be monitored.

Food Imports

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much *(a)* wheat, *(b)* sugar, *(c)* butter and *(d)* cheese was imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is set out in the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1985" (Cmnd. 9423) in tables 8, 11 and 17, a copy of which is in the Library.

Food Manufacture

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much *(a)* wheat, *(b)* sugar, *(c)* butter and *(d)* cheese was manufactured in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is set out in the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1985" (Cmnd. 9423) in tables 8, 11 and 17, a copy of which is in the Library.

Food Supplies (Warfare)

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are any plans to bring food supplies into city areas in the event of attack.

Mrs. Fenner: This and other aspects of food control and distribution in wartime are covered in the plans being developed by MAFF and local authorities.

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Food Manufacturers Federation and *(b)* the National Farmers Union about the provision and distribution of food in *(a)* a conventional phase and *(b)* a nuclear phase of an attack.

Mrs. Fenner: Consultations on this matter have taken place with representatives of the food trades, including members of the Food Manufacturers Federation. No consultations have yet taken place with the NFU.

Nuclear Blast

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to issue advice to farmers on making grain stores and cattle sheds secure against blast and radiation effects of nuclear weapons.

Mrs. Fenner: Advice to farmers on protection against the effects of radioactive fallout will be given in the revised version of "Home Defence and the Farmer." General information on the effects of nuclear weapons is contained in "Nuclear Weapons" and on protective measures in "Domestic Nuclear Shelters Technical Guidance," both published by the Home Office.

Crops (Cold-resistant Strains)

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are any plans to produce cold-resistant strains of crops for use after a nuclear attack.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department has no such plans.

Warfare (Food Distribution)

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines have been issued to commercial food manufacturers and distributors about distributing food in the event of an attack; and whether commercial companies are expected to undertake this task.

Mrs. Fenner: Proposals for food rationing in wartime, which were formulated in consultation with representatives of the food trades, are now being discussed with local authorities. The question of the part to be played by commercial companies and any guidance to be offered on this has yet to be decided.

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with representatives of commercial food suppliers and distributors about distribution of food to the public in an attack.

Mrs. Fenner: Discussions with these interests have taken place as part of the Department's routine civil defence planning for food distribution in crisis and war.

Warfare (Food Stocks)

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated time that stocks of *(a)* wheat, *(b)* butter and fats, *(c)* sugar and *(d)* canned foods would be expected to last in the event of an attack.

Mrs. Fenner: No single estimate can be given in view of the large number of factors involved.

Warfare (Livestock)

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are any plans to evacuate livestock from likely target areas in the event of *(a)* nuclear war and *(b)* conventional war.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department has no such plans.

Solway Firth (Salmon Netting)

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last visited the Solway Firth to review salmon netting practices.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, and I visited the Solway on 26 July 1984 to meet representatives of local fishing interests and to see salmon nets in operation. Following that meeting, discussions have been taking place between representatives of the North-West water authority and the Annan district salmon fishery board, with co-operation from the fisheries departments, to identify solutions to the major problems which have to be overcome to achieve a system of joint management of salmon and freshwater fisheries in the Solway area.

Aircraft Usage

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make available in the Library data covering the overall usage of aircraft in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and other situations since 1979, in the manner in which it was previously published by his Department;

(2) why data on the overall usage of aircraft in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and other situations is no longer published by his Department.

Mrs. Fenner: Data on the aerial application of pesticides in agriculture, horticulture and forestry for the years 1978 to 1981 have been published in the pesticide usage survey report series (reports numbers 22, 28 and 34). A report for 1982 is in preparation.

The collection, for the purpose of the annual review of agriculture, of data on the overall use of aircraft in agriculture and so on was discontinued in 1980 as being of insufficient significance to justify the costs of collection.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide a list of all the pesticide usage survey reports published to date; and if he will make available in the Library survey reports Nos. 23. "Review of usage of pesticides in agriculture, horticulture and forestry, England and Wales 1975-79", 29, "Vegetables, 1981" and 35, "Arable farm crops and grass 1982".

Mrs. Fenner: Pesticide usage survey reports published to date are as follows:

Report No.

1. Hops 1965-1969 (with 1970)
2. Cereal seed dressings 1970
3. Vegetables for human consumption 1966, 1969
4. Orchards 1967, 1970
5. Hops 1970-1972
6. Soft fruit 1965, 1968, 1971
7. Mobile seed treating/cleaning machines 1972/1973
8. Review of usage of pesticides in agriculture and horticulture in England and Wales 1965-1974
9. Vegetables for human consumption 1972
10. Orchards 1973
11. Arable farm crops (including Scotland) 1974
12. Glasshouse crops 1968, 1972
13. Glasshouse crops (+ Scotland) 1976
14. Hardy nursery stock (+ Scotland) 1971, 1976
15. Soft fruit (+ Scotland) 1975
16. Hops 1973-1977
17. Review of usage of pesticides in food storage and processing, industry and public health — United Kingdom 1964-77
18. Arable farm crops (+ Scotland) 1977
19. Vegetables (+ Scotland) 1977
20. Fodder and forage crops 1979
21. Orchards 1979
22. Aerial spraying, Great Britain 1978, 1979
23. Review of usage of pesticides in agriculture, horticulture and forestry in England and Wales, 1975-1979
24. Soft fruit 1980
25. Protected crops: glasshouses 1981 and mushrooms 1982 (Preliminary report)
26. Hops 1978-1981
27. Review of pesticide usage in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, Scotland 1975-1979
28. Aerial applications, Great Britain 1980
29. Vegetables 1981 (Preliminary report)
30. Hardy nursery stock 1981
31. Pesticides used on sheep 1981 (Preliminary report)
32. Soft fruit 1980, Orchard 1979, Scotland
33. Pesticides and preservatives used in vegetables and fruit during storage, Scotland 1980
34. Aerial applications, Great Britain 1981
35. Arable farm crops and grass 1982 (Preliminary report)
42. Glasshouses with cut flowers, bulbs and mushrooms, Scotland 1981
44. Oilseed rape Scotland 1982
47. Oilseed rape England and Wales 1982
48. Hops 1982 (Preliminary report)

Arrangements

Arrangements are being made for a complete set of these reports (including the preliminary reports) to be placed in the Library.

The following reports are in preparation:

Report No.

37. Outdoor bulbs 1982
38. Orchards and fruit stores 1983
41. Review of usage of pesticides in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry in England and Wales 1980-1983
43. Hardy nursery stock, Scotland 1981
45. Arable farm crops, Scotland 1982
46. Vegetables for human consumption, Scotland 1982
49. Aerial applications 1982
52. Aquatic herbicides used by Water Authorities 1981
53. Usage of pesticides by Local Authorities 1979
54. Pesticides used on sheep, Scotland 1983

Copies of these will be placed in the Library as soon as they become available.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those

pesticide products cleared under the pesticides safety precautions scheme containing methyl isothiocyanate, or liberating methyl isothiocyanate when used.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *108*]: There is one pesticide containing methyl isothiocyanate which is cleared under the pesticides safety precautions scheme, but I understand it is no longer marketed in this country. There are two active ingredients included in products cleared under the pesticides safety precautions scheme which liberate methyl isothiocyonate on use. These are metham sodium and dazomet. The products concerned are used for soil fumigation and are as follows:

Basamid
Basamid liquid
Campbell's metham sodium
Sistam
Super sistam
Vipam
Vitafume
Vond Metam
Boszamet minicrystals
Midox dazomet crystals
Salvo

Departmental Vote (Cash Limits)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is proposed to change the cash limit on any Department Vote for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Jopling: Yes. Following underspending on a number of services, the cash limit for Class III, Vote 4 (Other Agricultural and Food Services and Support for the Fishing Industry) is being reduced by £7 million from £149,134,000 to £142,134,000. This reduction will partly offset increased expenditure, subject to parliamentary approval, of £23,300,000 on Class III, Vote 3 (Agricultural Support, Animal Health, Land Drainage and Flood Protection) which is not subject to a cash limit and for which a supplementary estimate will be presented to Parliament shortly.

Seal Population (North Sea)

Mr. John Townend asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the seal population in the North sea; what information he has as to the gross food requirement of the seal population there; and what information he has as to the amount of fish destroyed but not consumed by the seals.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 December 1984, c. *295*]: The Natural Environment Research Council provides regular advice on the management of seal populations, including annual estimates of the population.

There are five population centres for grey seals in the United Kingdom: the Farne Islands, Outer Hebrides and Orkney, Inner Hebrides, and South-West Britain. Only the Farne Islands population can really be considered to be in the North sea, and NERC's population estimate for that area is 8,010.

For common seals there are six population centres: Inner Hebrides, Outer Hebrides, Orkney, Shetland, east coast Scotland and the Wash. The figures for the two relevant areas—east coast Scotland and the Wash—are 850 to 1,050 and 6,600 respectively. The approximate total of all seals in the North sea is therefore 15,500.

In January 1984, NERC's sea mammal reseach unit produced a report for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland on the interactions between grey seals and United Kingdom fisheries. The report covers grey seals only, and we have no comparable information about common seals. The report estimates the maximum annual consumption of fish by grey seals in the Farne Islands at 15,930 tonnes.

As regards fish damaged but not eaten, the report analyses damage to the salmon population at certain specific sites, but it does not attempt to give overall estimates for the North sea or for all fish species. I understand from NERC that it would be practically impossible to produce such figures.

A copy of NERC's report is available in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prescriptions

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total cost of prescriptions given on the National Health Service in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years;

(2) how many prescriptions were given to patients on the National Health Service in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The numbers of prescriptions issued by general practitioners, including those dispensed directly by dispensing doctors, and the gross cost of prescriptions in each of the years from 1979 to 1983 were as follows:

Year	*Number thousands*	*Gross cost £ thousands*
1979	12,933	33,692
1980	13,038	41,940
1981	13,051	49,007
1982	13,435	56,982
1983	13,984	63,665

Gross cost includes charges payable by patients. Figures are not available for the cost of individual patient prescribing in hospitals.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated saving to the National Health Service in Northern Ireland through the proposed limitation of the kind of drugs which can be obtained through National Health Service prescriptions.

Mr. Chris Patten: An estimate cannot be made until the content of the limited list has been finalised.

Short Brothers, Belfast

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers are presently employed by Short Bros., Belfast; and how this figure compares with the previous five years.

Dr. Boyson: At 31 January 1985 Shorts employed 6,632 persons. The average number of persons employed by the company in the last five years is as follows:

	Number
Year ended 31 March 1984	6,127
19 months ended 31 March 1983	6,265
Year ended 31 August 1981	7,096
Year ended 31 August 1980	6,629
Year ended 31 August 1979	6,648

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the level of the profit or loss achieved by Short Bros., Belfast, in each of the last five years; and what are the projections for each of the next two years.

Dr. Boyson: The latest published accounts of Short Brothers plc are for the year ended 31 March 1984. These show the following losses for the five accounting periods to that date:

	£ million
Year ended 31 March 1984	2,371
19 months ended 31 March 1983	19,099
Year ended 31 August 1981	12,951
Year ended 31 August 1980	8,919
Year ended 31 August 1979	8,260

The projected profits/losses for the next two financial years are commercially sensitive, and it would not be in the company's interests to reveal them at this time.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been given to Short Bros., Belfast, in aid and deficit support over each of the last five years.

Dr. Boyson: In the financial years ending 31 March 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, Short Brothers received £9·8 million, £16·3 million, £9·0 million and £9·5 million, respectively. These amount represent Government assistance from all sources in Northern Ireland, together with assistance provided under schemes operated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

On 13 December 1984, at column 595, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced his intention to make £6·5 million available to the company in the current financial year. This assistance will be payable under the Aircraft and Shipbuilding industries Order (Northern Ireland) 1979. Shorts may also benefit in the current financial year from other schemes operated by the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Industrial Development

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many industrial national inquiries have been directed to *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board during the last month for which statistics are available.

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Member's question has been interpreted as referring to inquiries from outside Northern Ireland about possible industrial investment in the Province. All such inquiries are referred to the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland. The IDB received 18 firm inquiries from companies outside Northern Ireland during January 1985.

Capital Grants

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the uptake of capital grants for local enterprise development unit-sized companies; and if he will make it his policy to maintain the present levels of such grants for such companies.

Dr. Boyson: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Dental Undergraduates

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new dental undergraduates were admitted for dental education in Northern Ireland in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Scott: Thirty-five each year.

Remanded Persons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners in 1984 were remanded in custody prior to trial for periods between *(a)* nought to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months, *(e)* 12 to 18 months and *(f)* over 18 months for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1985, c. *871*]: Of those persons in custody at the time of their trial and tried on indictment, the numbers remanded in custody for the specified periods in 1984 were as follows:

	Persons charged with:	
Interval between first remand and termination	*Scheduled offences*	*Non-scheduled offences*
Less than 3 months	27	45
3-6 months	22	26
6-9 months	55	15
9-12 months	59	9
12-18 months	34	5
18 months and over	47	1
Total	244	101

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

No-passport Excursions

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any further talks have been held, or will be held, with the French authorities to discuss the possible reinstatement of the no-passport excursion scheme.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explained to President Mitterrand in October 1984 the problems caused by the termination of the former no-passport excursion arrangement and its replacement by the more complex scheme now in force. My right hon. and learned Friend then raised the matter with Monsieur Cheysson in Paris in November. It has been agreed that the present scheme should be reviewed jointly with the French authorities in the early part of this year. In preparation for this review my officials are in contact with the General Council of British Shipping, and with the Home Office and Post Office, to prepare material for an evaluation of the first six months' operation of the scheme.

Embassy Staffs

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will give details of any changes in the numbers of diplomatic or administrative and technical staff at Her Majesty's embassies in Damascus, Baghdad or Teheran since the reply to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 6 June 1984.

Mr. Renton: Since the answer given to my hon. Friend by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) on 6 June 1984 there have been no changes in the numbers of diplomatic or administrative and technical staff at Her Majesty's embassies in Damascus and Baghdad. There are two more third secretaries in the British interests section of the Sweden embassy in Tehran than were listed previously. One of these has been added since, but the other, was omitted in error from the earlier reply.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current number of administrative and technical staff currently employed at the embassies of Syria, Iraq and Iran, respectively.

Mr. Luce: The number of administrative and technical staff currently employed at these missions is as follows:

	Number
Syria	3
Iraq	27
Iran	8

Diplomats

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list by name and diplomatic title or job description all persons with diplomatic status currently accredited to the United Kingdom in the Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian embassies, respectively.

Mr. Luce: This information is contained in the London Diplomatic List of December 1984, a copy of which is held by the Library of the House. The following changes have taken place since the list went to press:

SYRIA
No changes
IRAQ
Departures
Dr. Sabah Abdullah Sultan, Medical Counsellor
Arrivals
Mr. Tarik Abdulwahab Abdulrazzak, Attache
IRAN
No changes.

Iranian Consulate General, Manchester

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Iranian citizens are currently employed in the consulate general of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Manchester.

Mr. Luce: Thirteen, of which four are notified to us as consular staff and nine are locally engaged.

Helsinki Final Act

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the implementation by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Eastern European countries of the provisions of the Helsinki final act during the last six months.

Mr. Rifkind: During the six month period to 31 December 1984, implementation by the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries of their commitments under the Helsinki final act showed little significant change. There were a few positive developments in individual countries, but generally, and in the Soviet Union in particular, the situation remained unsatisfactory. Emigration from the Soviet Union dropped to its lowest level since the signing of the Final Act. There were however welcome developments on a small number of personal and family reunification cases, where individuals were granted exit visas to leave the Soviet Union.

SECURITY IN EUROPE PRINCIPLES GUIDING RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTICIPATING STATES CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES AND CERTAIN ASPECTS OF SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT (BASKET I)

The Soviet performance in the field of human rights remained poor throughout the period under review. Acts in violation of principle VII concerned with 'Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief' were regularly reported, with much attention focussed on various forms of religious persecution, particularly of members of unregistered sects. An orthodox believer, Vladimir Poresh, was given an additional sentence of three years' hard labour at the end of 1984. He was apparently the first sentenced prisoner of conscience to be tried under repressive new (1983) legislation punishing those who "maliciously disobeyed" the penal authorities.

A higher level of officially inspired anti-semitic propaganda was matched by a marked increase in the number of Jewish activists tried and sentenced for a variety of alleged criminal offences. Human rights monitors, other religious groups and peace activists were also subject to continuing pressures, which in a number of cases led to arrest and imprisonment. There were reports that some of the accused sustained physical injuries whilst awaiting trial. There was also further evidence of psychiatric abuse.

Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union declined further, only 175 people being permitted to emigrate in the last quarter of 1984. The total number of Jews to transit Vienna in 1984 was only 900 — the lowest figure since large-scale emigration began in 1970. Soviet spokesmen have suggested that this is because the process of family reunification is virtually complete.

The Soviet authorities gave no indication of any change in their harsh approach even towards the better known individual cases. Mrs. Elena Bonner, wife of Academician Andrei Sakharov, who had been arrested in May, was convicted on 17 August of anti-Soviet slander and sentenced to five years' internal exile. Both Dr. Sakharov and Mrs. Bonner are reportedly living in exile in Gorky. Various attempts were made by the Soviet authorities, for example, by the provision of film and photographs, to suggest that the couple were alive and well, although their relatives and friends continued to be unable to contact them. Bulgarian compliance with the Helsinki and Madrid provisions showed little change. Pressure on dissidents was maintained and in general implementation of CSCE provisions of human rights gave cause for concern.

In Czechoslovakia, too, there was little change. CSCE implementation remained fundamentally flawed. Basic freedoms continued to be withheld notably through use of "protective supervision" legislation against dissidents. The attitude of Czechoslovak authorities on the question of family reunification, family visits, bi-national marriages and tourism continued to be severely restrictive.

GDR policy on implementation remained essentially unchanged. About 10,000 people were allowed to leave in the period under review, only one third of the total for the first six months of 1984, but nevertheless more than in previous years. Hungarian compliance with the Helsinki and Madrid provisions on the other hand was relatively satisfactory. During the reporting period, there was no major harrassment of dissidents.

In Poland strong pressures were maintained on opposition activists. But under the July amnesty virtually all political prisoners were released. Father Popieluszko's murder drew widespread condemnation. Four secret police officers were put on trial for the crime and have now been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

In Romania, Father Gheorghe Calciu-Rumireasa, a Romanian Orthodox priest, who had been imprisoned for trade union activities, was released from prison in August 1984 but is still effectively under house arrest. In general, Romania continued to pay scant regard to the humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki and Madrid documents during the period under review.

CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY BUILDING MEASURES

Only one major exercise, "Shield 84" held in Czechoslovakia in September, was notified. Details contained in the notification were sparse and no observers were invited.

CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS, OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND OF THE ENVIRONMENT (BASKET II)

A marginal improvement in East-West trading relations during the period under review was noticeable, in part attributable to a slight upturn in the economies of Eastern European countries, in part to an improvement in political relations. In general, the procedures for conducting business in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have remained unchanged and the flow of economic and commerical information limited. There has been some improvement in direct-dial telephone facilities for business men in Moscow.

CO-OPERATION IN HUMANITARIAN AND OTHER FIELDS (BASKET III)

Emigration from Eastern European countries has continued at a generally low level though there has been a slight increase in the numbers permitted to leave Romania and Poland. As noted above the increased rate of emigration from the GDR at the beginning of the year has not been maintained though the numbers leaving are still greater than in previous years. The GDR authorities took an intransigent line over asylum seekers in the Prague embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. Emigration from the Soviet Union fell to a new low level. With the exception of Poland and Hungary, the Eastern European countries continued to place restrictions in the way of family visits and reunifications.

Compliance with the information provisions of the Helsinki and Madrid documents by the countries of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe remained generally poor. Jamming of foreign radio transmissions continued except in Hungary and Romania. Existing restrictions on the media and the activities of journalists remained generally unchanged.

CO-OPERATION AND EXCHANGES IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Although political factors and internal restraints have had their effect on cultural and educational exchanges during the period under review and the improvement in the East-West political climate should permit some increase of exchanges in coming years.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

EC (Departmental Officials)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials, and at what grade and salary, within his Department have responsibility for dealing with all aspects of the European Community.

Mr. Renton: The following staff are employed in the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London on European Community matters:

Grade	*Numbers*	*Annual Salary** £	
D84	2	21,313	25,617
DS5 $	2	20,207	
DS5	10	14,195	18,789
D86	3	11,782	14,444
D87D	1	10,801	13,223
D87E	1	9,793	12,029
D89	2	7,317	9,792
DS10	9	3,967	7,293
S1	2	7,112	8,726
S2	6	6,381	7,592
S3	3	5,429	6,430
Clerical Officer	2	5,882	7,293
Clerical Assistant	1	5,139	6,113
Paper Keeper	2	6,282	6,548

*Includes London Weighting.

The work of the two Departments concerned is supervised by an assistant under-secretary (which equates to Home Civil Service 3, formerly under-secretary) on a salary of £30,800. Two deputy under-secretary's (which equate to Home Civil Service 2, formerly deputy secretary) devote approximately one third each of their time to European Community matters amongst other duties.

The details for the Overseas Development Administration are:

Grade	*Numbers*	*Salary* £	
HCS2	15% of 1	36,500	
HCS3	20% of 1	30,800	
HCS5	1	21,213	25,617
Principal	3	14,195	18,789
SEO	1	11,782	14,444
HEO	2	9,793	12,029
EO	2	7,317	9,792
Administration Trainee	1	7,317	9,792
CO	1	5,882	7,293

SOCIAL SERVICES

Home Helps

Mr. Saeed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to the average cost per annum of providing a home help;

(2) what study he has made of the correlation between increased levels of provision of home help services and the additional numbers of elderly or infirm people who could continue to live in their own homes or in a warden-controlled environment instead of being admitted to hospital or full-time residential care; what estimate he has made of the relative cost implications involved; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what study he has made of the correlation between increased levels of provision of home help services and the additional average length of time which elderly or infirm people could continue to live in their own homes prior to requiring full-time residential or nursing care; what is the current average cost per week of providing full-time residential or nursing care to an elderly or infirm person; what is the average current cost per week of providing home help assistance to an elderly or infirm person; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: A number of recent research projects sponsored by the Department have examined the

relationship between residential and community care for the elderly. In particular a study in Coventry from 1975 to 1978 sponsored jointly by the Department, the Joseph Rowntree memorial trust and Coventry city council made some useful estimates of the specific correlation referred to in the questions for the 65 clients of the home help services in the sample and the cost implications. These have to be treated with caution and cannot be reliably projected on to a national scale owing to the small size of the sample and the fact that home help is only one of a range of services required to enable elderly or infirm people to continue living in their own homes. A recent report by the Audit Commission has examined the operation of the home help services in the context of other services for the elderly.

Information about average costs of certain local authority services is in the annual publications of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy entitled "Personal Social Services Statistics". Their latest report covering expenditure for 1982-83, although not based on a complete coverage, shows that the average hourly cost of home help service in England and Wales was £2·97, but as the number of hours provided for clients varies according to their needs it is not possible to make a valid comparison with the £90·59 a week of full time care in a local authority residential home for the elderly in England and Wales.

The average contribution under the supplementary benefit scheme for the support of elderly or infirm persons in private residential homes and nursing homes was £75·80 a week in 1983.

Young Persons (Training Schemes)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now make a statement on the progress made by the committee chaired by him which is looking into the question of benefits and grants for young people who are on training schemes, in apprenticeships, in full-time education or unemployed, between the ages of 16 and 21 years.

Mr. Whitney: These issues are still under consideration. We hope to announce the outcome of the social security review in the course of the next few months.

Housing Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the current price cost in 1983-84 of administering housing benefit; and what was the average cost of administration per claimant.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated cost of administering housing benefit in 1983-84 was £103 million. I regret that the average cost of administration per claimant is not available.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of households which qualify for housing benefit; and what percentage of all households this figure represents.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Subsidy returns indicate that about 7½ million households currently recieve housing benefit. This represents broadly 35 per cent. of households in Great Britain.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for those offices covering the Workington travel-to-work area, what was the total number of supplementary benefit appeals registered during the last month for which statistics are available.

Mr. Whitney: During the four weeks ending 15 January 1985 20 supplementary benefit appeals were registered by the two local offices (Workington and Carlisle), whose boundaries include the Workington travel-to-work area.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for those offices covering the Workington travel-to-work area, what was the total number of unemployed people claiming supplementary benefit during the last month for which statistics are available and the figures for the comparable month in 1983.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of unemployed people receiving supplementary benefit from the two local offices whose boundaries include the Workington travel-to-work area in December 1984 and December 1983 are as follows:

	December 1984	*December 1983*
Workington	2,530	2,675
Carlisle	3,315	3,161

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for those offices covering the Workington travel-to-work area, what was the total number of supplementary benefit claimants for the last month for which statistics are available and the figures for the comparable month in 1983.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from the two offices whose boundaries include the Workington travel-to-work area in December 1984 and December 1983 are as follows:

	December 1984	*December 1983*
Workington	6,398	6,258
Carlisle	8,293	8,122

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will amend the relevant statutory provisions to allow young people to continue to receive supplementary benefit whilst participating in international youth exchanges.

Mr. Newton: Under regulation 3 of the Supplementary Benefit (Conditions of Entitlement) Regulations a person who is required to be available for employment as a condition for receipt of benefit cannot receive supplementary benefit for any period spent abroad. This is because unemployed people are expected to make themselves readily available to take any suitable job, or attend promptly any interview about employment and people abroad cannot properly satisfy this condition. We have no plans to change the regulations.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether every product in the proposed limited list will appear in the drug tariff.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the light of limited list proposals, whether he has any intention to make changes to the dental practitioners' formulary list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Consultations are still taking place on the limited list proposals. Subject to the outcome of these consultations, some amendment may be required to the Secretary of State's list for dental prescribing which is appended to the Dental Practitioners' Formulary.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether in the light of all the considered representations he has received, he will now consider a mechanism similar to that appertaining for hospital formularies whereby a doctor can prescribe a product not on the limited list where in his judgment it is imperative for the patient.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are considering the arguments which have been put forward for such a mechanism.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what contact he or any other Minister or official of his Department had with Health Action International and Social Audit in formulating his proposals for the limited list of prescription medicines.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why letters to his Department complaining about limited list prescribing proposals have been answered by standard responses, with only minor variations in opening and closing paragraphs, which do not cover the issues raised by individual writers; when the standard response letter was composed; why his Department has continued to use the same basic text for at least six weeks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received nearly 7,000 letters about the limited list proposals announced on 8 November. In order to answer these letters as promptly as possible, we prepared standard replies covering the main points at issue. We are endeavouring to adapt these replies as necessary to answer any particular points raised and to use them only when they are appropriate. However we do not have sufficient Ministers and senior officials concerned with this policy to engage in a detailed correspondence with every correspondent and I regret that some apparent discourtesy is unavoidable.

All the letters we receive are being read with care and the points being made are being noted by Ministers and the Chief Medical Officer. The basic text of our letter will change when we make our final decision in the light of all the representations we have received.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to publish the final version of the restricted list of drugs to be made available on the National Health Service from 1 April; and how it differs from the provisional list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We intend to make a comprehensive announcement shortly.

Prescriptions Charges and Drug Costs

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he proposes to take any action to deal with the wide variation in prices charged by pharmacists for dispensing identical private prescriptions;

(2) what is the average chemist's mark-up on drugs compared with the wholesale price.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Although I understand that Pharmaceutical Services of Great Britain publishes a list of recommended fees for private dispensing, the prices, including any mark-up on ingredient cost, charged for dispensing a private prescription are a matter for the dispensing pharmacist. They are not a matter for Government.

There is no mark-up on drugs dispensed against National Health Service prescriptions. Retail pharmacists are reimbursed the cost of drugs dispensed and receive in addition remuneration, which for 1984 averaged £1·02 per item dispensed. Our reimbursement levels also take account of the level of discounts which are frequently offered by wholesalers to pharmacists.

Elderly People (Health Provision)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those regional health authorities which have taken the provision of private nursing home beds into consideration when making provision in their region for the increase in the number of elderly people and the allowance they have made for private nursing home beds in their current regional strategy papers.

Mr. John Patten: The information is not available centrally. Our guidance to health authorities asks them to take voluntary and private provision into account in their strategic planning.

Geriatric Beds

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each district health authority the increase in the number of long-term geriatric beds in National Health Service hospitals and provide the figures for the increase in the elderly population for each district health authority for each year since 1974.

Mr. John Patten: Information available centrally on available beds in the specialty of geriatric medicine does not distinguish between those for acute care and those for long-term care. A reply based on all geriatric beds could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Elderly People (Private Nursing Homes)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures for the total number of people over pensionable age who have moved from long-term geriatric care in National Health Service hospitals to the private nursing home sector in each of the years since 1980.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information is not collected centrally.

Birmingham General Hospital

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many operations have been carried out at Birmingham general hospital upon patients who do

not live in the Birmingham area during each of the last five years; and if he is satisfied that National Health Service resources are being prudently and properly used there.

Mr. John Patten: We do not collect this sort of detailed local information centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to seek information from the chairman of Central Birmingham health authority. It is normal and proper for health authorities to use resources for treatment of patients from outside their districts.

AIDS

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if his Department will issue urgent guidelines to all National Health Service staff involved in treating patients suffering from or suspected to be suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations his Department has received concerning guidance to National Health Service workers in contact with patients suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what liaison there is between his Department and international research agencies dealing with the problems of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Research in the United Kingdom into the problems of AIDS is co-ordinated by the Medical Research Council working party on AIDS, on which our Department is represented. The working party collaborates with scientists in other countries through the United States centres for disease control in Atlanta and the World Health Organisation's AIDS reference centre in Paris. In the European Community the Comité pour la Recherche Medicale has set up a working group on AIDS on which the United Kingdom is represented by two members of the MRC working party, who keep our Department closely informed.

Heating Allowances

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received about the level of heating allowances since he first announced that the available scale margin would be applied to them; how many have been favourable to his policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Since 18 June 1984 when my right hon. Friend announced the changes made to the available scale margin in November 1984 at columns *20-22* we have received about 1,350 letters about the changes, including about 770 from hon. and right hon. Members. People do not generally feel any need to write supporting particular Government policies and therefore almost all the letters received commented or enclosed constituents' letters commenting unfavourably on the effects of the changes. However, for the reasons set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 27 November 1984 at column *468*, we remain convinced that the changes were justified.

Hospital Waiting Times

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the waiting times for appointments for operations in the various health authority areas; if it is his intention to hold an investigation into the problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received some representations from hon. Members and from the public about the length of waiting time for admission for in-patient treatment in individual specialties in particular places. On a national basis, progress is being made in reducing waiting lists. There has been a continuing downward trend, following the disruption caused by the 1982 industrial action. In March 1979 total waiting lists stood at 752,422; by March 1984 they had been reduced to 692,945.

Supplementary Benefit Appeals

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of supplementary benefit appeals which were held in Glasgow in each of the last five years for which figures are available, *(b)* the proportion of the appeals in each year in which the claimants were successful, *(c)* the proportion of the appeals in each year in which the claimants were represented and *(d)* the proportion of successful appeals in each year in which the claimants were represented.

Mr. Whitney: It is not our practice to give figures for successful appeals which can be related to individual tribunals. I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible with the information requested on the number of appeals and the frequency of represented appeals.

New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the proposed date for the construction of the new accident department at New Cross hospital, Wolverhampton.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the West Midlands regional health authority's present plans, which are to be kept under review, envisage a start in 1992 on a £10 million development to improve facilities for accident and emergency, acute and paediatric services.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in considering the qualifications under which severe weather payments are made; if he intends to announce revised regulations to take account of the position in Scottish areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 11 February, at column *76*.

Dental Undergraduates

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he implemented the recommendations to reduce the intake of dental undergraduates in 1984; and what means he used to secure that reduction;

(2) how many new dental undergraduates were admitted for dental education in England and Wales in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Ancillary Services)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1983-84 for each region the figures for payments to outside contractors for support services and for contractual arrangements for patient care indicating the services provided; and if he will also give each figure as a percentage of the total expenditure on the relevant service in each region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1985, c. *330*]: The table has been derived from the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities for 1983-84. The accounts do not give a detailed analysis of expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care.

Region	*Medical and surgical equipment maintenance*		*X-ray equipment maintenance*		*Laboratory equipment maintenance*		*Catering*		*Laundry*		*Cleaning*	
	£'000	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*
Northern	984	5·44	514	48·61	339	9·03	12	0·05	228	5·70	282	0·99
Yorkshire	795	4·11	337	22·77	212	4·55	20	0·07	254	4·98	688	2·24
Trent	1,321	5·31	794	46·43	666	11·09	66	0·21	133	2·48	375	0·97
East Anglian	231	2·17	235	38·44	188	8·90	Nil	Nil	24	0·93	1,016	6·50
North West Thames	1,036	5·37	615	34·72	375	6·45	46	0·17	926	20·26	645	1·76
North East Thames	1,002	3·69	906	39·65	659	6·40	71	0·22	789	13·41	1,049	2·24
South East Thames	1,025	3·89	943	55·08	482	9·67	35	0·12	625	10·63	840	2·07
South West Thames	741	4·76	795	62·39	249	8·45	101	0·42	694	13·53	658	2·23
Wessex	932	6·59	578	57·74	211	8·57	—	—	266	9·04	195	0·93
Oxford	731	6·87	168	41·93	169	5·96	9	0·07	651	22·69	553	3·63
South Western	833	5·06	534	37·00	807	18·20	34	0·15	373	9·25	149	0·61
West Midlands	1,420	4·99	602	39·49	471	7·52	18	0·05	433	7·10	475	1·31
Mersey	782	5·71	605	60·46	374	11·26	—	—	63	1·32	242	1·05
North Western	1,027	4·09	712	49·73	822	14·91	Nil	Nil	577	9·90	492	1·43

Region	*Engineering maintenance*		*Building maintenance*		*Grounds etc. maintenance*		*Vehicle maintenance*		*Computers—contract services*		*Contractual arrangements for patient care*	
	£'000	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*	*£'000*	*per cent.*
Northern	2,856	16·58	4,167	36·39	98	6·55	575	25·34	26	2·73	1,270	0·28
Yorkshire	2,980	17·85	4,394	39·49	225	12·14	282	9·73	47	3·67	1,733	0·34
Trent	3,471	15·86	4,418	31·48	139	5·51	761	22·73	194	22·09	738	0·12
East Anglia	1,812	20·26	1,870	39·70	120	12·14	302	13·52	172	19·29	426	0·17
North West Thames	5,753	29·58	5,568	44·82	291	20·02	554	15·71	550	58·18	3,083	0·57
North East Thames	6,639	25·83	7,341	46·70	285	16·24	510	12·18	655	20·11	4,407	0·63
South East Thames	4,928	21·28	5,727	44·06	206	14·24	443	11·24	422	58·44	2,102	0·35
South West Thames	4,005	23·95	3,660	37·16	427	29·29	629	18·99	227	12·44	5,926	1·32
Wessex	2,069	18·24	2,372	31·20	121	9·61	384	16·60	119	20·24	1,276	0·35
Oxford	1,835	20·82	1,896	35·52	201	24·82	496	23·02	67	10·50	1,201	0·43
South Western	3,264	20·27	3,645	34·57	49	2·81	950	26·62	127	7·30	2,328	0·54
West Midlands	4,794	16·48	6,732	38·82	310	11·73	452	10·33	153	6·35	2,056	0·30
Mersey	3,051	22·80	4,011	43·04	268	19·97	223	9·97	17	1·79	1,951	0·52
North Western	4,992	26·19	5,284	34·37	283	13·32	303	8·19	120	12·45	6,261	1·02

Notes to the table:

1. All figures are for current expenditure: capital is excluded.
2. For contractual arrangements for patient care, "total expenditure on the relevant service" is taken as total current expenditure on hospital services.
3. Payments to doctors, pharmacists, dentists, opticians and others contracted to the NHS to provide family practitioner services are excluded.
4. Minimal expenditure and percentages (ie less than £500 or 0·01 per cent.) are indicated by the use of a dash (—).
5. Information in the table has been prepared on as consistent a basis as practicable but comparisons of percentages between services may in some cases be misleading as the bases of the total relevant expenditure figures for different services are not completely uniform.

ENVIRONMENT

United Nations Decade for Women

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make funds available to local authorities to publicise the United Nations Decade for Women.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Local authorities have had nine years to publicise the United Nations Decade for Women 1976-85, had they wished to do so.

Home Improvements

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants were made to Ealing borough council for *(a)* home improvement purposes and

(b) council house improvements and maintenance in 1974 and each subsequent year up to the latest year for which figures are available; what is the projection for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Exchequer contributions towards expenditure on home improvement grants paid to Ealing boroughcouncil from 1978-79 onwards were:

Figures in £000's

	£ million
1978-79	242·4
1979-80	299·2
1980-81	359·7
1981-82	487·4
1982-83*	819·0
1983-84*	1,314·0
1984-85*	1,878·0

* Subject to adjustment when audited final claims are received.

Figures in respect of earlier years are not readily available to the Department. The amount which will be paid for 1985-86 will depend in part on their continuing entitlement to contribution on loan charges already incurred but also on the level of expenditure on grants in 1985-86, which is for Ealing to decide within the resources available to them.

Council house improvement and maintenance are not specifically grant-aided through the housing subsidy system. These costs are taken into account in the calculation of an authority's entitlement to housing subsidies. But the size of the Exchequer subsidy depends each year on the entire subsidy calculation, which takes account not only of the total reckonable expenditure incurred by the authority in the provision of council housing, but also the extent to which the authority could reasonably be expected to meet all or part of these costs from local resources.

Insulation Grants

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reinstate for the coming year an allocation to the North Devon district council of £54,000 for home insultation grants; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The allocation of £39,000 to North Devon district council for grants under the homes insulation scheme in 1985-86 is an initial allocation. In common with other authorities in England, they can bid for additional allocations from the substantial reserve of £7 million which we have established, provided there is sufficient demand for grants in their area. This arrangement should ensure that the available funds go where they are most needed.

Local Authority Services (Competition)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is now able to publish his proposals on competition in the provision of local authority services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: With my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales I have today published a consultation paper setting out proposals for promoting increased value for money by exposing more local authority activities to the test of competition. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Library.

By virtue of Part III of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 local authority directly employed staff are already obliged to compete for most of their building and maintenance work and authorities are required to draw up separate annual reports and accounts showing the results of their direct labour organisations performance of such work.

The consultation paper makes two main proposals. First, it proposes that a similar compulsory tendering regime should be extended to the following activities:

i. Refuse collection and street cleansing;
ii. The cleaning of buildings;
iii. Catering services;
iv. Ground maintenance;
v. Vehicle maintenance.

Second, there is a wider range of local government activities where there is scope for securing the benefits of a more competitive approach but where formal statutory tendering regime on DLO lines cannot easily be applied. Therefore, in order to compare the value for money from using directly-employed staff with that of going to outside firms, the paper outlines proposals which would enable the Secretary of State to require authorities to prepare and make public reports comparing in-house costs of particular activities with the costs of having the work done outside.

The paper contains two further proposals. The first is to nullify the imposition by local authorities of contract conditions which have nothing to do with the contractors' competence to carry out the work in question (for instance a condition disqualifying contractors who have worked on certain NATO defence contracts). The second is to give to the Secretary of State power to act where local authorities unjustifiably set aside or frustrate the objective of fair competition. This will make the DLO rules more effective and enforceable.

The proposals in the paper will make a major contribution to the extension of the principles of fair competition in the provision of public services and so enable councils to get better value for money to the benefit of their communities.

Haringey Borough Council (Expenditure)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in calculating the allowable level of 1985-86 expenditure for Haringey borough council, what was the percentage reduction made by his Department from the amount Haringey budgeted to use from internal funds in framing its 1984-85 budget.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Rate Limits

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in setting the 1985-86 rate limits, what is the percentage being reduced from the 1985-86 expenditure level of those authorities who did not seek re-determination.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has no statutory power to alter an expenditure level in the absence of an application for a re-determination.

DEFENCE

Defence Equipment (Sri Lanka)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a general statement on trade in defence equipment and services with Sri Lanka.

Mr. Butler: It has been the consistent policy of this and previous administrations not to disclose details of defence sales business with other countries. However, in accordance with the Government's policy, all such business is considered carefully on its merits on a case by case basis, bearing in mind all relevant factors including the stability of the region. I can give an assurance that this is the case with Sri Lanka at the present time; full account is, of course, being taken of the local situation, which we are monitoring closely.

Nutrition

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Defence what policies and guidelines are issued to the armed forces in respect of nutrition.

Mr. Lee: The nutrition of the armed forces is kept under continuous review by the services nutrition advisory panel whose advice is almost always implemented. The services fitness training programme, including special films and publications incorporating advice on nutrition, strongly reinforces the general advice given to service men in this area, particularly on the ill effects of obesity.

Heart Disease

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the incidence of death from heart disease among the armed forces; and how this compares with the figures for the United Kingdom population as a whole.

Mr. Lee: During the period 1981-83 inclusive there were 130 male deaths from ischaemic heart disease in the regular armed forces in the age group 20-54, a rate of 17 per 100,000 at risk. In the same period in the comparable population of the United Kingdom there were 29,149 deaths from the same cause, a rate of 76 per 100,000 at risk.

Illegal Radio Stations

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any of Her Majesty's naval vessels have taken any action, or if it is proposed that they take any action, in respect of radio stations operating illegally in British territorial waters in interference with stations operating legally from the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which he received from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade on 7 February at column *665*.

Forces (Entertainment)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the British agencies which book acts for performance before British and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces.

Mr. Lee: Entertainment paid for by the Ministry of Defence for the United Kingdom armed forces is provided solely by the combined services entertainment division of the Services Sound and Vision Corporation. I have no information about bookings made for and funded by other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces, or those arranged privately.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence which British agency booked the South African group The C & G Band to play before North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces.

Mr. Lee: The Services Sound and Vision Corporation has no record of engaging this band. I have no information about bookings made for and funded by other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces, or those arranged privately.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the arrangements by which performers are recruited to play before British and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces.

Mr. Lee: No. Arrangements made by other NATO countries are a matter for their Governments.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will ensure that the South African group The C & G Band does not perform before British forces in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation;

(2) if he will ensure that South African performers are not recruited to play before British and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces.

Mr. Lee: The Services Sound and Vision Corporation's practice is to engage United Kingdom entertainers who are members of the appropriate United Kingdom union, and I see no reason for them to change this policy. Arrangements made by other NATO member countries are a matter for their Governments.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to promote the contracting of British entertainers to perform before British and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces.

Mr. Lee: The Services Sound and Vision Corporation will continue to engage British entertainers wherever possible. I am happy to say that they have been well received and their work much appreciated in such widely separated and arduous duty stations as Northern Ireland and the Falklands.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military and civilian personnel are engaged in training the Sri Lankan armed forces; how many are loan service personnel; and how many there are from each service.

Mr. Lee: There are no British loan service personnel training the Sri Lankan armed forces. Places are made available on British forces training courses to small numbers of Sri Lankan personnel on an opportunity basis, but no British personnel are specifically dedicated to training Sri Lankan students.

MCV80 (Subcontractors)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied with the subcontracting

arrangements being used by the prime contractors for the MCV80 and MCV80 variants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: Subcontract arrangements in all current and planned MCV80 contracts reflect our aim to secure competition at this level, as well as at the main contractor level. Contracts for development of variant vehicles—the major development area remaining — require the prime contractor to select subcontractors on the basis of competitive tendering wherever this is practical. Similarly firms tendering for production contracts are required to maximise competitive subcontracting. Where exceptions are permitted in the interests of safeguarding the programme these are kept under rigorous control.

Trident

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimated cost of the Trident programme as a percentage of the overall defence procurement budget.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced a revised cost estimate for the Trident programme on 29 January 1985 at columns 134-7. This will represent on average about 6 per cent. of the defence equipment budget over the period of Trident's procurement.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals have been put forward by any of the nuclear weapons powers for ensuring the maintenance of their nuclear weapons capabilities, currently achieved by periodic underground testing in the context of negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: I am not aware of any such proposals.

HMS Conqueror (Log)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with inquiries to discover the whereabouts of the contol room log of HMS Conqueror.

Mr. Stanley: The police side of these inquiries is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. As far as the Ministry of Defence side is concerned, I cannot at present add to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) on 30 November 1984 at columns 593-94.

Eastern Bloc Countries (Imports)

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the total value of vehicle mechanical parts bought by or on behalf of his Department from Eastern bloc countries between 1980 and 1984;

(2) what was the total value of protective clothing bought by or on behalf of his Department from Eastern bloc countries between 1980 and 1984;

(3) what was the total value of electrical components bought by or on behalf of his Department from Eastern bloc countries between 1980 and 1984;

(4) what was the total value of vehicle tyres bought by or on behalf of his Department from Eastern bloc countries between 1980 and 1984.

Mr. Butler: The Ministry of Defence has no contracts for these items with Eastern bloc countries. However, as I said in my earlier reply to the hon. Member on 11 February 1985, at column 51, some limited purchases of materials and parts may occur at the component level from time to time, but only in circumstances where no problems of strategic dependence are involved.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing revenue obtained from income tax in each year since 1978-79, at current and at constant 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Moore: The information is shown below.

	£ million	
Income tax receipts	*At current prices*	*At 1978-79 prices**
1978-79	18,748	18,748
1979-80	20,599	17,620
1980-81	24,295	17,520
1981-82	28,725	18,840
1982-83	30,474	18,740
1983-84	31,280	18,420

*Using the GDP deflator.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cumulative effect on revenue accruing to the Exchequer of changes in *(a)* income tax, *(b)* investment income surcharge, *(c)* capital transfer tax, *(d)* capital gains tax and *(e)* income tax above the basic rate introduced since June 1979.

Mr. Moore: [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 February 1985, c. *673*]: Estimates are shown in the table, taking the base for each of the taxes in 1984-85 as given.

The estimates for income tax are based on the difference in liability in a full year at 1984-85 income levels if 1978-79 allowances, rates and thresholds (after indexation to 1984-85 levels by reference to the statutory formula) were substituted for those currently in force.

Similarly, the figure for capital transfer tax represents the estimated effect on the tax payable on transfers in 1984-85 if the 1978-79 structure of the tax were substituted, with statutory indexation of the rate bands after 1982-83.

The figure for capital gains tax also represents the estimated effect on the tax payable on capital gains realised by individuals and trusts in 1984-85 of substituting the 1978-79 tax regime, but excluding the effect of statutory indexation of the threshold after 1982-83. It includes the effect of the indexation of costs of acquisition. These effects cannot be estimated precisely and are subject to a wide margin of error.

It is not possible to determine what income in 1984-85 would have been if the 1978-79 allowances, rates and thresholds had been in force (after indexation) over all the intervening years, or to what extent the changes in the taxes may have affected the levels of transfers or disposals of capital.

Direct Revenue Effects

	£ million	
Total income tax		4,300
of which: Investment Income Surcharge (IIS)	730	
Rates and thresholds above the basic rate (excluding (IIS)	1,120	
Capital transfer tax		350
Capital gains tax		300

Customs and Excise (Manning Levels)

Mr. Hill asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimated projections have been made of future manning levels of Customs and Excise staff at ports of entry to the United Kingdom; and what will be the anticpated effect on such figures of the increases in known heroin smuggling.

Mr. Hayhoe: The planned levels of the total number of permanent staff in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are shown below for 31 March in each year:

	Number
1985	25,500
1986	25,445
1987	25,245
1988	25,020

The investigation and prevention of drugs smuggling attracts the highest priority; manning levels at ports and airports will depend on the identification of high-risk areas and the growth of passenger and freight traffic.

The Government have already made clear their determination to deal with drugs abuse and, in particular, the problems caused by the illicit importation of heroin. In October last year, the Government announced that, in 1985-86, Customs preventive controls were to be increased by 100 new preventive posts and by making 60 temporary posts permanent.

Inland Revenue (Taxation Cases)

Mr. Evennett asked the Chancellor of the Exhequer whether he intends to review the criteria by which the Inland Revenue decides whether to brief counsel to plead taxation cases on its behalf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Cases in which the Revenue are concerned before Appeal Commissioners and other tribunals cover a very wide range. Decisions on which cases require the use of counsel depend on a variety of factors and are properly a matter for the Board of Inland Revenue and its legal advisers.

Income Tax

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer for each 1 per cent. increase in income tax personal allowances, what is the total gain to income tax payers in each band of income tax.

Mr. Moore: The latest estimates of the gains from a 1 per cent. increase in personal allowances are shown below:

Marginal tax rate per cent.*	*Total gains in a full year £ million*
30	180
40	6
45	4
50	2
55	1
60	2
Total	195

* based on the distribution between marginal rates in 1984-85.

Industrial Wage

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the percentage of the average industrial wage which is represented by *(a)* the single person's tax allowance and *(b)* the married couple's tax allowance for each year since 1955.

Mr. Moore: Appendix C of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1982" contains information for tax years up to 1980-81. Figures from 1981-82 to 1984-85 are as follows:

Tax threshold as a percentage of average male manual earnings

	Single person	*Married man (without children)*
1981-82	20·6	32·1
1982-83	21·8	34·1
1983-84	23·4	36·6
1984-85*	24·7	38·9

* Provisional.

Pound Sterling

Mr. Faulds asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the increase in revenue from oil production for each 1 per cent. fall in the value of the pound sterling against the United States dollar.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 24 January 1985 at column *496*.

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for the role and powers of the Bank of England of the United Kingdom joining the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The United Kingdom is already a member of the European monetary system but sterling does not participate in the exchange rate mechanism. The question of participation and its implications are kept under review.

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for national control of monetary policy of the United Kingdom joining the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The question whether the United Kingdom should join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS, and the implications of doing so, are kept under

review. The United Kingdom would not consider joining without giving full consideration to its monetary policy in the conditions of the time.

Corporation Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his intention to permit current cost accounting methods in accordance with "Statement of Standard Accountancy Practice No. 16", issued by the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies to be used for future calculations of liability for corporation tax.

Mr. Moore: I understand the accounting standards committee is considering a possible successor to SSAP16. Current cost profits disclosed by accounts prepared in accordance with SSAP16 may be used in preparing computations of profits for tax purposes, but the various current cost adjustments referred to in the standard must be excluded, as they are neither allowable deductions nor chargeable receipts for tax purposes.

Value Added Tax (Frontier Collection)

Mr. Hunter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Her Majesty's Government support the abolition of value added tax collection at European Community frontiers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer indicated in his Budget Statement on 13 March 1984, at column 300, we would revert to the system of postponed accounting for VAT on imports if other member states agreed to the Commission's proposals, in the draft 14th directive on VAT, to adopt that system throughout the Community.

Gilt Issues

Mr. Freeman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what proportion of new gilt issues, in the last 12 months for which statistics are available, were purchased by pension funds.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Estimates of the net acquisition of gilt-edged stocks by pension funds are published in "Financial Statistics", table 7.14. Net official sales are published in table 3.5 of "Financial Statistics". In the year to end-September 1984 pension funds net acquisition of gilts represented about 28 per cent. of the value of net official sales.

EC Finance Council

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Community Economic and Finance Council in Brussels on 11 February.

Mr. Lawson: I represented the United Kingdom at this Council.

The Council discussed the financial framework for the guidance section of the European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund over the next five years. This subject was referred back to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for further examination with a view to further discussion at the March Economic and Finance Council. Ministers also discussed tax measures to encourage co-operation between undertakings in different member states.

Investment Income

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the proportion of married couples where both husband and wife are earning who currently have investment income to aggregate.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Allowances

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *675*, which categories of person would be brought into tax to the extent of £150 million if the value of the married persons allowance and the additional personal allowance were used to increase child benefits.

Mr. Moore: Married couples and single parents with income for income tax purposes — after allowing for reliefs and allowances other than the married man's allowance or the single person's allowance and additional personal allowance — between £2,005 and £3,155 in 1984-85.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish Government expenditure on housing per head of population in *(a)* Wales, and the comparable figures for *(b)* England, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish Government expenditure on education per head of population in *(a)* Wales, and the comparable figures for *(b)* England and *(c)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Customs Staff and Posts

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the numbers of customs staff at seaports, airports and inland premises in Scotland at 31 March 1984, *(b)* the number of additional customs staff allocated to Scotland since that date and *(c)* the number of new customs posts which will be allocated to Scotland in 1985-86;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of staff from the investigation division of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise attached to individual ports in the United Kingdom, listing the individual ports and the number of such staff in each one;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of customs staff at seaports, airports and inland premises in Scotland in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensions and Publications (Taxation)

Mr. Winnick asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received concerning *(a)* any tax changes in pension arrangements and *(b)* the possible imposition of value added tax on publications.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *147-8*]: Some 7,000 letters about pension provisions and over 2,000 letters about VAT on publications have been received, in addition to representations from various trade associations, trade unions and other representative bodies.

Economic Policies

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the economic indications by which he judges the success of his economic policies.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *148*]: Inflation is running at less than half the rate inherited in 1979. The economy is experiencing the longest period of economic recovery since 1945. Estimated employment has been rising since the spring of 1983.

Mr. Raison: I discussed the problem as a whole with the United Nations Assistant Secretary General for emergency operations in Ethiopia, Mr. Kurt Jansson, on 12 February. I believe that the massive food and other relief now being provided is reaching those in need, including most of those so identified in Eritrea and Tigré, although clearly there are substantial difficulties in areas where there is civil war. I have been concerned at recent reports about forcible resettlement, but it is difficult to obtain firm evidence. Allegations that money given to relief agencies has been misappropriated are for those agencies to answer, but I am satisfied that the money we are providing to individual agencies is being properly and usefully spent.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the current level of Government aid given to Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I am satisfied that we are doing what we can, both nationally and through the European Community. But further needs will arise as the year goes on, and we shall continue our efforts to meet them.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 4 December 1984, *Official Report*, column 135, what is the most recent information he has as to how much grain has now been promised by each developed country to Ethiopia over the next 12 months; how far this is short of Ethiopia's needs; and in which month each country's promised delivery is likely to arrive in Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: Commitments of food aid notified to the office of the UN co-ordinator for Ethiopia for the period December 1984 to June 1985 are set out in table 1. Precise figures for the second half of the year are not available, although many donors have indicated their intentions. The UN co-ordinator estimates that completed deliveries plus pledges notified to him will be sufficient to meet the target of 1·2 million tonnes of cereals he set in December 1984. This took account of the country's absorptive capacity and was based on an estimate of 7·6 million people in need of emergency relief.

Forecasts of arrivals of cereals and cereal products at the ports of Assab, Massawa and Djibouti are set out in table II. No firm information is available on shipments after April.

Table I
Commitments of food aid to Ethiopia covering December 1984 to June 1985 by country

Country	*(Tonnes)*
Australia	8,500
Austria	4,000
Belgium	8,400
Bulgaria	18,000
Canada	75,100
China	4,300
Denmark	900
European Community (to August 1985)	178,200
Finland	1,600
Federal Republic of Germany	31,000
France	2,600
Greece	8,000
Hungary	2,500
India	35,000
Ireland	1,600
Italy	2,000
Japan	4,300
Netherlands	1,300
Norway	25,000
Poland	900
Spain	1,800
Sweden	14,000
United Kingdom	21,500
United States of America (to July 1985)	247,700
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	2,700
Voluntary agencies	30,000
World Food Programme (source unspecified)	62,000

Source: Office of the United Nations co-ordinator, Addis Ababa.
Notes: 1. Figures are rounded to nearest 100 tonnes.
2. Figures include all foods, including supplementary food and oils, but cereals account for nearly all the commitments.

Table II
Arrivals of cereal products as food aid by month and country of origin

(tonnes)

	February	*March*	*April*
World Food Programme	21,000	30,000	74,000
United States of America	72,000	38,000	14,000
European Community	15,000	22,000	15,000
Canada	6,000	18,000	10,000
United Kingdom	10,000	—	—
Austria	—	4,000	—
Belgium	3,000	—	—
Japan	4,000	—	—
Sweden	14,000	—	—
Greece	2,000	2,000	2,000
France	—	—	1,000

Source: World Food Programme Shipping Bulletin 30 January 1985.
Notes: Figures are rounded to nearest 1,000 tonnes. Shipments of less than 1,000 tonnes, and shipment by voluntary organisations, not included.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Church-aided Schools (Building Programme)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allocation is being made in the current year to Oxfordshire county council to assist in building programmes for church-aided schools; and what criteria are used in determining such allocation.

Mr. Dunn: The limit of capital expenditure by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools in Oxfordshire on which the Department will be prepared to pay grant in 1985-86 is £113,000. In determining the distribution of the resources available for building work at voluntary schools, first priority must be given to meeting commitments on projects already under way. Governors' estimates of commitments for 1985-86 proved substantially higher nationally than had been expected. In consequence, it has been possible to approve only those new projects which are statutorily required to meet "basic need"—for new school places in areas of population growth—or to implement proposals approved under section 13 of the Education Act 1980.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost at current prices, in both capital and revenue terms, if a place in nursery education were to be provided in September 1985 for every child aged three and four years old; and what is his estimate of the cost if that were done for September 1988.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

EC (Budgetary Discipline)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the steps taken by the Commission and the various Councils of Ministers to fulfill the conditions linked to the agreement on increased own resources made at the Fontainebleu summit relating to budgetary discipline.

The Prime Minister: The Council of Ministers (Foreign Affairs) at the meeting in Dublin on 4 December adopted detailed arrangements to implement budgetary discipline. Article 10 of the Council conclusions adopted provides that budgetary discipline will apply to the 1986 budget and to Council decisions taken in 1985 affecting expenditure in 1986. The Commission has stated that its agricultural proposals for 1985 are within the agricultural guideline figure for 1986. Those proposals will be discussed by the Council of Ministers (Agriculture) on 25/26 February. Discussion of the 1986 budget has not yet begun.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister what mechanism has been established to monitor the effective budgetary descipline which the Council of Ministers agreed as a condition of increasing the Common Market's own resources at the Fontainebleu Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The text agreed unanimously by the Council of Ministers on 4 December fulfils the European Council's request that the measures necessary to guarantee the effective application of budgetary discipline be adopted. Under the new procedures, Finance Ministers have been given an important role in ensuring that spending decisions are compatible with the requirements of budgetary discipline.

Military Plutonium

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the statement made by the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Kinross and West Perthshire (Sir A. Douglas-Home) on 21 April 1964, *Official Report*, column *1098*, that military plutonium production was being gradually terminated, she will make a statement on progress to date in this regard.

The Prime Minister: It is not in the national interest to give details of defence plutonium production; however, it is kept to the minimum required to meet defence needs.

Military Reactors

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of evidence given to the Sizewell inquiry about the use of military reactors, Her Majesty's Government will now answer parliamentary questions about such reactors to the extent consonant with essential national security; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Government will continue to answer questions about the use of military reactors to the extent consonant with national security.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what is the purpose of the moneys paid out of the Exchequer to hill farmers; and if she will publish in the *Official Report* particulars of such moneys paid out in each of the past five years together with particulars of any moneys paid out by the EEC during the same period.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 31 January 1985. Details of support to agriculture in hill areas are given in table 28 of the White Paper on the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1985" (Cmnd. 9423).

Absence from Office (Contact Arrangements)

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister if, at any time during her holiday last summer, she was not contactable from London by telephone.

Mr. Boyes asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will list the occasions in 1984 when she was out of the country on official business; and by what means she could be contacted by her officials on each occasion;

(2) what arrangements she made in 1984 for officials to be able to contact her whilst she was on holiday.

The Prime Minister: I was out of the country on official business on the following occasions during 1984:

Date	
23 January	France
26–27 February	Italy
2–3 February	Hungary
13-14 February	Soviet Union
19–20 March	Belgium
17–19 April	Portugal
4 May	France
25–26 June	France
2–4 November	India
29 Nov.–1 Dec.	France
3–4 December	Republic of Ireland
17–23 December	China
	Hong Kong
	USA

Whenever I am out of the country, arrangements are always made which ensure that I can be contacted. For reasons of security, the details of these arrangements cannot be disclosed.

EMPLOYMENT

Redundancies

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give the latest figures since 29 February 1984 for the number of firms announcing redundancies in (i) the Wirral and (ii) Birkenhead;

(2) if he will give the figures since 29 February 1984 for the number of redundancies and closures in Birkenhead and Merseyside.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is given in the following table:

Redundacies confirmed as due to occur from 1 March 1984 to 31 December 1984†*

	Wirral local authority area‡	*Birkenhead jobcentre area*	*Merseyside Metropolitan county‡*
Number of occasions of redundancy‖	13	10	147
Redundancies involved	1,402	1,202	9,024
Closures: number of establishments	6	Nil	56
Redundancies involved in closures	157	Nil	3,663

Notes:

* Confirmation by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving 10 or more workers.

† Includes provisional figures for December.

‡ Groupings of jobcentre areas approximating to the area.

‖ Firms which have made redundancies on more than one occasion during the period are counted more than once.

Computotech Ltd.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied with the management of Computotech Ltd of Manpower Services Commission schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Computotech has been providing training of the quality and standards required by the Manpower Services Commission. I am informed that Computotech Holdings Ltd. and a number of its subsidiaries have been put into receivership, and this resulted in the closure earlier this week of Computotech's schemes in London. The remaining schemes are continuing to operate. All trainees who have been affected by the London closure will continue to be paid their allowances by the commission, and arrangements are being made to transfer them to new schemes or courses as soon as possible. The commission is, of course, keeping the remaining schemes under the closest review.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Renton: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the code are already in hand following the publication, on 9 February 1984, of the programme of action on women in the Civil Service.

UN Commission for Africa

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attitude was taken by Her Majesty's Government to the provision of a new conference centre for the United Nations Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Renton: At the 1984 General Assembly the United Kingdom voted against provision of new conference facilities for the UN Economic Commission for Africa. United Kingdom representatives stressed that at a time of severe economic hardhship in Africa the United Nations should concentrate resources on helping directly to alleviate these conditions.

Declaration of Decolonisation

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will dissociate the United Kingdom from the United Nations' celebration of the 25th anniversary of the declaration of decolonisation.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom voted against the 1984 General Assembly resolution endorsing the United Nations programme of activities to observe this anniversary on the grounds that there were more pressing priorities for the funds to be allocated to the programme. We are considering our participation in the celebrations in the light of that vote.

UN (Expenditure Savings)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to seek the saving of expenditure by the United Nations by opposing any project which is, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, unnecessary or frivolous.

Mr. Renton: It is our consistent policy to press for improved efficiency of United Nations operations through the curtailment of unnecessary, frivolous or otherwise ineffective programmes. Further, United Kingdom representatives recently emphasised that programmes of proven value should be financed by savings elsewhere in UN programmes and not by new money.

El Salvador

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 7 November 1984, *Official Report*, column 4, what colleges in Britain will be receiving El Salvadorean officers; what is the estimated cost of this assistance; what subjects will be studied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We are still discussing with the Salvadorean authorities which courses would be suitable for the one or two officers to whom places have been offered in Britain.

TRANSPORT

Transport Bill

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Transport who he consulted on the proposal for bus substitution contained in the Transport Bill.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend announced proposals for legislation on bus substitution services on 21

June 1984. In formulating those proposals he took account of the views of the Select Committee on Transport, which commented positively on bus substitution in its report of May 1983; and of the views of the chairman of the British Railways Board. Since announcing his proposals my right hon. Friend has further consulted the British Railways Board, and has also sought the views of the Central Transport Consultative Committee, the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils and the London Boroughs' Association.

Road Safety and Traffic Management

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the terms of reference of the review body to be headed by Dr. Peter North to deal with questions relating to road safety and traffic management; and to what extent he will propose to await its recommendations before taking action on the recent report on road safety by the Transport Committee.

Mrs. Chalker: The terms of reference of the review body were set out in the reply of 31 January of my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley). These include simplification of the law as proposed in recommendation XXV of the Transport Committee's report. In other respects I see no need to await the review body's recommendations before responding to the Transport Committee.

Russian Ships (British Ports)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if the information given to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East in his letter of 11 January, about the continuing entry to British ports of Soviet merchant and passenger vessels, has been communicated to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

(2) what discussions are taking place, or are proposed, with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning continued access to British ports by Soviet merchant vessels.

Mr. David Mitchell: There have been a number of discussions between my Department and the Soviet authorities concerning possible amendments to the Anglo-Soviet treaty of merchant navigation. It would not be appropriate to reveal the proposals that have been made by either side while these discussions are continuing.

Heavy Lorries

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether a driver not holding a heavy goods vehicle licence is permitted to drive a vehicle whose weight is below the gross 7·5 tonnes qualifying limit at which a heavy goods vehicle licence is required but which is pulling a standard drawbar trailer whose weight is such as to bring the combined gross weight of the vehicle and trailer to over 7·5 tonnes.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

Goods Vehicles (Testing)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with representatives of the transport industry about the weight threshold for the plating and testing of goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Under present arrangements, all goods vehices over 1525 kg unladen weight are subject to the Goods Vehicles (Plating and Testing) Regulations 1982, which require, amongst other things, an annual roadworthiness test at a Department of Transport heavy goods vehicle testing station. Vehicles below this threshold are subject only to the normal MOT test.

The use of an unladen weight threshold for these purposes is inconsistent with other legislation, where gross weights are now commonly used, and it has been put to me by representatives of vehicle body builders that there would be road safety advantages in moving to a gross weight threshold for plating and testing purposes also. My officials have therefore started informal discussions with representatives of the various sectors of the industry about possible ways of securing a change on these lines.

There are a number of implications associated with any change to the plating and testing threshold and any arrangements could not be implemented for some time. Nevertheless, I have broad sympathy with the case for change, and I hope that it will be possible to reach a satisfactory solution acceptable to all parties.

If the present discussions are successful, therefore, I hope to bring forward firm proposals for change in due course.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

South Africa (Company Interests)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out for each year since the implementation of the proposals in "Code of Conduct for Companies with Interests in South Africa", Cmnd. 7233, the number of companies expected to lodge reports with his Department; how many reports have been lodged; and what is the number of these which have been deemed satisfactory.

Mr. Fletcher: The numbers of companies which have reported each year since the publication of Cmnd. 7233 were given in table 1 of the latest "Analysis and Summary of Companies' Reports" presented to Parliament on 10 April 1984 and which is available in the Library of the House. The same table also recorded the numbers of companies believed to have a responsibility to submit a full report under the code, but which declined to do so. Companies whose reports fail satisfactorily to provide all the information required are on every occasion approached for additional details. But records have not been kept of the few times when that has been necessary.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further plans he has for changing the role and resources of the British Overseas Trade Board; what representations he has received on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Amateur Radio Licence

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has had from the Radio Society of Great Britain in relation to the introduction of a novice amateur radio licence.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 30 January 1985, c. *218*]: The Radio Society of Great Britain, which represents the interest of United Kingdom radio amateurs, has put forward proposals for a provisional or novice licence in the past, but it has not done so in recent times because, I understand, doubts have been expressed as to whether a novice facility is in the best interests of amateur radio. My Department requires radio amateurs to achieve a minimum standard of proficiency and there are fears that introducing a lower standard for novices would cause interference to other services. Officials in the radio regulatory division of my Department have regular meetings with the society, and although no formal proposals have been put forward recently on this subject, it remains under discussion.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for 1984, in league order, the 10 countries known to him to have the highest top rate of income tax *(a)* on earned income and *(b)* on all income, including investment income; and if he will include details for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moore: The information available for other countries is given in the tables. The top rate of income tax in the United Kingdom is 60 per cent. on all income.

Table 1
Ten countries with highest top rates of income tax on earned (employment) income

	per cent.
Including local income taxes	
Libya	96·5
Tanzania	95
Algeria	86
Ethiopia	85
Portugal	84·4
Japan	83·6
Tunisia	82·2
Sweden	81·2
Zambia	80
Poland	78
Excluding local income taxes	
Libya	96·5
Tanzania	95
Algeria	86
Ethiopia	85
Portugal	84·4
Tunisia	82·2
Zambia	80
Poland	78
Belgium, Netherlands	72

Table 2
Ten countries with highest top rates of income tax on all income, including investment income

	per cent.
Including local income taxes	
German Democratic Republic	98
Libya	96·5
Tanzania	95
Ethiopia	89
Japan	88
Portugal, Algeria	86
Tunisia	85·85
Poland	85
Sweden	81·2
Excluding local income taxes	
German Democratic Republic	98
Libya	96·5
Tanzania	95
Ethiopia	89
Portugal, Algeria	86
Tunisia	85·85
Poland	85
Zambia	80
Belgium, Netherlands	72

Notes
1. The tables give the rate of tax for the latest year for which firm information is available.
2. The rates for investment income may not relate to all types of investment income.
3. Local income taxes have, where chargeable, been taken into account at typical rates.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the yield if value added tax were to be extended *(a)* to the construction of commercial property and *(b)* to financial services.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is estimated that the net additional revenue from extending value added tax at the standard rate to the construction of commercial property would be of the order of £300 million at 1984-85 prices. The application of the tax to financial services would raise difficult technical problems, and I regret that it is not possible to give a meaningful estimate of the likely yield.

Lodging Allowances

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his current estimate of the cost of exempting married persons from taxation on lodging allowances paid whilst working away from home; and what would be the additional cost of extending this concession to single persons;

(2) if he has any plans to exempt single people from taxation on lodging allowances.

Mr. Moore: I assume the hon. Member refers to the lodging allowance an employee may receive from his employer when he is required to work temporarily away from his usual place of employment and it is impracticable to expect him to travel home on a daily basis. Providing the allowance reimburses the employee's additional costs of accommodation, it is not taxable income whether received by a married or a sigle person. Information is not

available centrally on which to base an estimate of the cost of not taxing lodging allowances paid in these circumstances.

If the hon. Member has another point in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Pound Sterling

Mr. Faulds asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what relationship is assumed or predicted by the Treasury model of the economy between each United States 1 cent. reduction in the value o the pound sterling and *(a)* the value per barrel of North sea oil production and *(b)* the revenue derived by the Treasury from that production.

Mr. Moore: At current levels of the dollar-sterling exchange rate and dollar oil prices a 1 cent. fall in the value of sterling against the dollar would raise sterling oil prices by about 1 per cent. Other things being equal, a 1 per cent. increase in sterling oil prices is expected to raise North sea revenues by about £150 million in a full year.

Statistical Information

Mr. Hunter asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Her Majesty's Government accept the desirability of the introduction of new technology so that statistical information no longer has to be collected at European Community frontiers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is, of course, desirable that new technology should be used wherever possible and on a cost-effective basis to collect information in a way which will minimise delays at European Community frontiers. The United Kingdom already has efficient computer systems which directly collect statistics for about three quarters of all import traffic. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has plans to extend the scope and capability of these systems and is considering, in particular, whether it will be possible to use them to collect statistics on exports.

The European Community is evolving a plan for co-ordinating the development of member states' computer systems in order to maximise the benefits of new technology for intra-Community trade. Her Majesty's Goverment will lend full support to any proposals which are conducive to the reduction of frontier delays, provided that any investment in the systems or developments proposed is properly appraised and justified.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Baldry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of a male worker's average earnings went in tax and national insurance contributions in the following years: 1955, 1964, 1970, 1979, and for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Moore: Information for a married man on average male manual earnings, assuming no tax reliefs and allowances other than the married man's allowance and NIC at the contracted-in rate, is as follows:

Average rate of tax plus NIC

	Percentage of gross earnings
1955-56	10·0
1964-65	17·6
1970-71	24·8
1979-80	25·4
1984-85	*27·6

* Provisional.

Books and Newspapers (VAT)

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further representations he has received on the possible introduction of value added tax on books and newspapers.

Mr. Hayhoe: Over 2,000 representations about the imposition of VAT on books, newspapers and periodicals.

Taxation

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on revenue accruing to the Exchequer of changes in income tax paid at above basic rate, arising only from the change in the tax threshold in each year since 1979.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 February 1985, c. *673*]: If in 1984-85 the main personal allowances had each been replaced by the corresponding 1978-79 allowances, indexed to 1984-85 levels by reference to the statutory formula, there would have been an additional liability to tax at rates in excess of the basic rate of about £30 million in a full year.

Tax Revenue

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect on revenue in 1984-85 of the decisions made in Budgets from 1982 onwards to raise higher tax bands over and above the rate of inflation.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1985, c. *61*]: If the 1981-82 basic rate limit and higher rate income tax bands were indexed to 1984-85 by reference to the statutory formula and substituted for those currently in force, the direct revenue effect would be a yield of about £270 million in a full year at 1984-85 levels of income.

Customs Staff and Posts

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of staff from the investigation division of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise attached to individual ports in the United Kingdom, listing the individual ports and the number of such staff in each one.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *291-2*]: The investigation division of Customs and Excise is mainly based in London but also has a number of provincial offices. None of its staff is specifically attached to or responsible for individual ports.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the numbers of customs staff at seaports, airports and inland premises in Scotland at 31 March 1984, *(b)* the number of

additional Customs staff allocated to Scotland since that date and *(c)* the number of new Customs posts which will be allocated to Scotland in 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *291-2*]: The information is as follows:

(a) Four hundred and thirty-nine.
(b) Four, but staffing levels at Glasgow airport have been reduced by three.
(c) Eight.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate how many dwellings in the public sector tenanted by elderly and infirm residents have been left unoccupied by their tenants because such tenants are too old or infirm ever to return.

Sir George Young: This information is not available.

Rate Capping

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the London borough of Brent about the effect of his rate capping proposals on their ability to maintain and improve homes transferred to them from the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: No such representations have been received.

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the code are already in hand following the publication on 9 February 1984 of the programme of action on women in the Civil Service. The recommendations contained in the programme are being pursued in my Department through a subcommittee of the General Whitley council.

Local Government Reform

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applications for consents under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984, made to him by 31 January, involve a financial consideration of less than £500;

(2) how many applications for consents under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 made to him by 31 January 1985 involve no financial consideration.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Financial considerations are not always a material factor in determining applications under section 8 of the Act and such details have not been supplied or sought in every case. Of cases where financial details were supplied, 1,120 involved a sale price or periodic rental of less than £500 and 703 of these involved no financial consideration.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applications for consents under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984, made to him by 31 January 1985, are still outstanding;

(2) how many applications for consents under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 made to him by 31 January 1985 are still outstanding.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Thirty-one applications under section 8 and 15 applications under section 9.

In at least 16 cases further information is awaited from the local authority.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total cost of Government Departments so far incurred in processing applications by the six metropolitan county councils for consents under sections 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Estimates across Government Departments are not collected centrally; and no distinctions made for these purposes between the sections of the Act.

The cost of Department of Environment staff, including associated accommodation and administrative costs, engaged on processing specific applications from the metropolitan county councils for consent under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Act in the period up to 31 January 1985 was approximately £55,000.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average value of contracts for which consent has been sought under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 by 31 January 1985.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The number of contracts involved is not necessarily a material consideration in determining applications for consent under section 9 of the Act. Such information is not always provided.

The average value of applications received by 31 January 1985 under section 9 is £1,192,300. This figure excludes any cases where financial details were not provided.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for consents under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984, made to him by 31 January 1985, were for *(a)* police vehicles, *(b)* fire service vehicles and appliances, *(c)* police clothing, *(d)* fire service clothing and *(e)* fuel; and what is the average contract value for each category.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Details of applications received for consent under section 9 of the Act in respect of each category are as follows:

Category	*Number of applications received by 31 January 1985*	*Average application value (£)*
(a) Police Vehicles	3	414,534

Category	Number of applications received by 31 January 1985	Average application value (£)
(b) Fire Service vehicles and appliances (including those for airports use)	6	507,059
(c) Police clothing	None	—
(d) Fire service clothing	2	157,328
(e) Fuel	4	2,566,365

Severe Weather Costs

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will give financial assistance to local authorities, as in previous years, for snow clearing, gritting and salting, where the cost is greater than the product of a 1p rate;

(2) whether expenditure on snow clearing, gritting and salting will be disregarded for grant penalty purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Local Government Practices and Procedures

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the interim report from the inquiry into local government practices and procedures will be made; and if it will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I consider it reasonable to look to the committee of inquiry to submit an interim report by the end of July. It is customary for published reports of this nature to be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when appointments to the committee of inquiry into local government practices and procedures will be finalised.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State advised the House on 6 February, further appointments to the committee of inquiry will be made shortly.

Homes Insulation Scheme

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of grant allocations to each local authority for 1985-86 under the homes insulation scheme, calculating for each authority the percentage increase or decrease on the 1984-85 grant.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 21 January at column *316*. It is misleading to make comparisons between the allocations for the years 1984-85 and 1985-86 on an authority by authority basis, since 25 per cent. of the allocation for 1985-86 is being held in reserve for distribution to authorities as justified by demand. Such comparisons would be further distorted by underspending in 1984-85, which is likely to amount to about £4 million.

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the grants made under the homes insulation scheme in 1984-85 he anticipates will go to householders increasing the amount of insulation rather than installing insulation for the first time.

Sir George Young: Latest figures indicate that during the second quarter of 1984-85, 11,000 grants were paid to householders topping up existing loft insulation, compared with some 49,000 grants to those installing insulation for the first time.

Since the homes insulation scheme was extended only to grant aid topping up on 20 July 1984, this ratio does not necessarily represent a reliable guide to the financial year as a whole.

Private Water Supplies

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those EEC regulations and directives relating to the standards of quality and inspection of private water supplies which are to be brought into force in the present year; and what consultations have taken place with the bodies whose duty it will be to implement any such changes in the law.

Mr. Gow: The EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC) will apply to all drinking water supplies and comes into operation on 15 July this year. My Department consulted those associations representing the bodies which in England and Wales will be implementing the directive in relation to private supplies, including the Association of District Councils, and the London Boroughs Association.

DOE circular 25/84—Welsh Office Circular 51/84—was sent to local authorities in England and Wales on 18 October 1984 to guide them on their duties under the directive.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the report of the consultation exercise on the principles to be applied in assessing new disposal facilities for low and intermediate level radioactive wastes.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report has been published today and I have placed copies in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Salmon

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now dropped his proposals for the tagging of salmon.

Mr. John MacKay: Consideration of the possibility of introducing a salmon-tagging scheme is continuing and it is hoped to reach conclusions in the near future. Consultations with interested parties have identified a number of difficulties which require careful study.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he is considering to ensure the survival of the salmon.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 24 January 1985 at columns *517-18*.

In addition, consideration is being given to the possibility of introducing a system of salmon sales control and a review of existing salmon legislation in Scotland is under way.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received the submission from the Lothian health board on the closure of the Bruntsfield and Deaconess hospitals; and if he is in a position to indicate when he is likely to announce his decision.

Mr. John MacKay: Lothian health board submitted to my right hon. Friend formal closure proposals in respect of the Deaconess and Bruntsfield hospitals on 6 February.

Otherwise, I have nothing to add to what was said in the reply to the hon. Member on 28 January.

Homes Insulation Scheme

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the grants made under the homes insulation scheme in 1984-85 he anticipates will go to householders increasing the amount of insulation rather than installing insulation for the first time.

Mr. Ancram: I estimate that the proportion will be of the order of 21 per cent.

Broadleaved Woodland (Felling Licences)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date the Forestry Commission issued felling licences for broadleaved woods; of these, how many licences had conditions requiring the replanting purely of broadleaved trees; and how many hectares of woodland this totalled in each period.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

		Licences which required replanting with broadleaves only	
	Number of licences issued	*Number of licences*	*Area (hectares)*
Year ended 31 March 1983	421	143	262
Year ended 31 March 1984	386	117	227
Nine months ended 31 December 1984	155	69	110

In addition, a significant number of licences were issued requiring restocking with a mixture of broadleaves and conifers, designed to lead eventually to woodlands of a predominantly broadleaved character.

Broadleaves

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Forestry Commission has met representatives of local authorities in the United Kingdom since September 1984 to discuss broadleaves in Britain; and what changes in consultation procedures for felling licence and broadleaved woodland grant applications were discussed.

Mr. John MacKay: No, but representatives of local authority associations have been invited to the broadleaves in Britain seminar to be held in May.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representatives from the Country Landowners Association, the Countryside Commission, the Countryside Commission for Scotland, the Institute of Chartered Foresters, the National Farmers Union, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and Timber Growers UK have been invited to attend the broadleaves in Britain seminar organised by the Forestry Commission for 8 May.

Mr. John MacKay: One representative has been invited from each of these bodies except for the Nature Conservancy Council and Timber Growers UK, which have been invited to send two.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why the Forestry Commission has restricted its invitations to the seminar on broadleaves in Britain on 8 May to only 22 organisations; and why many of those organisations have been invited to send only a single representative.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission has been concerned to keep the numbers of persons attending the seminar within manageable proportions in order to ensure a constructive discussion. It has, however, extended its list of invited organisations to 27.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria the Forestry Commission used in deciding which conservation groups should be invited to the seminar on 8 May at which it will present its revised policies on broadleaves in Britain.

Mr. John MacKay: Given the need to restrict the numbers attending the seminar, the criterion was to select bodies which would provide a balanced representation of conservation interest.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria the Forestry Commission's working group on broadleaves in Britain used in deciding which non-governmental organisations it would consult privately before presenting its revised policies in May.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission's working group has had meetings with such non-government organisations as it felt necessary to consult over particular aspects of its developing policy proposals.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland have met the Forestry Commission since September 1984 to discuss broadleaves in Britain and its revision of policies for broadleaved woodlands.

Mr. John MacKay: No, but officials have been in regular contact and a meeting has been arranged for later this month to discuss this matter.

Deer (Firearms Etc.) (Scotland) Order 1984

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those individuals and statutory or non-statutory organisations which submitted criticisms on the Deer (Firearms Etc.) (Scotland) Order 1984; if he will detail the nature of these criticisms; in each case specifically when each criticism was received by his Department; and if he will list the criticisms he intends to accommodate in the new draft.

Mr. John MacKay: Criticisms were received from Dr. J. Carr (14 September 1984); Lord Northfield (21 October 1984); Mr. K. W. Woodvine (23 October 1984); The British Deer Society (30 October 1984); The Gun Trade Association (26 November 1984); Mr. J. Hotchkis (3 December 1984); and Mr. J. R. Seago (17 January 1985). Criticisms mainly concerned the circumstances in which shotguns might be used and the specification of ammunition for rifles. My right hon. Friend expects to meet some but not all of the points made. For details I would ask the hon. Member to await the draft order which will be laid before Parliament shortly.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what constituted the apparent irregularity in the laying procedure of the draft Deer (Firearms Etc.) (Scotland) Order 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Some corrections made to the draft order after it had been laid were not submitted to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he made a public statement or formally indicated the withdrawal of the draft Deer (Firearms Etc.) (Scotland) Order 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: A press release was issued on 27 November 1984, the date on which the draft order was withdrawn. In addition, all those involved in consultations were informed by letter.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mr. Steven Owen

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Mr. Steven Owen of Musselburgh was held in police custody for three days between 9 February and 12 February awaiting court proceedings arising from a parking ticket; and if he is satisfied that the appropriate notice for Mr. Owen to appear in the East Lothian district court on 23 January was served on him by the police in the appropriate manner.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am having a full inquiry made into all the circumstances referred to by the hon. Member and I shall write to him as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

TA Centres

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Territorial Army centres are guarded by Territorial Army personnel and not by regular soldiers; and if he will list the centres so guarded.

Mr. Lee: Whenever possible, if it is necessary to guard Territorial Army centres, they are guarded by Territorial Army personnel, unless the centres are within regular Army establishments for which regular troops have overall responsibility.

Defence Land

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of defence land holdings have been released following the recommendations of the Nugent committee report; and what new land holdings have been acquired by his Department since its publication in 1973.

Mr. Lee: Defence land holdings have reduced by 7·6 per cent. since April 1973. I regret that details of acquisitions are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the recommendations of the Nugent committee on defence land holdings concerning the disposal of the Ministry of Defence site at Lydney and Aston Down, Gloucestershire, East Riggs, Dumfriesshire, Pershore, Worcestershire, Watchett/Doniford, Somerset, Wrekin, Shropshire, Ollerton, Nottinghamshire, Netley, Hampshire and Perranporth, Cornwall have been fully carried out.

Mr. Lee: The recommendations of the Nugent report have been fully carried out at Lydney, Watchet/Doniford, Netley and Perranporth. Four hundred acres of land at Pershore and 370 acres at Aston Down have been passed to the Property Services Agency for disposal. Approximately 1,050 acres of leased land at Ollerton has been given up.

The range at the Wrekin and East Riggs have been retained for defence use.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the two Army sites situated at Manorbier, Dyfed have been disposed of as recommended by the Nugent committee report.

Mr. Lee: The East Moor cliff training area and 184 acres of the firing range at manorbrier have been sold; 102 acres of the range head have been retained.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the RAF site at North Luffenham, Rutland, has been disposed of following the decision to move its facilities to RAF Benson and RAF Digby, in accordance with the recommendations of the Nugent report on defence land.

Mr. Lee: Some 75 acres of land were passed for disposal at North Luffenham following the review suggested by the Nugent committee.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, following the recommendations of the Nugent committee report on defence land, it has been practicable for land outside the main site at Yoxter, Somerset to be disposed of.

Mr. Lee: To date it has not been practicable but the matter is being kept under review.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the recommendations of the Nugent committee report have been carried out concerning the Dartmoor complex in Devon, 250 acres of land at Swinderby, Lincolnshire, Watton, Norfolk, Sealand, Cheshire, Irvine, Ayrshire, and 600 acres of land at Cronwell, Lincolshire.

Mr. Lee: All of the recommendations concerning the Dartmoor complex have been carried out. The range at Irvine has been sold and 600 acres of land at Cranwell have been passed to the Property Service Agency for disposal. Some 88 acres have been disposed of at Watton but the remainder of the site and the land at Swinderby has been

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18th February 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Official Secrets Act 1911

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General how many prosecutions there have been since 1955 under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911; of these prosecutions, how many resulted in convictions; and what was the average term of imprisonment imposed.

The Attorney-General: Proceedings under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 have been instituted against 51 persons and one company since 1955. The charges against four defendants were withdrawn at the magistrates' court. Thirty-six were prosecuted to conviction and nine were acquitted. In one case the defendant was discharged by examining justices in respect of all save one charge which was withdrawn, and two cases remain pending. Fifteen of those convicted received immediate custodial sentences. The average length of 14 of those sentences was 15 months. The remaining custodial sentence of four years included penalties for other offences.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General if he is satisfied with the operation of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

The Attorney-General: My responsibility is for the enforcement of the law as it stands. I am satisfied that it is enforced sensibly and fairly.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General how many civil servants have been prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act in each of the last 10 years; and if he will break down the figures according to the section of the Act under which the prosecution was brought.

The Attorney-General: The following table provides details of the prosecutions against civil servants under sections 1 and 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 for 1974 and subsequent years. There were no prosecutions other than under sections 1 and 2.

	Prosecutions under section 1	*Prosecutions under section 2*
1974	—	—
1975	—	—
1976	—	—
1977	—	—
1978	—	—
1979	*1	1
1980	—	*1
1981	—	1
1982	1	1
1983	—	2
1984	1	1
1985	—	†1

* Withdrawn at magistrates court.
† Plus one pending.

Mr. John Morris asked the Attorney-General how many prosecutions there have been under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act *(a)* since 1979 and *(b)* since 1955.

The Attorney-General: Proceedings under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 have been instituted against 51 persons and one company since 1955 and against 20 persons since 1979.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the guidelines regarding prosecution to which he referred in his statement of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 180.

The Attorney-General: The guidelines regarding prosecution to which I referred in my statement of 12 February 1985 was the document setting out the criteria for prosecution which I drew up for the guidance of all who prosecute on behalf of the public, and published in February 1983. The issue of these guidelines was one of the interim measures announced on 27 July 1982 by my right hon. and noble Friend the then Home Secretary pending the introduction of a prosecution service independent of the police. A copy of these guidelines was placed in the Library of the House on 14 February 1983.

At the same time they were drawn to the attention of chief officers of police and other bodies with a prosecution function by my right hon. and noble Friend the then Home Secretary. My Department has supplied copies of these guidelines as and when they have been requested, and I am satisfied that no further publication of them is required at this time.

Mr. Madden asked the Attorney-General on how many occasions he had consultations with Ministers in 1984 in respect of senior civil servants being prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act.

The Attorney-General: None.

Jurors (Political Affiliations)

Mr. Greenway asked the Attorney-General if he will make it his policy, in all future cases to be tried by jury, to instruct Crown counsel to object to the empanelment of any juror known to have political affiliations which in his opinion could call in question the ability of that juror to reach an objective verdict on the basis of the evidence.

The Attorney-General: It is not open to counsel to challenge a prospective juror before he is empanelled. The occasion for making such a challenge arises only at the point where persons who are already on the panel and have been selected by ballot to try a particular case come forward to be sworn for that purpose. I assume that this is what my hon. Friend intended to refer to.

If any facts are known to prosecuting counsel which lead him to doubt the impartiality of a particular juror, he may then ask that juror to stand by for the Crown. If this leaves an insufficient number of persons to constitute the jury on the panel that has been summoned, counsel may then challenge the juror for cause. Whether that challenge is well-founded and should therefore be upheld will be decided by the trial judge.

A juror's political affiliations would not, in themselves, constitute a ground for asking him to stand by or for challenging him for cause unless, in the words of the guidelines on jury checks, which I published in July 1980 and a copy of which is in the Library of the House, his

'political beliefs are so biased as to go beyond normally reflecting the broad spectrum of views and interests in the community to reflect the extreme views of sectarian interest or pressure group to a degree which might interfere with his fair assessment of the facts of the case or lead him to exert improper pressure on his fellow jurors.'

The jury checks which are authorised by the guidelines are limited in scope and would not be expected to disclose political affiliations which were not of the extreme character that I have just described.

Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984

Mr. Chope asked the Attorney-General on what date part III of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 will be brought into effect.

The Attorney-General: It is intended to bring part III of the Act into force in July.

Mr. Chope asked the Attorney-General on what date he expects the drafting of the new rules of court under part III of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 to be completed.

The Attorney-General: It is intended that the necessary rules will be drafted and submitted for consideration to members of the Matrimonial Causes Rule Committee in March.

Greenham Common Demonstrators (Legal Aid)

Mr. Madden asked the Attorney-General how many people charged with offences at or near Greenham Common over the last year have applied for legal aid; how many such applications have been refused; how many appeals against refusal to grant legal aid have been upheld by the area legal aid committee; and if any direction has been issued advising that legal aid should be withheld from any person charged with offences at or near Greenham Common.

The Attorney-General: Information distinguishing applicants for legal aid who were charged with offences arising at or near Greenham Common could only be obtained from the courts and the Law Society at disproportionate cost. No such direction as is suggested has been issued.

Mr. Clive Ponting

Mr. Madden asked the Attorney-General on what date Clive Ponting was charged under the Official Secrets Act; from what force was the officer who charged him; and if Clive Ponting was charged at any time with any other offence in connection with passing papers to any hon. Member.

The Attorney-General: Clive Ponting was charged on 17 August 1984 with an offence contrary to section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 by an officer of the Ministry of Defence police. He was at no time charged with any other offence.

Mr. Madden asked the Attorney-General when the Director of Public Prosecutions was first notified that papers from the Ministry of Defence, relating to Clive Ponting, had been passed to an hon. Member; when papers relating to this matter were first referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions; if the Department of Public Prosecutions was asked to advise *(a)* on whether any offence had arisen specifically under the Official Secrets Act and *(b)* as to whether any other offence had been committed; and if the Director of Public Prosecutions was asked to offer advice according to the general criteria previously understood to concern the Director of Public Prosecutions in giving advice on whether proceedings are appropriate.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions was first notified of the unauthorised disclosure of papers from the MOD to an hon. Member in an oral report by a senior officer of that Ministry at 11 am on 13 August 1984. Certain documents were handed at the time to the DPP, who, after consultation with the Solicitor-General, asked for a very early police report which was submitted to the Director on 16 August 1984. Referral by the Ministry of Defence to the DPP was for the purpose of a decision whether to prosecute and not for advice.

The possible offence disclosed by the facts reported to the DPP was an offence under the Official Secrets Act 1911. In recommending to the Solicitor-General that consent should be given to a prosecution, the Director of Public Prosecutions had regard to the guidance as to criteria for prosecution which I published in March 1983 (a copy of which is in the Library of the House).

ENVIRONMENT

Use Classes Order

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consider revising the Use Classes Order to clarify whether the proposed special housing development for single people with medical or social problems or related matters is a material change of use requiring planning permission.

Mr. Macfarlane: Planning permission is not needed for the occupation of dwelling-houses by single people with medical or social problems provided that no material change of use is involved, nor for any change of use falling within class XIV of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972. The position is elaborated in the memorandum submitted by my Department to the Social Services Select Committee on 27 July 1984. I will consider whether further clarification is needed, and, if so, what form it might take, together with any recommendations on this matter which the Select Committee may make in its report to the House.

Gipsies (Designated Sites)

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have designated sites for gipsies under the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Macfarlane: According to the returns submitted by district councils in January this year, a total of 230 gipsy sites have been provided in the areas of 24 London boroughs and 156 district councils in England.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last reviewed the operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: The operation of the Act is kept under constant review. Changes were last introduced in

1980 when, by amendments enacted in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act, provision was made for Exchequer capital grant to local authorities for the cost of developing sites. We also simplified the enforcement powers available to authorities whose areas are designated under section 12 of the 1968 Act. I have no plans for further amendments at present.

GLC (Staff)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to how many staff have entered the employment of the Greater London council in the last 12 months;

(2) what information he has as to how many staff have left the Greater London council's employment in the last 12 months.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not held centrally.

Rochdale Metropolitan District (Grants)

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of all Government grants paid to the Rochdale metropolitan district in the last five years, including an estimate for 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: The available information is given in the following table:

Government grants to the metropolitan borough of Rochdale

£ million cash

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Rate support grant *	39·7	44·7	50·0	46·3	47·4	49·6	49·1	53·2
Rent and rate rebates and housing benefit †	1·7	1·9	2·6	2·9	3·9	14·3	15·7	—
Housing subsidies ‡	3·5	4·6	5·6	3·5	0·9	0·2	0·8	—
Other grants ‖	3·8	5·3	6·4	6·6	7·4	9·6	—	—
Total	48·7	56·5	64·6	59·3	59·6	73·7	—	—

* The rate support grant system changed in 1981-82. Figures for earlier years are not on a comparable basis. The figures for 1978-79 to 1980-81 include the needs, resources and domestic elements. Thereafter they include block grant and domestic rate relief grant. The figures up to 1981-82 are final entitlement. Those for 1982-83 to 1984-85 are latest estimates after holdback. The 1985-86 figure assumes that the authority will spend at target.

† The figures for 1978-79 to 1982-83 are for rent and rebates. Those for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are for housing benefit. The 1984-85 figure is provisional. No estimate is available for 1985-86.

‡ The figures for 1982-83 to 1984-85 are subject to adjustment on the basis of final audited claims. No estimate can be made for 1985-86.

‖ These include relevant and non-relevant specific grants and capital grants. Figures are not available for 1984-85 and estimates cannot be made for that year or 1985-86.

Water Authorties (Rate Poundage)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* details for the latest available period of the average equated rate poundage in respect of unmeasured water supply for each water authority in England.

Mr. Macfarlane: The following table gives details of the equated water rate for unmeasured water supply for the financial year 1984-85.

Water Authority	*Equated Water Rate—pence per £ Rateable Value*
North West	17·96
Northumbrian	26·95
Severn-Trent	16·70
Yorkshire	27·70
Anglian	20·55
Thames	11·75
Southern	17·47
Wessex	22·40
South West	23·90
English average	16·83

Note: The equated rate is the rate poundage which would apply if no standing charges were levied.

Bedfordshire Structure Plan

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to grant an examination in public following application by the Bedfordshire county council for *(a)* general amendments to the Bedfordshire structure plan and *(b)* a specific amendment to the plan prohibiting the deposit of nuclear waste in the county.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend proposes to hold an examination in public to consider selected matters raised by the proposed alterations to current policies in the Bedfordshire structure plan. He does not propose to examine in public the second alteration which proposes a new policy on nuclear waste. Any specific proposal for the deposit of nuclear waste at Elstow will be dealt with under the procedures announced by my right hon. Friend in the House on 24 January.

Energy Conservation and Homes Insulation

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* all grants available to householders for energy conservation and home insulation.

Sir George Young: Grants under the homes insulation scheme are available towards the cost of insulating the lofts of dwellings with less than 30mm of existing insulation, together with the associated lagging of tanks and pipes in the loft and the provision of a hot water tank jacket.

Supplementary benefit recipients may obtain from local DHSS offices single payments for draught proofing materials and hot water tank jackets.

In addition the Energy Efficiency Office makes seedcorn and pump-priming grants to voluntary bodies who carry out measures such as loft insulation and draught stripping.

Retail Chains (Planning Appeals)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in the latest 12 months for which figures are available he has overruled his inspector's recommendations *(a)* to refuse a planning appeal by retail chains for the construction of a retail outlet of over 5,000 sq ft and *(b)* to accept a planning appeal on the same terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: In 1984 my right hon. Friend allowed appeals relating to this type of proposed development in three cases where the inspector had recommended dismissal. In no cases did he dismiss such an appeal where the inspector had recommended in favour of allowing it.

Housing Grants (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants were made to the city of Leicester council for *(a)* home improvement purposes and *(b)* council house maintenance and improvements in 1974 and each subsequent year up to the latest year for which figures are available; if he will estimate the figure for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Exchequer contributions towards expenditure on home improvement grants paid in Leicester city council from 1973-74 onwards were:

(Figures in £000's)

Year	
1973	103·2
1974-75	133·1
1975-76	185·0
1976-77	255·8
1977-78	309·7
1978-79	404·5
1979-80	541·5
1980-81	8·11·6
1981-82	1,296·0
1982-83	2,070·5
1983-84*	2,871·0
1984-85*	3,692·8

* Subject to adjustment when audited final claims are received.

The amount which will be paid for 1985-86 will depend in part the council's continuing entitlement to contribution on loan charges already incurred but also on the level of expenditure on grants in 1985-86, which is for the council to decide within the resources available to it.

Council house improvement and maintenance are not specifically grant-aided through the housing subsidy system. These costs are taken into account in the calculation of an authority's entitlement to housing subsidy. But the size of the Exchequer subsidy depends each on a calculation which takes account not only of the total reckonable expenditure incurred by the authority in the provision of council housing, but also the extent to which the authority could reasonably be expected to meet all or part of these costs from local resources.

Docklands STOLport

Mr. Tracey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce his decision on the proposed STOLport in London docklands as soon as the current legal proceedings have been concluded.

Mr. Macfarlane: Dependent upon the outcome of the legal proceedings, my right hon. Friend will issue his decision as soon as possible thereafter.

Mortgages

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has, in respect of each local authority, and for each year since 1979, regarding *(a)* the number of mortgages granted, *(b)* the number of mortgages in respect of which repayments have been rescheduled and *(c)* the number of cases in which an authority has repossessed a property on which it had advanced a mortgage.

Sir George Young: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Substandard Dwellings

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes have taken place in the number of substandard dwellings in *(a)* south Yorkshire, *(b)* west Yorkshire, *(c)* Humberside and *(d)* north Yorkshire in the five years up to the latest date for which information is available.

Sir George Young: Local authorities report in their annual housing investment programme returns the numbers of dwellings in their areas which at 1 April were unfit and/or lacking basic amenities. The numbers reported for 1979 and 1984 were as follows:

thousands

	1979	*1984*
Humberside	33	21
North Yorkshire	23	10
South Yorkshire	75	37
West Yorkshire	119	44
Yorks & Humberside region	250	122

In 1984, Leeds did not include an estimate of the number of its own dwellings which were unfit and Harrogate gave no estimates of sub-standard private housing. In both 1979 and 1984 a few returns did not include estimates of sub-standard housing association or other public sector sub-standard dwellings.

Derelict Land

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes have taken place in the number of acres of derelict land in *(a)* south Yorkshire, *(b)* west Yorkshire, *(c)* Humberside and *(d)* north Yorkshire in the five years up to the latest date for which information is available.

Mr Macfarlane: Information in the form requested is only available from the derelict land surveys published by my Department. The last, in 1982, also contains details of the previous one in 1974. A copy of the 1982 survey is available in the Library of the House. The information on the areas requested is as follows:

Amount of derelict land (acres)

	1974	*1982*	*Difference 1974-82*
Humberside	2,445	2,188	−257
North Yorkshire	96	1,964	1,868
South Yorkshire	3,866	2,742	−1,124
West Yorkshire	7,057	6,521	−536

Rate Capping

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will consider excluding from rate capping calculations the cost of the design and supervision of land reclamation schemes.

Mr. Waldegrave: It would be open to an authority designated for selective rate limitation to seek a redetermination of the expenditure level proposed for it on these grounds if it so wished. My right hon. Friend would consider any such application carefully.

Home Improvement Policy (Review)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the consultation document his Department has issued on the "Review of Home Improvement Policy", as referred to in section 3.7.23 on page 112 of Cmnd. 9428-II.

Sir George Young: The consultation document on the review of home improvement policy has not yet been published. The reference on page 112 of Cmnd. 9428-II was simply an oversight. I hope that it will be possible to publish the consultation document shortly and I will then gladly arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

Statutory Instruments

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions he has exercised his powers under section 14 of the Interpretation Act 1978 to revoke, amend or re-enact any statutory instrument.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The information is not readily available in the form requested and cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Local Authority Block Grants

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total of block grants to be received by each local authority in England in 1985-86, assuming that it spends at the total of its grant related expenditure assessment, after close-ending grant claims to the 1985-86 settlement grant total, but before holdback.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Library.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total of block grant to be received in 1985-86 by each local authority designated under the Rates Act 1984, assuming that it spends *(a)* at target, *(b)* at the total of its grant-related expenditure asessment after the effects of holdback and *(c)* at its expenditure level after the effects of holdback.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The information is as follows:

£ million

	Grant for spending at target	*Grant for spending at GRE (after holdback)*	*Grant for spending at expenditure level (after holdback)*
Basildon	1·268	2·664	0·878
Brent	67·046	69·825	63·512
Camden	—	17·450	—
GLC	1·989	190·708	1·989
Greenwich	31·631	28·704	31·631
Hackney	48·941	50·723	48·105
Haringey	58·051	62·124	55·299
ILEA	—	—	—
Islington	23·152	40·971	20·560
Lambeth	45·716	55·942	43·648
Leicester	12·230	12·382	11·746
Lewisham	46·508	43·821	45·734
Merseyside	98·578	97·241	94·453
Portsmouth	8·596	8·475	8·285
Sheffield	92·591	89·804	89·273
Southwark	38·908	54·407	36·364
South Yorkshire	71·272	63·955	68·253
Thamesdown	2·215	3·096	1·947

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total of block grants to be received by each local authority in England in 1985-86, assuming that it spends at the total of its grant-related expenditure assessment after the effects of holdback.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blackburn on Thursday 7 February 1985 at column *632-33*.

Local Authority Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, for each authority designated under the Rates Act 1984, he will specify his judgments and assumptions on (i) expenditure levels for 1985-86, (ii) grant receivable for 1985-86, (iii) transfer to and from special funds and balances during 1985-86, (iv) the appropriate level of balances in hand for 1985-86 and (v) the maximum attainable cuts from reported 1985-86 spending levels, which have formed part of the maximum precepts or proposed maximum rates for those authorities for 1985-86.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I have made clear to the authorities concerned that I would be happy to discuss with an individual authority the calculation of the rate or precept limit proposed for them in the context of a proposal from the individual authority for a higher limit. I have no power to redetermine an expenditure level in the absence of an application for a redetermination.

Severe Weather Costs

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether expenditure on snow clearing, gritting and salting will be disregarded for grant penalty purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 15 February 1985, c. *311*]: My right hon. Friend is considering the representations to that effect which he has received.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give financial assistance to

local authorities, as in previous years, for snow clearing, gritting and salting, where the cost is greater than the product of a 1p rate.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer,* 15 February 1985, c. *311*]: My right hon. Friend is considering the representations to that effect which he has received.

Local Authority Charges

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, with reference to the Under-Secretary of State's letter of 11 December 1984 to the local authority associations, *(a)* how this relates to the review of local authority charges undertaken by his predecessor in 1979-80, *(b)* what was the outcome of this review and what proposals the Government made and *(c)* under which legislation such proposals have been given effect.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer,* 29 January 1985, c. *129*]: The 1979 review of fees and charges looked at existing charges for local services and recommended that responsibility for a number of minor fees and charges be transferred from central to local government when a suitable legislative opportunity arose. The Government has accepted that recommendation in principle.

However, as I indicated in my letter of 11 December to the local authority associations, the local government finance studies will be looking at the whole issue of local revenue raising in the context of measures to improve the accountability of authorities to their electors, including the possibility of increased use of fees and charges for the beneficial use of services. This goes wider than the original remit of the 1979 review. Nevertheless, we regard the findings of that review as an input to the present studies and will certainly be taking them into account.

Haringey Borough Council (Expenditure)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, in calculating the allowable level of 1985-86 expenditure for Haringey borough council, what was the percentage reduction made by his Department from the amount Haringey budgeted to use from internal funds in framing its 1984-85 budget.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply,* 14 February 1985, c. *284*]: Haringey's treasurer's department worked out that its proposed rate limit took account of the depletion of its reserves in 1984-85, less an amount equal to 5 per cent of its expenditure level. My Department has confirmed in writing that the council's figures represent the basis upon which my right hon. Friend derived the proposed rate limit.

Right to Buy

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many outstanding applications to buy local authority dwellings there were in each local authority area of England on 1 April 1984.

Sir George Young: The following table gives admitted right to buy claims being dealt with at the end of March 1984, as reported by the local authorities. These figures exclude admitted claims which have subsequently been withdrawn or deferred, as well as those where the sales have been completed. Reliable information on the progress of applications to buy under voluntary arrangements is not available.

Admitted RTB claims in pipeline March 1984–13 February 1985

Local Authority	
North Region (excluding Cumbria)	
Hartlepool	176
Langbaurgh	262
Middlesbrough	239
Stockton-on-Tees	306
Chester-le-Street	62
Darlington	89
Derwentside	68
Durham	125
Easington	476
Sedgefield	399
Teesdale	11
Wear Valley	42
Alnwick	139
Berwick-upon-Tweed	44
Blyth Valley	138
Castle Morpeth	214
Tynedale	111
Wansbeck	122
Gateshead	474
Newcastle upon Tyne	425
North Tyneside	294
South Tyneside	601
Sunderland	1,077
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	
Beverley	93
Boothferry	0
Cleethorpes	78
East Yorkshire	*
Glanford	146
Great Grimsby	153
Holderness	49
Kingston upon Hull	583
Scunthorpe	1,010
Craven	25
Hambleton	39
Harrogate	86
Richmondshire	46
Ryedale	56
Scarborough	43
Selby	74
York	199
Barnsley	226
Doncaster	1,691
Rotherham	671
Sheffield	1,464
Bradford	186
Calderdale	3
Kirklees	287
Leeds	1,256
Wakefield	1,128
East Midlands Region	
Amber Valley	117
Bolsover	47
Chesterfield	157
Derby	1,022
Erewash	154
High Peak	1
North East Derbyshire	76
South Derbyshire	89
West Derbyshire	118
Blaby	44
Charnwood	91
Harborough	95
Hinckley and Bosworth	102
Leicester	478
Melton	75
North West Leicestershire	91
Oadby and Wigston	34
Rutland	22
Boston	73
East Lindsey	88
Lincoln	76
North Kesteven	43

Local Authority	
South Holland	125
South Kesteven	44
West Lindsey	71
Corby	299
Daventry	109
East Northamptonshire	47
Kettering	109
Northampton	64
South Northamptonshire	124
Wellingborough	119
Ashfield	118
Bassetlaw	163
Broxtowe	141
Gedling	234
Mansfield	206
Newark	145
Nottingham	645
Rushcliffe	241
Eastern Region	
Luton	447
Mid Bedfordshire	282
North Bedfordshire	*
South Bedfordshire	276
Aylesbury Vale	531
Chiltern	201
Milton Keynes	146
South Bucks	0
Wycombe	234
Cambridge	203
East Cambridgeshire	150
Fenland	0
Huntingdon	12
Peterborough	142
South Cambridgeshire	188
Basildon	160
Braintree	895
Brentwood	107
Castle Point	*
Chelmsford	385
Colchester	715
Epping Forest	195
Harlow	710
Maldon	125
Rochford	124
Southend-on-Sea	181
Tendring	155
Thurrock	502
Uttlesford	169
Broxbourne	161
Dacorum	322
East Hertfordshire	229
Hertsmere	*
North Hertfordshire	452
St. Albans	320
Stevenage	555
Three Rivers	284
Watford	208
Welwyn Hatfield	1,558
Breckland	265
Broadland	85
Great Yarmouth	119
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	33
North Norfolk	90
Norwich	600
South Norfolk	127
Babergh	*
Forest Heath	235
Ipswich	368
Mid Suffolk	120
St. Edmundsbury	18
Suffolk Coastal	181
Waveney	0
Greater London Region	
Greater London Council	437

Local Authority	
City of London	113
Barking and Dagenham	1,141
Barnet	1,058
Bexley	0
Brent	802
Bromley	880
Camden	903
Croydon	562
Ealing	470
Enfield	920
Greenwich	359
Hackney	*
Hammersmith and Fulham	565
Haringey	544
Harrow	217
Havering	398
Hillingdon	*
Hounslow	672
Islington	845
Kensington and Chelsea	129
Kingston upon Thames	144
Lambeth	*
Lewisham	*
Merton	184
Newham	*
Redbridge	0
Richmond upon Thames	784
Southwark	649
Sutton	550
Tower Hamlets	*
Waltham Forest	*
Wandsworth	1,259
Westminster	431
South Eastern Region	
Bracknell	*
Newbury	248
Reading	286
Slough	375
Windsor and Maidenhead	197
Wokingham	112
Brighton	*
Eastbourne	0
Hastings	90
Hove	*
Lewes	93
Rother	162
Wealden	172
Basingstoke and Deane	1
East Hampshire	168
Eastleigh	229
Fareham	110
Gosport	169
Hart	127
Havant	224
New Forest	658
Portsmouth	0
Rushmoor	246
Southampton	450
Test Valley	517
Winchester	177
Medina	197
South Wight	360
Ashford	107
Canterbury	163
Dartford	198
Dover	320
Gillingham	0
Gravesham	267
Maidstone	196
Rochester upon Medway	391
Sevenoaks	102
Shepway	202
Swale	471
Thanet	42
Tonbridge and Malling	1
Tunbridge Wells	132

Local Authority	
Cherwell	465
Oxford	363
South Oxfordshire	233
Vale of White Horse	220
West Oxfordshire	281
Elmbridge	263
Epsom and Ewell	*
Guildford	425
Mole Valley	189
Reigate and Banstead	525
Runnymede	79
Spelthorne	182
Surrey Heath	275
Tandridge	272
Waverley	212
Woking	183
Adur	140
Arun	233
Chichester	4
Crawley	557
Horsham	268
Mid Sussex	148
Worthing	42
South west region	
Bath	103
Bristol	1,847
Kingswood	110
Northavon	174
Wansdyke	0
Woodspring	492
Caradon	130
Carrick	170
Kerrier	43
North Cornwall	125
Penwith	105
Restormel	110
Isles of Scilly	1
East Devon	119
Exeter	134
Mid Devon	113
North Devon	361
Plymouth	255
South Hams	128
Teignbridge	132
Torbay	71
Torridge	97
West Devon	48
Bournemouth	191
Christchurch	*
North Dorset	144
Poole	314
Purbeck	87
West Dorset	321
Weymouth and Portland	175
Wimborne	*
Cheltenham	57
Cotswold	156
Forest of Dean	248
Gloucester	154
Stroud	212
Tewkesbury	96
Mendip	152
Sedgemoor	97
Taunton Deane	140
West Somerset	36
Yeovil	364
Kennet	131
North Wiltshire	276
Salisbury	104
Thamesdown	614
West Wiltshire	92
West Midlands Region	
Bromsgrove	146
Hereford	170
Leominister	102

Local Authority	
Malvern Hills	95
Redditch	70
South Herefordshire	112
Worcester	212
Wychavon	234
Wyre Forest	113
Bridgnorth	133
North Shropshire	100
Oswestry	57
Shrewsbury and Atcham	151
South Shropshire	54
The Wrekin	152
Cannock Chase	175
East Staffordshire	193
Lichfield	131
Newcastle-under-Lyme	154
South Staffordshire	111
Stafford	198
Staffordshire Moorlands	57
Stoke-on-Trent	128
Tamworth	0
North Warwickshire	107
Nuneaton and Bedworth	95
Rugby	202
Stratford-on-Avon	273
Warwick	207
Birmingham	2,684
Coventry	313
Dudley	*
Sandwell	726
Solihull	350
Walsall	173
Wolverhampton	*
North West Region including Cumbria	
Chester	110
Congleton	103
Crewe and Nantwich	266
Ellesmere Port and Neston	219
Halton	154
Macclesfield	0
Vale Royal	213
Warrington	9
Allerdale	139
Barrow-in-Furness	108
Carlisle	140
Copeland	140
Eden	63
South Lakeland	378
Blackburn	275
Blackpool	140
Burnley	72
Chorley	85
Fylde	48
Hyndburn	100
Lancaster	1
Pendle	57
Preston	*
Ribble Valley	32
Rossendale	198
South Ribble	84
West Lancashire	87
Wyre	100
Bolton	132
Bury	66
Manchester	* 1,084
Oldham	282
Rochdale	297
Salford	531
Stockport	82
Tameside	185
Trafford	273
Wigan	238
Knowsley	2,064
Liverpool	1,583

Local Authority	
St Helens	201
Sefton	0
Wirral	137

* Not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

World Bank (Africa Aid)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what impact the decision not to contribute to the Africa fund of the World Bank will have on the ability of the United Kingdom companies to win orders generated by World Bank aid to Africa.

Mr. Raison: We would expect to secure procurement access to the World Bank's special facility for sub-Saharan Africa if we untied the bilateral aid which we have undertaken to earmark for use in support of the facility. This question is still under consideration.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reach a decision about whether to have tied offshore procurement in respect of the £15 million a year earmarked for use in support of the World Bank special facility for sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: A decision will be taken soon.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Public Health and Housing

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many local authorities were convicted of offences under the Public Health and Housing Acts in 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me, which may be incomplete, relates to all offenders other than individuals, ie companies, local authorities, etc., found guilty at magistrates' courts in England and Wales. In 1983 about 85 such offenders were convicted of offences under Public Health Acts and about 25 under Housing Acts. Corresponding information for 1984 is not yet available.

Drugs and Alcohol (London)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research is carried out by his Department to establish the extent to which drug addiction or alcohol abuse is a contributory factor to the commission of crime in London.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office has undertaken or commissioned a number of research studies which examine the relationship between drug misuse and crime in the United Kingdom. Home Office Research Study No. 23 "Delinquency Amongst Opiate Users", published in 1974, described the criminal histories of a group of London opiate users. A study of the criminal behaviour of regular opioid users in London, Cambridge and Bristol has recently been completed.

Research in progress includes a statistical analysis of the criminal convictions of addicts first notified from anywhere in England and Wales between 1979 and 1981, a similar analysis for persons convicted of an offence involving class A notifiable drugs and an examination of some aspects of the relationship between drug misuse and burglary in London and two provincial areas. It is hoped that the findings of these studies will be published during this year. A study in Nottingham of drug misuse and the links with crime is shortly to begin. A review of the findings of these studies, and others, may indicate whether drug misuse contributes more or less to the commission of crime in London as compared with other areas in the United Kingdom.

The result of national and international research on the relationship between crime and alcohol use have been reviewed in articles in the Home Office research and planning unit research bulletin in 1976 and 1983. Copies of the bulletin are in the Library of the House.

Public Witnesses (Statements)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to introduce legislation to allow public witnesses to refer to statements made previously when in the witness box of a trial.

Mr. Mellor: Such legislation is unnecessary since, as the law stands, any witness (whether or not acting in a professional capacity) may, with the leave of the court, refresh his memory by reference to any writing made or verified by himself at a time when the facts were still fresh in his memory.

Greiss Test

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any modifications have been made to the Greiss test since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None has been made.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department has commissioned to check the accuracy of the Greiss test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None.

Police (Cautioning Practice)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has issued a circular and guidelines to chief officers of police on cautioning practice, following the circulation of his Department's consultative document "Cautioning by the Police" in June 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The circular and guidelines on police cautioning are being issued to chief officers of police today. Copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

Magistrates' Courts

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent the joint Home Office and Lord Chancellor's Department circular HOC 67/1984: LCD JC(84)1, on reducing delay in magistrates' courts has led to reduced delays; whether the national information collection system referred to therein has been introduced; and what has been the outcome of the feasibility study of time tabling arrangements for cases on the day of hearing.

the broadleaves policy review later this month. I cannot anticipate what revised arrangements, if any, might be proposed on the question of the release of farm land for tree planting.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether representatives of his Department have met the Forestry Commission since September 1984 to discuss "Broadleaves in Britain" and its revision of policies for broadleaved woodlands.

Mr. MacGregor: Officials have been in regular contact and a meeting has been arranged for later this month to discuss this matter.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the annual budget for each of the veterinary investigation centres each year since 1975.

Mr. Jopling: The information is as follows:

Veterinary Investigation Centres
Resources use and costs

VICs	*1976-77* £	*1977-78* £	*1978-79* £	*1979-80** £
Newcastle	150,647	161,961	186,906	226,767
Penrith	208,322	219,174	244,650	263,558
Thirsk	144,964	159,229	197,931	223,408
Leeds	157,445	167,441	201,324	281,875
Liverpool	139,512	137,262	161,322	207,801
Sutton Bonnington	185,838	207,353	255,369	291,501
Northampton	92,669	109,806	128,846	156,693
Lincoln	112,995	126,409	144,109	193,275
Shrewsbury	—	—	227,184	290,766
Chester	31,960	33,487	38,476	46,265
Worcester	133,068	139,812	176,083	614,924
Worcester BTL	—	179,480	268,875	—
Cambridge	159,987	179,361	201,837	239,038
Norwich	158,517	175,712	206,273	263,347
Wye	93,171	99,802	123,919	150,310
Reading	202,241	204,924	241,045	341,104
Winchester	103,822	98,100	126,042	162,539
Starcross	153,041	161,376	176,619	222,922
Bristol	208,894	228,193	227,399	287,526
Truro	100,665	112,322	131,693	167,072
Gloucester	127,813	133,439	161,732	206,049
Bangor	113,916	126,684	140,036	179,922
Cardiff	105,764	119,657	144,352	186,604
Aberystwyth	116,728	133,522	157,597	179,273
Carmarthen	151,482	160,000	168,960	198,060
Weybridge	95,631	100,797	129,975	150,225
Wolverhampton	167,567	189,078	—	—
	3,416,659	3,864,381	4,568,554	5,730,894

* Veterinary Investigation Centres Accounting System (VICA) introduced in the final six months of the 1979-80 financial year.

Veterinary Investigation Centres
Resources use and costs

VICs	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £
Newcastle	247,571	275,600	302,480	323,249
Penrith	291,723	315,975	348,530	346,794
Thirsk	242,969	274,174	317,501	315,389
Leeds	335,685	328,553	357,167	399,631
Liverpool	227,200	238,893	258,590	266,000
Sutton Bonnington	309,549	333,894	387,760	369,266
Northampton	187,448	192,867	209,262	243,022
Lincoln	203,353	232,293	257,291	270,715
Shrewsbury	304,580	333,039	396,505	386,464
Chester	56,637	55,372	59,158	70,119
Worcester	635,912	651,430	652,106	704,403
Worcester BTL	—	—	—	—
Cambridge	268,456	297,905	344,901	336,000
Norwich	282,620	320,006	349,372	369,510
Wye	187,773	203,558	222,340	227,925
Reading	370,497	413,260	416,359	374,969
Winchester	184,044	224,344	262,370	294,966
Starcross	293,094	278,979	319,415	279,530
Bristol	314,143	349,938	388,851	409,987
Truro	192,314	209,912	246,780	267,642
Gloucester	221,830	224,643	266,994	306,501

VICs	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £
Bangor	198,263	195,758	235,620	229,334
Cardiff	171,710	155,391	146,171	144,192
Aberystwyth	189,390	223,592	261,579	255,446
Carmarthen	196,855	209,788	240,722	251,176
Weybridge	86,865	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	—	—	—	—
	6,200,481	6,539,164	7,247,824	7,442,230

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of people employed, full or part-time, at the veterinary investigation centres at a convenient date each year since 1975.

Mr. Jopling: The numbers of professional, technical and industrial staff in post at the veterinary investigation centres in England and Wales at 1 October were as follows:

	Number
1975	314
1976	337·5
1977	354·5
1978	347·5
1979	339·5
1980	324
1981	317
1982	349
1983	327
1984	337

In addition, an average 75½ support staff provide clerical, typing and cleaning services for the centres.

Support Statistics

Mr. Baldry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total support given by the Exchequer to agriculture and United Kingdom farmers in real terms in the following years: 1955, 1964, 1973, and the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jopling: Expenditure on agricultural support in the United Kingdom under national grant schemes and subsidies and, since 1972-73, under the CAP is as follows in cash and 1983-84 prices.

Financial year	£ million (cash)	£ million (1983-84 prices)*
1955-56	205	1,680
1964-65	264	1,630
1973-74	392	1,420
1983-84	1,728	1,728

* Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices.

The figures are taken from the appropriate annual review White Papers and exclude expenditure which may benefit farmers but where the value to them is not shown by the expenditure — for example, expenditure on research, advice and education. They include, however, some expenditure which benefits consumers and trade interests rather than producers. The information is not readily available on a calendar year basis and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether representatives of the Welsh Office Agriculture Department have met the Forestry Commission since September 1984 to discuss "Broadleaves in Britain" and its revision of policies for broadleaved woodlands.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No, but officials of the Welsh Office Agriculture Department and the Forestry Commission are in regular contact on the matter.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 February 1985

ENERGY

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Peter Walker: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the code are already in hand following the publication on 9 February 1984 of the programme of action on women in the Civil Service.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now give the total coal stocks both distributed and undistributed as of *(a)* 31 December 1984 and *(b)* 31 January 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: The latest official figures for coal stocks published in the January edition of "Energy Trends" show total distributed stocks of 16·743 million tonnes and total undistributed stocks of 21·085 million tonnes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many man hours have been provided by the Metropolitan police in connection with the miners' dispute;

(2) how many man hours have been provided by the Metropolitan police since 14 March to deal with racial harassment problems.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Between 14 March 1984 and 9 February 1985 aid provided by the Metropolitan police to other police forces in connection with the miners' dispute has amounted to some 213,000 man-days. Information about the number of man-hours worked is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

No central record is maintained by the Metropolitan police of the time spent by officers on each of the many tasks they may be called upon to perform in the course of normal divisional duties in the Metropolitan police district.

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Brittan: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the draft code are already in hand following the publication on 9 February 1984 of the programme of action of women in the Civil Service.

Multi-occupied Houses (Fire Safety)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the delay in drawing up a national code of practice covering means of escape in case of fire from houses in multiple occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the subject of means of escape in case of fire from houses in multi-occupation in the Liverpool area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Members to the reply, I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 14 February at column *235*.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: A draft order was laid on 12 February under section 14(10) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. If the draft order is approved by Parliament, the Act will continue in force for a further 12 months. I shall receive Sir Cyril Philips' first report on the operation of the Act very shortly; his report and my response to it will be made public before the draft order is debated.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tigré

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present level of British aid to the Tigré area of Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: The relief aid we are providing to help victims of the famine in Ethiopia is not specifically directed to particular provinces, but is intended to help those in need wherever they may be.

Ethiopia

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek a report from the Secretary General of the United Nations as to the present situation in Ethiopia, including allegations that food relief has been abused, and is not reaching all parts of Ethiopia, that people are being forcibly resettled and that money donated to relief agencies has been misappropriated; and if he will make a statement.

retained for defence use. Th Ministry of Defence use of Sealand will be reviewed when decisions about the development of the Dee estuary have been taken.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what decision has been taken concerning the future of the site at Maidstone (Sandling Wood), Kent following the recommendations of the Nugent report on defence lands.

Mr. Lee: The Sandling Wood site was declared surplus to defence requirements and subsequently sold in January 1981.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any land has been made available for disposal at the Royal Air Force station at Andover, Hampshire following the recommendations of the Nugent committee report on defence lands.

Mr. Lee: Approximately 230 acres of land at the former RAF Andover have been disposed of since the report of the defence lands committee.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the recommendations of the Nugent committee on defence lands have been fully carried out with respect to Llansilin, Shropshire and Driffield, Yorkshire.

Mr. Lee: Both sites are being used for defence purposes. It has been possible, however, to dispose of 90 acres of the Driffield site.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence why only 24 acres of the land held at West Rayham, Norfolk, have been released of the 111 acres so recommended by the Nugent committee report on defence lands.

Mr. Lee: There is a continuing defence requirement for the remaining 87 acres.

US National Guardsmen

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of United States national guardsmen who have been on exercise in the United Kingdom in 1984 and in 1985 to date.

Mr. Stanley: Eight hundred and forty in 1984. None so far in 1985.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans for United States national guardsmen to visit the United Kingdom to take part in exercises at any time in 1985.

Mr. Stanley: It is envisaged that United States national guardsmen will participate in exercises in the United Kingdom in 1985 but no firm plans have as yet been made.

Reforger Exercises

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the United States Army units training in Britain during the recent Reforger exercises; and whether those units have been trained in the airland battle doctrine.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

HMS Splendid and Spartan

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column 189, when the hon. Member for Linlithgow can expect to receive a letter from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on HMS Splendid and HMS Spartan.

Mr. Heseltine: I have written to the hon. Member today.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Doctors (Dispensing)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general practitioner partnerships also dispense medicines; what is the average income from National Health Service prescriptions received by such partnerships; and what estimate he has made of the financial consequences for such partnerships of the implementation of his original proposals for a limited list of drugs available under the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Central data are not readily available in the form requested. However, at 1 October 1983, the latest date for which information is available, there were 2,948 dispensing doctors in England, 209 of whom were not working in partnership. The average gross income from dispensing—excluding the cost of drugs—for all dispensing doctors was £6,041. In addition, some dispensing doctors receive an income from the discounts offered by manufacturers. The limited list proposals may reduce the average gross income from NHS dispensing if it reduces the total number of NHS prescriptions dispensed. We are still considering whether to allow dispensing doctors to prescribe privately to NHS patients medicines which will no longer be available on the NHS.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the total income received by general practices in the United Kingdom from the dispensing of National Health Service prescriptions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Anti-progesterone Pills

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many doctors have applied to the Committee on Safety of Medicines for permission to conduct clinical trials of anti-progesterone pills on women; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many doctors have applied to the Committee on Safety of Medicines for permission to conduct clinical trials of the French anti-progesterone pill, known as RU 486, on women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All information provided to the licensing authority in support of applications made or exemptions applied for under the Medicines Act 1968 is treated as commercially confidential as it could be of financial value to the competitors of the applicant.

Any clinical trials of RU 486, or any other similar product, as an abortifacient must, of course, comply with the requirements of the relevant Abortion Acts.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what factors led him to change his policy of opposition to a limited list of prescribable drugs as stated on 22 November 1983, *Official Report*, column *112*.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My reply of 22 November 1983 at column *114* was about a limited list of drugs across all therapeutic categories. We had accepted the recommendation of the Greenfield committee on effective prescribing that a limited list of this kind should not be introduced because there was not at that time any convincing evidence that the potential financial benefits would outweigh the administrative problems in drawing up and maintaining one. Our present proposals cover only a small number of therapeutic categories and are the result of further detailed investigations and inquiries which show that savings would be both immediate and worth while with no damage to patient care.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that there will be an adequate period of adjustment for manufacturers between the announcement of his final limited list proposals and their entry into force.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Manufacturers have known of the provisional list since November. The revised list will be announced shortly, coming into effect on 1 April.

Doctors (Incomes)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 72, on what basis information relating to the income derived by individual doctors or practices from dispensing National Health Service prescriptions is confidential; if he will make it his policy to publish such information with the consent of the individuals or practices concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: General medical practioners are independent contractors to the National Health Service. Our policy has always been that no information about individuals or practices incomes will be made available without their consent. Perhaps my hon. Friend could seek this information from the practice concerned.

Spastics Society (Correspondence)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter sent to him on 22 January by Sir John Cox, of the Spastics Society, and others about the special programme funding of social services, together with his reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Yes. I shall be replying to Sir John shortly.

Tendering

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the savings achieved in relation to the eight contracted-out services referred to in his Department's press release 84/50 on health service tendering.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1985, c. *55*]: I have received the following up-to-date information on the eight contracts which replaces that in my reply of 23 July 1984:

District	*Annual savings* £
Leeds Western	* 30,000
East Surrey	*157,000
Maidstone	*140,000
Medway	†357,000
Bromley	‡ 53,000
Merton and Sutton	‡126,000
North Warwickshire	‡ 70,000
North-West Surrey	‡ 50,000

* These are all new services. The savings figures are derived from comparison with in-house bids.

† Some work is being undertaken by a contractor and some by the in-house organisation. The total savings are derived from a comparison with previous estimated costs.

‡ The savings are derived from comparison with previous estimated costs.

I apologise that some of the previous information was incorrect, but it was based on the best information available to us at the time. The hon. Member will note that these eight examples between them are providing annual savings of £983,000 a year.

AIDS

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if his Department will issue urgent guidelines to all National Health Service staff involved in treating patients suffering from or suspected to be suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement;

(2) What representations his Department has received concerning guidance to National Health Service workers in contact with patients suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *279*]: Interim guidelines on AIDS, drawn up the advisory committee on dangerous pathogens, were published jointly by Health Ministers and the Health and Safety Commission on 16 January. Health authorities were told about these guidelines in circular HC(85)2. This asked them to comply with the recommendations as soon as practicable and to bring them to the attention of staff. The guidelines set out the measures to be taken to safeguard the health and safety of people who, because of their work, come into direct contact with AIDS patients or specimens from them. We have received no representations concerning the guidelines.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether representatives of the Forestry Commission and officials from his Department have met since September 1984 to discuss the revision of arrangements for the release of lowland agriculture land for forestry or woodland planting; and whether any revised arrangements are proposed under the "Broadleaves in Britain Review".

Mr. MacGregor: Officials of the two Departments have been in regular contact and will be meeting to discuss

spends directly and indirectly on research ino *(a)* acquired immune deficiency syndrome, *(b)* cancer and *(c)* the common cold.

Mr. Brooke: The Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. As to expenditure on AIDS, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 26 November at column *389*. In the financial year 1983-84, I understand that the council spent approximately £11 million on cancer research projects, with the Health Departments contributing a further £5·8 million. A number of areas of enquiry are relevant to the common cold, including viral infections, influenza and diseases of the upper respiratory tract. The MRC's on projects in these areas totalled £1·55 million in 1983-84.

Research into these problems is also being conducted in universities and medical schools. Much of this is financed from the block grant allocated for teaching and research on advice from the University Grants Committee.

Shoggs Head Infant School, Barnsley

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received an objection from the parents' action group to the closure of Shoggs Head infant school by the Metropolitan borought council of Barnsley.

Mr. Dunn: One statutory objection, representing 11 signatures, has been received to the proposed closure of Shroggs Head infant school. There is no indication from the objection as to whether the signatures represent a parents' action group.

Unemployed School Leavers

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the school educational attainment of unemployed school leavers.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

Provisional results of the 1983 labour force survey indicate that in Great Britain in the second quarter of 1983 there were about 490,000 unemployed people aged 16 or over who had never had a job since leaving full-time education. Analysis by highest qualification indicates that about 50 per cent. of these had no qualifications; 18 per cent. had CSE (below grade 1) or equivalent, 23 per cent had 'O' levels or equivalent and 10 per cent. had 'A' levels or equivalent or higher.

CIVIL SERVICE

Decision-taking (Delegated Responsibility)

41. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he is satisfied with the level of delegation of decision-taking within the Civil Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am fully convinced of the need for greater delegation so that more decisions are taken by managers with clear objectives, the authority they need to make best use of their resources, and the means to account for whay they achieve.

ENERGY

Government Purchasing Policy

1. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what measures will be taken by his Department following the conclusions of the report on Government purchasing.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department is drawing up an action plan which I expect to see in March.

Electricity Generation

20. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of electricity generated by the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1984 was from coal on a fuel used basis; and what was the comparative figure for 1983.

Mr. Goodlad: Figures for the full calendar year will not be available until later this month. However, in the period January to November, on a fuel used basis, 55 per cent. of the electricity produced by the Central Electricity Board was derived from coal compared with 82 per cent. in the equivalent period in 1983.

Coal Industry Dispute

21. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the dispute in the coalmining industry.

23. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the present coalmining dispute.

28. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on the mining strike.

29. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the strike in the mining industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley).

26. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss the strike in the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have frequent meetings with the chairman of the National Coal Board. I would refer the hon. Member to my earlier reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley).

Opencast Mining

22. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will implement the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's recommendation that the statutory limit on individual opencast licences should be raised from 25,000 tonnes to 100,000 tonnes.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be reviewing the MMC's recommendation in the context of coal policy generally when the present dispute in the industry has been settled.

Nuclear Material

24. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what levels of nuclear fuel stocks are available at power stations; and what volume of nuclear waste is awaiting removal from nuclear power stations.

Mr. Goodlad: Nuclear power stations normally hold stocks of fresh fuel sufficient for refuelling power stations several months ahead. Normally irradiated fuel is held for a minimum of 90 days at nuclear power stations prior to removal to Sellafield.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the full range of activities his Department undertakes in order to fulfil any obligations it discharges with regard to *(a)* nuclear materials accountancy and *(b)* nuclear materials safeguards.

Mr. Goodlad: The Department of Energy safeguards office has responsibility for ensuring that operators of United Kingdom nuclear facilities undertake nuclear material accountancy and other safeguards activities required by United Kingdom and community legislation are fulfilled. It also has a safeguards co-ordinating, control and advisory function and all routine declarations made by United Kingdom facilities to Euratom pass through the safeguards office.

Electricity Generation (Oil Burn)

25. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what tonnage of oil has been burned in the electricity supply industry during the current miners' dispute; how this compares with the corresponding period 12 months previously; and if he will give the costs in each case.

Mr. Goodlad: Figures for fuel used in the generation of electricity appear in *Energy Trends*, which is published monthly. Information on the cost involved is a matter for the industry.

Sizewell Inquiry

27. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to receive the inspector's report from the Sizewell inquiry.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that the inquiry is expected to finish shortly. The length of the report writing period thereafter is a matter for the inspector.

Electricity Consumption

30. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last compiled information on the consumption of electricity broken down by area boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Information on electricity sales by area boards is published in the boards' annual reports and the Electricity Council's statements of accounts and statistics, copies of which are in the Library of the House. In addition I regularly receive details of electricity sales from the electricity supply industry.

Nuclear Burst (Damage)

31. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what action he is taking to harden vulnerable equipment in his charge against the effects of nuclear electromagnetic pulse.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a general issue which is being considered interdepartmentally.

Coal-firing Scheme

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will amend his Department's rules of guidance to extend the provisions of the coal-firing scheme to local authorities and health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The coal firing scheme is operated under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, which provides powers for the government to extend selective assistance for purposes connected with the development of industry. The rules governing the scheme need to be consistent with these powers.

Departmental Adminstration

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total cost of adminstration of his Department expressed in constant prices in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: The gross figures are:

Year	*£ million (1983-84 prices)*
1979-80	33·1
1980-81	31·7
1981-82	29·5
1982-83	27·8
1983-84	26·6

The figures in the table show that my Department reduced its gross running costs by around 20 per cent. in real terms over the five years.

Oil-related Construction and Fabrication Industry

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current level of domestic activity within the United Kingdom onshore oil-related construction and fabrication industry.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Many United Kingdom fabrication companies now have substantial orders. In just over a year British companies have won some £700 million of fabrication work.

Enhanced Oil Recovery

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he proposes to ensure that enhanced oil recovery is pursued in offshore fields; and if he will introduce regulations and inducements to facilitate such development.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Government have under review the possibilities for additional measures to encourage enhanced oil recovery in accordance with their policy of achieving maximum economic recovery of petroleum from the United Kingdom continental shelf. The Government have an extensive research and development programme, conducted in collaboration with the industry, to help establish and assess the economic effectiveness of the technology in North sea conditions.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy which nuclear power stations were shut down or operated at substantially reduced capacity for purposes of inspection over the last three months of 1984 and in the same period in 1983.

Mr. Goodlad: The following nuclear power stations operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board were shut down or operated at substantially reduced capacity for the purposes of inspection in accordance with the requirements of their nuclear site licences during the whole or part of the last three months of 1983 or 1984.

1983

Berkeley
Bradwell
Dungeness A
Hinkley Point A
Trawsfynydd

1984

Berkeley
Bradwell
Dungeness A
Dungeness B
Hinkley Point A
Oldbury
Trawsfynydd

Electricity Boards

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will define the financial framework within which electricity boards operate.

Mr. Goodlad: The financial framework within which the electricity supply industry operates has been defined on a number of occasions. In particular, I refer the hon. Member to the memorandum submitted by the Department of Energy and the Treasury to the Energy Committee in January 1984 (House of Commons Report 276, volume 2, pages 2 and 3).

Since then, my right hon. Friend has agreed with the industry and announced a new financial target and performance aim over the next three years, as stated in *Official Report*, 19 December, at column *164*. The external financing limit for the industry in the coming year (−£1,128 million), consistent with the financial target and performance aim, was announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement of 12 November 1984.

Sellafield and Springfields (Safeguards)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when his Department made proposals to the European Atomic Energy Authority over the implementation of safeguards at the mixed civil-military nuclear plant at Sellafield and Springfields.

(2) whether his Department has received any communications or representations from *(a)* the European Economic Community Energy Commission, *(b)* the Director General (Energy) of section DG-17 at the European Commission and *(c)* the Director of Euratom Safeguards Directorate on the matter of the prohibition of Euratom inspectors at Sellafield and Springfields works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Proposals with respect to both BNF Sellafield and Springfields were put to the Commission in 1981 and 1982 respectively, and are now being discussed between the United Kingdom and the Commission.

SCOTLAND

Handicapped Persons (Care Facilities)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many day-care centres there are in Lothian and Edinburgh for the severely handicapped over 16 years of age; and what information he has as to *(a)* how many vacant places there are for 1984-85, *(b)* where those vacancies exist, *(c)* if there is a waiting list and *(d)* how these figures compare with the 1980 figures and each year since 1980.

Mr. John MacKay: Information is only available centrally up to 31 March 1984 and does not extend to unoccupied places or waiting lists. The figures for the years 1980 to 1984 are as follows:

*Adult Training Centres/Day Care Centres for the Handicapped**

Year Ended 31 March	*Lothian (excluding Edinburgh)*	*Edinburgh*
1980	8	12
1981	8	11
1982	8	12
1983	8	12
1984	8	13

* Includes centres provided by voluntary agencies.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what facilities there are for respite care for the over 16-year-old severely handicapped attending day centres in Lothian and Edinburgh for 1984-85; and how these figures compare with those in 1980 and in each year since 1980.

Mr. John MacKay: The only information held centrally about forms of respite care relates to the full-time care of disabled people in residential homes for handicapped persons provided by the local authority and voluntary agencies. Information beyond 31 March 1984 is not yet available. The available figures are as follows:

Number of Residential Homes

Year Ended 31 March	*Lothian (excluding Edinburgh)*	*Edinburgh*
1980	4	10
1981	4	11
1982	4	12
1983	4	11
1984	4	12

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from general practitioners in rural areas who prescribe and dispense drugs regarding the proposals to ban prescriptions to National Health Service patients of brand-name products which will be excluded from the Government's limited list scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: We have received some 350 representations from doctors commenting on our proposals

to limit the range of drugs available in certain therapeutic categories. Some of these letters have come from general medical practitioners in rural areas but it would not be possible to identify those who are dispensing doctors without disproportionate cost.

Salmon

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland on Monday 11 February, what steps he will take to seek to restore the levels of the Scottish catch of salmon to the levels attained in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 24 January and 15 February at column *517-18* and *312*.

"Broadleaves in Britain"

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) why the Forestry Commission has held private discussions about it revisions of the "Broadleaves in Britain" review since September 1984 with non-governmental organisations representing farming, landowning and timber-growing interests;

(2) why the Forestry Commission has not held discussions since September 1984 with non-governmental organisations representing conservation interests about its revisions of the "Broadleaves in Britain" review.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission is at present drawing up draft policy proposals for broadleaved woodlands for discussion at a seminar to be held in May, to which 27 organisations, representing a balanced cross-section of interests, have now been invited.

In the course of developing these proposals, the commission has had the benefit of the many comments it received in response to its consultative paper "Broadleaves in Britain"; it has also had meetings to discuss certain ideas with the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Commission for Scotland, covering the environment interest, and with some non-Government bodies whose interests were not covered by those agencies. The Forestry Commission will also be consulting other Government Departments before putting the draft policy proposals to the seminar.

Regional Fire Advisers

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, for each civil defence region, the name, present employment, date appointed and terms of reference of the regional fire adviser for each year from 1979 to 1985;

(2) if he will list, for each regional fire adviser from 1979 to 1985 (i) the meetings attended in person or in deputy at which any representative of his Department acting in an official capacity was also present and (ii) the topics discussed at each meeting;

(3) if any employer has refused to allow any employee to become a regional fire adviser;

(4) what are the means by which the consent of an employer is obtained to the appointment of a regional fire adviser.

Mr. Ancram: In Scotland regional fire advisers are described as zone fire commanders (designate). Until 1982 the country was divided into three zones for home defence purposes and, subsequently, into two zones. The table shows the appointments over the years 1979 to 1985; the post in South zone is currently vacant. There are no formal terms of reference but a zone fire commander (designate) is responsible for the co-ordination of emergency fire service planning in his zone. Meetings attended by representatives of the Scottish Home and Health Department and involving zone fire commanders (designate) in this capacity (their names are shown in brackets) took place on the following dates:

18 May 1979 (Mr. Knowlton);
11 December 1979 (Mr. Jones);
13 April 1982 (Mr. Knowlton);
27 October 1982 (Mr. Nicoll);
27 January 1983 (Mr. Knowlton and Mr. Nicoll);
13 April 1983 (Mr. Knowlton and Mr. Nicoll);
13 October 1983 (Mr. Nicoll);
12 January 1984 (Mr. Knowlton and Mr. Nicoll);
3 May 1984 (Mr. Knowlton);
14 November 1984 (Mr. Nicoll).

The topics discussed at these meetings related to war emergency planning for the fire service.

The consent of an employing authority to its firemaster being appointed as zone fire commander (designate) is obtained by correspondence between the Scottish Home and Health Department and the authority and has in no case been refused.

Zone	*Name*	*Date of Appointment*	*Position at date of appointment*	*Present Employment*
North	Mr. A. Jones	24 March 1977	Firemaster, Tayside Fire Brigade	Commandant of Scottish Fire Service Training School
North	Mr. D. Nicholl	21 October 1982	Firemaster, Tayside Fire Brigade	Firemaster, Tayside Fire Brigade
East	Mr. J. Anderson	27 April 1976	Firemaster, Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade	Retired
West	Mr. R. J. Knowlton	27 April 1976	Firemaster, Strathclyde Fire Brigade	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland
South	Mr. R. J. Knowlton	12 January 1984	Firemaster, Strathclyde Fire Brigade	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland

Forestry Commission (Aerial Spraying)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the sites which constitute the 3,727 hectares of land which were aerially sprayed with pesticides by the Forestry Commission in 1984, giving in each case the area, the pesticide used and the target pest species.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Location: Conservancy	Forest District	Area (hectares)	Pesticide	Target Species
South Wales	Afan	66	Glyphosphate	Grasses
South Wales	Afan	33	Asulam	Bracken
South Wales	Brecon	28	Glyhosphate	Grasses
South Wales	Brecon	36	Asulam	Bracken
North Scotland	Dornoch	2,167	Virox	Pine Sawfly
East Scotland	Fife	1,100	Diflubenzuron (Dimilin)	Pine Looper Moth
East Scotland	Speymouth	142	Fenitrothion	Control experiment directed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the auspices of the Pesticide Safety Precautions scheme to evaluate any effects on woodland birds.
South Scotland	Aberfoyle	155	Asulam	Bracken
		3,727		

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost to the Forestry Commission of the 3,727 hectares of aerial pesticide spraying which it carried out on its estate in 1984; and what proportion of the work was carried out by private contractors.

Mr. John MacKay: The total cost to the Forestry Commission was approximately £70,000. All the aerial spraying was undertaken by private contractors.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Law of the Sea Convention

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those articles of the United Nations convention on the law of the sea which Her Majesty's Government consider as having achieved the status of customary international law.

Mr. Rifkind: Customary international law is based on state practice. In order to prepare the list requested, it would be necessary to examine each point in detail to assess how far the specific provisions in the text of the convention reflected state practice. That would not be practicable.

Mr. Adam Fergusson

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply by his hon. Friend the Minister of State, *Official Report*, 11 February, column *30*, why it is necessary for Mr. Adam Fergusson, in his capacity as special adviser on European Community Affairs, to maintain contact with the European Assembly on non-Community issues; and if he will specify the non-Community issues involved.

Mr. Rifkind: The non-Community issues referred to in my reply on 11 February at column *30* include those dealt with by the Ten (eg political co-operation) in which the European Parliament has an interest. These are matters of importance to this country and it is right that our views should be fully taken into account in the European Parliament.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the division in responsibility between his Department and British Nuclear Fuels plc, with regard to the storage, export and accountancy of plutonium.

Mr. Luce: Before an export licence is issued, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible for obtaining appropriate assurances from the Government of a receiving state regarding peaceful and non-explosive use, application of International Atomic Energy Authority safeguards, standards of physical protection and conditions for retransfer. British Nuclear Fuels Plc is responsible to the Department of Energy for the storage and accountancy of all safeguarded material in its possession.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sitting Hours

Mr. Chope asked the Lord Privy Seal on how many days in each of the last 10 parliamentary Sessions the House has sat beyond midnight; and what was the proportion of total sitting days in each Session thereby represented.

Mr. Biffen: The information is as follows:

Session	(a) Total sitting days*	(b) Days on which the House sat after 12 midnight	(b) as a percentage of (a)
1974-75	198	94	47·47
1975-76	191	73	38·22
1976-77	149	60	40·27
1977-78	169	67	39·64
1978-79	86	28	32·56
1979-80	244	103	42·21
1980-81	163	71	43·56
1981-82	174	65	37·36
1982-83	115	34	29·57
1983-84	213	87	40·85
1984-85†	62	31	50

* Including Fridays.
† To 15 February.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Community

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the trading advantages of United Kingdom membership of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Butcher: The European Community gives United Kingdom producers the opportunity of trading in a permanently assured internal market of 270 million

people, allowing the fuller exploitation of economies of scale and giving a greater competitive stimulus to higher productivity and efficiency.

Second-hand Cars (Consumer Protection)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation bringing second–hand car dealers within the scope of consumer protection laws in the same manner as in Scotland.

Mr. Butcher: The Government have no current plans to introduce legislation on the lines of the provisions of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 allowing local authorities in Scotland to license dealers in second hand goods, including used cars.

EEC (Heads of Government Agreement)

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to implement the Community Heads of Government agreement of December 1982 that a priority goal should be to strengthen the Common Market and intensify action to eliminate practices and measures which restrict trade and distort competition.

Mr. Channon: The European Council in December 1982 requested the Council of Ministers to decide on a series of priority measures proposed by the Commission to strengthen the internal market by reducing technical barriers to trade and frontier formalities. Nearly all the measures proposed have now been adopted and most are already in operation.

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Butcher: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the code are already in hand following the publication on 9 February 1984 of the programme of action on women in the Civil Service.

Trade Marks (Amendment) Act 1984

Mr. Dorrell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to use his power under section 2(2) of the Trade Marks (Amendment) Act 1984 to make an order providing for implementation of the provisions of the Act before 1 October 1987.

Mr. Butcher: The date of 1 October 1987 for the implementation of this Act (which provides for registration of service marks) was set in order to give the Trade Marks Registry time to reduce its existing backlog so that the orderly working of the system would not be jeopardised by its extension to cover service marks. I am very pleased to say that despite increasing numbers of applications, the substantially improved productivity of the registry means that we are now aiming to implement the Act one year early.

Industry (Bank Loans)

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations his Department has received in connection with the availability of long-term bank loans to British industry.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has not received any recent representations on the availability of long-term bank loans to British industry.

Pirate Radio

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the recent action taken against pirate radio stations.

Mr. Butcher: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 7 February 1985 in column *665* of the *Official Report*.

Imports and Exports (Middle East)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will set out in tabular form for 1984 the value of United Kingdom exports to and imports from Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Israel, respectively.

Mr. Butcher: The provisional information for 1984 is as follows:

Value £ millions

	United Kingdom Exports (fob)	*United Kingdom Imports (cif)*
Iraq	343	69
United Arab Emirates	542	87
Jordan	193	18
Israel	393	393

Source: Table 1B of the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note: The United Arab Emirates comprise Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al Khaimah, Ajman, Umm al Qaiwain, and Fujairah.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will set out in tabular form for each of the calendar years 1980 to 1984 inclusive the value of United Kingdom exports to and imports from Syria and Iran, respectively.

Mr. Butcher: Following is the information:

Value £ millions

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Syria					
United Kingdom Exports (fob)	82	85	89	72	92
United Kingdom Imports (cif)	12	5	26	19	59
Iran					
United Kingdom Exports (fob)	393	403	334	631	703
United Kingdom Imports (cif)	107	154	226	101	369

* Provisional.
Source: Table 1B of the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Ferrous Scrap

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what results have been achieved through representations made to the EEC Commission and to the

Italian Industry Minister concerning the Italian Government's decision to subsidise imported ferrous scrap.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Support for Innovation Programme (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that industrialists in Yorkshire and Humberside region are sufficiently aware of the availability of grants under the support for innovation programme.

Mr. Duffy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what percentage of the total amount of money paid in grants under the support for innovation programme has been received in Yorkshire and Humberside region;

(2) if he will give preferential rates of grant in assisted areas to promote high technology development under the support for innovation programme.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Members as soon as possible.

Tourist Industry

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make special assistance available to compensate for the reduced availability of European Community grants for the tourist industry consequent upon the loss of assisted area status.

Mr. Butcher: Special assistance for the tourist industry is already available throughout Britain under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. The funds for this scheme in England were increased following its extension from the assisted areas in August 1982.

Local authority tourism projects in the assisted areas continue to be eligible for support from the European regional development fund. The Government have encouraged areas which lost Assisted Area status in the changes announced on 28 November 1984 to take advantage of the special transitional arrangement which it secured on their behalf with the European Commission, enabling applications to be submitted to the Commission by 31 March 1985 provided that the bulk of expenditure on those projects will be incurred by 30 November 1985.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will broaden the definition of regional assisted areas eligible for European Economic Community tourism assistance to include both rural development areas and the textile industry and coal and steel industry restructuring areas.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Regional Assistance (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the total planned reduction of £300 million in the cost of regional assistance is expected to occur in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Retail Grocery Trade

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the six largest retail grocery chains by turnover; and what is the share of the total grocery trade in the United Kingdom commanded by them in 1970, 1980 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: Statistics on the retail grocery trade are regularly collected by the Business Statistics Office and agregates from these inquiries which do not disclose information about individual businesses are available to me along with data from other sources. Official published figures for the totals of the five largest contributions by enterprise groups show that these accounted for 31 per cent. of retail sales of groceries and provisions in Great Britain in 1980 and 33 per cent. in 1982. Comparable figures for 1970 are not available. (Estimates for the largest six enterprise groups cannot be provided without disclosing information for an individual business.) Some information based on independent surveys of the retail grocery trade is published in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission reports on discounts to retailers (HC 311, 1981) and The Dee Corporation plc and Booker McConnell plc (Cmnd. 9429, 1985).

Information Technology

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the value of the output of the whole information technology industry in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984;

(2) what was the percentage of import penetration in the United Kingdom in information technology in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984;

(3) what was the rate of growth of the United Kingdom information technology industry in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Using the definition of information technology specified, data is given for 1979-1983 and for January-September 1984, the full-year figures not yet being available.

	Output at current prices £ million*	*Growth year-on-year Percentage*	*Import penetration Percentage*
1984 (January-September)	6,809	—	65
1983	7,635	18	63
1982	6,496	10	59
1981	5,905	6	53
1980	5,582	17	48
1979	4,753	17	51

Office machinery (activity heading 3301 in Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1980), electronic data processing equipment (3302), telecommunications equipment (3341), radio and electronic capital goods (3443), electronic components and subassemblies (3444 and 3453), and electronic consumer goods (3454).

* Sales of principal products of listed industries by all United Kingdom manufacturing firms.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom's balance of trade in information technology in 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Figures for the balance of trade in 1984 for the information technology industries (defined below) are not yet available; there was, however, a deficit of £1,792 million in the first three quarters of the year.

Office machinery (activity heading 3301 in Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1980), electronic data processing equipment (3302), telecommunications equipment (3341), radio and electronic capital goods (3443), electronic components and subassemblies (3444 and 3453), and electronic consumer goods (3454).

Microchips

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the size of the European market for microchips in 1984; and if he will estimate the percentage of that market supplied by *(a)* United Kingdom producers, *(b)* other European producers, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* the United States of America.

Mr. Butcher: The 1984 European market for semiconductor devices is estimated at around $4·7 billion. About 35 per cent. of this market was met by the European production and of this the United Kingdom contributed 10 per cent. The remainder came from Japanese (10 per cent.) and United States (55 per cent.) sources.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the United Kingdom market for microchips was supplied by domestic production in 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Figures for the whole of 1984 are not available. For the first three quarters of the year domestic suppliers provided 35 per cent. by value of the estimated home market.

Citizens Band Radio

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring forward proposals to make breaches of the code of practice for citizens band radio users subject to criminal sanctions.

Mr. Butcher: We have no plans to do so. The CB code of practice gives generalised advice on matters such as operating practice and safety and was not designed to be legally enforceable.

Manufacturing Industry (Investment)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the amount of investment in manufacturing industry on an annual basis for the years 1975 to 1980 and 1980 to the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The required information is given in the following table:

Investment in manufacturing industry (£ million at 1980 prices)

Year	*Total capital expenditure* £ million*
1975	7,084
1976	6,743
1977	7,213
1978	7,877
1979	8,205
1980	7,307
1981	5,693
1982	5,596
1983	5,433
1984	†6,111

* Direct capital expenditure plus assets leased from the financial industries.

† Fourth quarter estimated.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what his Department is doing to protect MPT 1320 citizens band radio users on 27 mhz FM in Southampton against the use of foul language, music broadcasting and other interference on the mobile users' channel, the calling channel and the emergency channel.

Mr. Butcher: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the misuse of citizens band radio. My Department is currently reviewing the work of the radio investigation service with a view to increasing the effectiveness of its law enforcement activities. As part of this effort we are planning a series of campaigns in selected areas against licence abuse and also licence evasion. Citizens band will be one of the first services to be tackled, though I cannot, of course, say where these campaigns will be particularly concentrated.

TRANSPORT

Ports (Road Links)

32. **Mr. Michael Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the motorway and road network links with small and medium ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I receive representations from time to time about road links to particular ports. Most ports have adequate road access. Where a better road is needed, improvements are in preparation or under consideration by ourselves or the local highway authority, as appropriate. any decision to provide a motorway-standard improvement would depend on several factors including the general quality of the existing routes.

Scottish Lowlands Airport Policy

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the report of the review of Scottish lowlands airport policy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We are still considering the report of the inter-departmental working group which carried out this review.

London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how he calculated the sum of £258,179,588 specified in the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill;

(2) what items that the Greater London Council was charged for under the order arising from section 49 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984, will not be included in calculating the sum specified in the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the full explanation I gave the House during the debate on the Ways and Means Resolution on 7 February.

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he expects the implementation of the London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill to create a surplus for London Regional Transport during the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Ridley: The amount specified in the bill will not be more than sufficient to provide LRT with reserves to meet its 1984-85 leasing commitments and other liabilities accruing at the end of the year.

Driving Tests

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the number of cancellations of driving tests due to recent adverse weather conditions has had upon the length of time waited by driving test applicants before receiving their test; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Nationally 73,660 test appointments were cancelled due to adverse weather between 2 January and 8 February (the latest date for which figures are available). This could add about two weeks to the national average waiting time. The Department is making every effort to provide new appointments for the candidates concerned before the normal forward booking date. Many have already been accommodated.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current cost to public funds of each driving test; and how such costs are computed.

Mrs. Chalker: Income from fees for each driving test is intended to cover all costs falling on public funds over the period for which the fee is prescribed (which does not necessarily relate to any one financial year). Calculations include the direct salary costs of driving examiners (with national insurance and superannuation liabilities), immediate overheads of the driving test organisation such as training, test bookings, accommodation costs and administration, together with a contribution to central departmental on-costs such as payroll and personnel management.

The figures for the last full financial year (1983-84) are:

	£ million	
Type of Test	*Income*	*Cost*
L-test	26·3	24·3
HGV driver test	2·2	1·8
PSV driver test	0·3	0·3
Part I motorcycle test	0·2	0·5

Income represents cash received net of refunds, and is inclusive of notional interest credits where significant waiting periods occur between payment of the fee and the test. (The national average waiting period for L-tests increased by 3 to 13 weeks during 1983-84.)

Driving Test Examiners

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that the number of driving test examiners currently serving the Huddersfield area is sufficient to maintain a prompt public service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The complement at Huddersfield driving test centre is one senior driving examiner and four examiners. Currently the centre is operating with one senior and three examiners, but a forth examiner is due to be posted there on 25 March. This level of staff should be adequate to meet the demand for tests in the area but the situation will be kept under review.

Heavy Lorries (Water Spray)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if the Institute of Road Transport Engineers was consulted by his Department before new regulations were issued to control water spray from heavy goods vehicles;

(2) which interested bodies his Department consulted before issuing new regulations to control water spray from heavy goods vehicles;

(3) what period of time was taken up in consulting interested bodies before he issued new regulations in respect of the control of water spray from heavy goods vehicles;

(4) how many alternative anti-spray devices were evaluated by his Department prior to the issuing of new regulations to control water spray from heavy goods vehicles.

Mrs. Chalker: Twenty different configurations of practical anti-spray devices were evaluated by Southampton university, under contract to the Department, and further tests were made on at least seven manufacturers' products. The result of this work were embodied in British Standard BS AU 200 which was the subject of wide consultation by the BSI.

Draft regulations applying this standard were issued on 2 March 1984 inviting comments from a great many organisations. Those who responded with substantial comments, including the IRTE, are as follows and regulations were laid before Parliament on 10 October 1984.

Replies to consultation: Spray suppression

Albert Jagger Limited
Southern Transport Enterprises
National Farmers Union
Transport 2000
Dendix Gen Brushes Limited
Logistic Executive
British Standards Institution
Aerodyne Equipment
Boydell & Jacks Limited
Maurice Goodall Holdings
Home Office (Fire Department)
Silentnight Holdings
ESSO Petroleum Company Limited
Neville Charrold Limited
British Telecom
Ford Motor Company
Road Haulage Association
HSE
Heavy Duty Division/DANA
Bus and Coach Council
British Railways Board
Civic Trust
Association of County Councils
Crane Fruehauf
Professor Lilley (University of Southampton)
British Brush Manufacturers
Sand and Gravel Association
Leyland Trucks
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
British Retailers Association
BTR Industries
Telehoist Limited
British Aggregate Construction Materials Industries
National Association of Co-operatives. Transport Officials
Monsanto
Institute of Road Transport Engineers
Milk Marketing Board
ICI
General Council of British Shipping
National Association of UK & Irish Millers Ltd.
Sand Ballast Hauliers
Automobile Association
ACTS Limited
Home Office (Police)
ERF Trucks
Institute of Road Safety Officers
Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders
Cyclists Touring Club

Freight Transport Association
Co-operative Union
Bedford Motor Vehicles
Motor Agents Association
Scottish Accident Prevention Council
Tarmac
Brimec (UK) Ltd.

Tanker Havens

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities will be given to hon. Members to consult the data bank of the marine, amenity and environmental factors of coastal areas considered suitable for the emergency transfer of oil from damaged tankers which he announced on 4 February, *Official Report*, column *438*.

Mr. David Mitchell: When it is completed, I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

A642

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for relieving the traffic burden on the A642.

Mrs. Chalker: The published proposals for the Kirkhamgate-Dishforth scheme include a link from the M1 to the A1 which would, amongst other things, relieve the A642 of much of its existing traffic. My right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Transport and the Environment, hope to announce a decision on these proposals during the early part of this year.

A1 (M)

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking towards upgrading the A1(M) between Aberford and Wetherby.

Mrs. Chalker: The published proposals for the Kirkhamgate-Dishforth scheme include improvement of the A1 from its junction with the A64 northwards to a new bypass of Wetherby. My right hon. Friends, the Secretaries of State for Transport and the Environment, hope to announce a decision on these proposals during the early part of this year.

The capacity of the A1 to the south of the junction with the A64 is being kept under regular review.

National Bus Company (Subsidy)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current level of subsidy from Her Majesty's Government to the National Bus Company; and what information he has as to the level of subsidy to bus companies in *(a)* France, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* Sweden and *(d)* Spain, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: In 1983 central Government subsidy to the National Bus Company was £41·8 million or 6 per cent. of the company's gross revenue. Total subsidy was 15 per cent. of gross revenue.

The latest information we have on total subsidy for bus services by country is as follows:

Subsidy as a percentage of revenue

	Percentage	*Year*
Great Britain	28	1982
France	57	1981
West Germany	38	1982
Sweden	56	1980
Spain	13	1976

All figures for total subsidy exclude payments to operators in respect of concessionary fares.

Public Transport Facilities (Grants)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the guidelines for the grants under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968.

Mrs. Chalker: Draft guidance to local authorities on the criteria that will apply to section 56 grants for public transport will be issued for consultation with local authority associations in the near future.

Moore Lane Bus Station, Bolton

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will be making a decision about the application for a grant for refurbishment of Moore Lane bus station in Bolton; if this will qualify for assistance under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: A decision on whether Moore Lane bus station in Bolton will qualify for a section 56 grant will be made in the light of the criteria applying to such grants, as soon as they have been established.

Green Belt (Motorway Interchange)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will allow the purchase of land owned by his Department at the M25/M1/A405 interchange, by St. Stephen's parish council, for the purpose of its continuance as green belt.

Mrs. Chalker: We have had a number of offers to purchase this land. Its use is a matter in the first instance for the local planning authority. Consistent with a decision on that use, it is Government policy to obtain the best possible price for assets disposed of.

Emery Airfreight

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will explain the reasons why the weekly air cargo service between New York and Manchester, operated on behalf of Emery Airfreight, is no longer allowed to operate.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No application to operate cargo charter flights on behalf of Emery Air Freight between New York and Manchester has been refused. Two recent applications by US charter airlines are currently under consideration.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Non-Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were charged in Northern Ireland with non-scheduled offences; and how many persons were found not guilty of all or some of the offences with which they were charged in the year 1984.

The Prime Minister: I have no recollection of the specific occasion, but it is possible that the Secretary of State for Defence reported to me orally on or shortly after 26 July.

Mr. Clive Ponting

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister (1) on what date she was first made aware that the Ministry of Defence police had identified Mr. Clive Ponting as the person suspected of having leaked official information from the Ministry in the summer of 1984; how this information was communicated to her; and if she will make a statement;

(2) on what date she was first made aware that the papers relating to a leak of official information from the Ministry of Defence in the summer of 1984 had been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions; how this information was communicated to her; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: On 13 August by a telex from my Private Office, although I was not made aware of the name of the person concerned until 17 August.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister on what date she was first made aware that a prosecution was to be brought against Mr. Clive Ponting in respect of an alleged leak of official information from the Ministry of Defence; how this information was communicated to her; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: On 17 August by a telex from my Private Office.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Manpower Services Commission intends to require that youth training scheme trainees are compulsorily transferred to a second placement after six months in their original placement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We have no plans to introduce compulsory transfers for young people on youth training scheme programmes after six months. The scheme is a voluntary one, offering 12 months of quality training and planned work experience, and trainees may leave at any time. Some programmes do involve more than one work placement but this is normally made clear to the trainees at the outset of the programme.

School Leavers

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those school leavers, who upon leaving school during the past two years have not gone into full-time work, further education or training, including the youth training scheme, have now found full-time work.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information of the type requested is not currently available. However it is being gathered in studies in England and Wales which have been commissioned jointly by the Manpower Services Commission, the Department of Employment and the Department of Education and Science. Among the topics to be covered the studies will seek information on the further education, employment and training experience of representative national samples of young people reaching minimum school leaving age during the 1983-84 academic year. A similar separate study is being carried out in Scotland. Preliminary results, covering the experience of this cohort up to the spring of 1985, are expected to become available around the end of this year.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the rate of unemployment in the SW9 postal district of London.

Mr. Alan Clark: Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Employment what new initiatives he intends to take to reduce youth unemployment.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government are considering a number of options for the enhancement of provision for young people, including the possibilities of extending training opportunities, but no decisions have yet been made.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been in full-time and part-time employment in each year from 1970 to the present.

Mr. Alan Clark: Comprehensive information is available only for those dates when censuses of employment were conducted and is as follows:

Thousand

	Full-time	*Part-time*
June 1971	18,308	3,341
June 1972	18,173	3,477
June 1973	18,355	3,828
June 1974	18,187	4,110
June 1975	17,964	4,248
June 1976	17,764	4,284
June 1977	17,828	4,298
June 1978	17,882	4,392
September 1981	16,815	4,499

Censuses of employment have been taken triennially since 1978. Results of the current, September 1984, census are scheduled to become available towards the end of this year.

Honeywell Information Systems Ltd.

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the award to Honeywell Information Systems Ltd. of the contract to supply terminals and micro-computers to unemployment benefit offices.

Mr. Alan Clark: The majority of the equipment being purchased under this £33 million contract will be manufactured in the United Kingdom with only about 10 per cent. coming from Italy and the United States. The supply of the 10,500 VDU terminals has been subcontracted entirely to Lynwood Ltd. — a wholly United Kingdom terminal supplier—representing some 30 per cent. of the capital contract. The terminal computer controllers to be installed in the unemployment benefit

offices — over 800 in total — are manufactured at Newhouse in Scotland; this accounts for around 60 per cent. of the contract value. The 10 per cent. of the contract placed outside the United Kingdom is for particular printers (Italy) and certain specialised components (from United States of America). In addition, the maintenance of the equipment will be carried out through United Kingdom field engineers.

Employment Statistics (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what changes have taken place in the number of people employed in the textile and clothing industry in the Yorkshire and Humberside region since June 1979;

(2) what changes have taken place in the numbers of people employed in the steel industry in the Yorkshire and Humberside region since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is for the period from June 1978 to September 1981 when censuses of employment were taken and is as follows:

Employees in employment in Yorkshire and Humberside

Thousand

Standard industrial classification 1968	*June 1978*	*September 1981*	*Net change 1978 to 1981*
Textiles (Order XIII)	98·2	66·4	−31·8
Clothing (Order XV excluding MLH 450, footwear)	37·2	27·5	−9·7
Iron and steel and steel tubes (MLHs 311 and 312)	65·0	44·9	−20·1

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Employment what changes have taken place in the numbers of people employed in the fishing industry in the Yorkshire and Humberside region since June 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is for the period from June 1978 to September 1981, when censuses of employment were taken. In that period, the number of employees employed in the fishing industry in Yorkshire and Humberside fell by 700, from 2,700 in 1978 to 2,000 in 1981.

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what changes have taken place in the number of people employed in the coal mining industry in the Yorkshire and Humberside region since June 1979;

(2) what changes have taken place in the number of people employed in manufacturing industries in Yorkshire and Humberside region since June 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Regional employment estimates related to the coal mining industry are available only for the period from June 1978 to September 1981 when censuses of employment were taken. In that period, the number of employees employed in the industry in Yorkshire and Humberside fell by 1,300, from 79,400 in 1978 to 78,100 in 1981.

Quarterly estimates of the total numbers of employees in employment in manufacturing industries, analysed by region, are published regularly in Table 1.5 of the labour market data section of *Employment Gazette*, copies of which are in the Library. Estimates for June 1983 to September 1984, the latest available, were published in the January issue of *Employment Gazette*. Estimates for June 1979 to March 1983 were contained in table 1.5 of historical supplement No. 1 to the August 1984 issue of *Employment Gazette*.

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Employment what increase has taken place in the total number of people unemployed in Yorkshire and Humberside region since June 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of unemployed claimants by region are available in the House of Commons Library. Comparisons are affected by the 1983 Budget provisions which enable some men, mainly aged 60 and over, to receive the long term rate of supplementary benefit and national insurance credits without having to sign on at an unemployment benefit office. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region, it is estimated that some 17,100 men were affected.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Unions

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to report his conclusions on ultra vires payments by students unions.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General considers and acts upon all documented complaints alleging the misuse of student union funds. In addition to consulting higher education interests about student unions, to which I referred in my answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on 12 February, at col *114*, my right hon. Friend will take into account the views of my right hon. and learned Friend on the question of misuse of funds.

Collective Worship

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive a reply from Surrey county council on the question of collective worship in schools.

Mr. Dunn: I am sorry that there has been a delay in reaching a conclusion on a case raised by my hon. Friend. Surrey has now provided the Department with information, and has been asked to clarify some of the points in it. I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Research Expenditure

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much his Department

Mr. Mellor: We hope to introduce during 1985 a national information collection system on waiting times, following the evaluation of pilot studies. Until such a system is in operation, it is not possible to say how far delays in magistrates' courts have been reduced.

The separate feasibility study of timetabling arrangements has been carried out by the university of Manchester, with the support of the Home Office. A report is expected shortly, and any findings of general interest will be communicated to courts in due course.

Warning and Monitoring Organisation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department where is the headquarters of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Cowley, Oxford.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will explain the functions of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The present functions of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation are to:

(a) pass to the general public, public authorities and the armed forces warnings of conventional or nuclear attack;

(b) provide confirmation of nuclear attack;

(c) pass to the general public, public authorities and the armed forces warnings of approach of radioactive fallout;

(d) provide headquarters of regional and local government and of the armed forces in the United Kingdom, and offshore islands and neighbouring countries with details of nuclear bursts and with a scientific appreciation of the path and intensity of fallout; and

(e) provide an emergency meteorological service after attack.

Fandango 85 and Wintex 85

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will explain the relationship between Fandango 85 and Wintex 85.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Fandango 85 is one of a series of self-contained exercises conducted by the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation to practise procedures. It will take place during the NATO exercise Wintex—Cimex 85 and draw on the scenario prepared for it. There is no other connection between the two.

Regional Fire Advisers

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each civil defence region, the name, present employment, date appointed and terms of reference of the regional fire adviser for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A list of regional fire advisers by region from 1979 to the present is given as follows. There are no formal terms of reference but a regional fire adviser is responsible for the co-ordination of emergency fire service planning in his region.

		Employment		
Region	*Regional Fire Adviser*	*At time of appointment*	*Now*	*Date of appointment*
No. 1	D. J. P. Walker	CFO Durham FB	Retired	Prior to 1979
	T. F. Elton	CFO Durham FB	CFO Tyne and Wear	December 1979
	T. F. Elton	CFO Tyne and Wear	CFO Tyne and Wear	November 1981
No. 2	K. Horan	CFO West Yorks	Retired	Prior to 1979
	T. F. Elton	CFO Tyne and Wear	CFO Tyne and Wear	August 1982 (upon amalgamation of 1 and 2 Regions)
No. 3	T. N. Watkins	CFO Derbyshire FB	Retired	Prior to 1979
	B. L. Fuller	CFO Notts FB	CFO West Midlands FB	April 1981
	P. H. Wilson	CFO Notts FB	CFO Notts FB	December 1981
No. 4	R. S. Barnes	CFO Essex FB	Retired	Prior to 1979
	R. C. Paramor	CFO Essex FB	CFO Essex FB	February 1979
No. 5	P. H. Darby	CFO London FB	HMCIFS	Prior to 1979
	R. A. Bullers	CFO London FB	CFO London FB	April 1981
No. 6	G. Clarke	CFO Hants FB	Cmdnt F S College	Prior to 1979
	J. R. Pearson	CFO Hants FB	CFO Hants FB	September 1984
No. 7	T. McCarthy	CFO Avon FB	Retired	Prior to 1979
	F. C. Ponsford	CFO Avon FB	Retired	February 1980
	J. J. Killoran	CFO Devon FB	CFO Devon FB	April 1984
No. 8	R. J. Morse	CFO South Glamorgan FS	Retired	Prior to 1979
	R. J. Morse	CFO West Glamorgan FB	Retired	October 1980
	K. Hayton	CFO Clwyd FS	CFO Clwyd FS	April 1984
No. 9	T. Lister	CFO West Midlands FS	Retired	Prior to 1979
	B. L. Fuller	CFO West Midlands FS	CFO West Midlands FS	October 1981
No. 10	R. A. Bullers	CFO Greater Manchester FS	CFO London FB	Prior to 1979
	M. Killoran	CFO Greater Manchester FS	CFO Greater Manchester FS	April 1981

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each regional fire adviser from 1979 to 1985 (i) the meetings attended in person or in deputy at which any representative of his Department acting in an official capacity was also present and (ii) the topics discussed at each meeting.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Regional fire advisers attend a wide range of meetings with representatives of Government Departments, local authorities and other public services to discuss various aspects of civil defence planning and training. To list all such meetings would require disproportionate effort.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any employer has refused to allow any employee to become a regional fire adviser.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None since one in 1977.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the means by which the consent of an employer is obtained to the appointment of a regional fire adviser.

Mr. Giles Shaw: By a letter to the fire authority employing a chief fire officer who is to be appointed as regional fire adviser.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministers (Communications)

Mr. Spearing asked the Prime Minister if she made any request, instruction or other communication to Ministers, prior to 16 August 1984, concerning action to be taken in the event of any unauthorised disclosure of significant information, whether or not concerned with security, by civil servants, particularly in respect of reports to be made to the Director of Public Prosecutions; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of 28 January, *Official Report*, column 22, in what ways the implementation of limited list prescribing for National Health Service drugs will vary in respect of Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: Until the limited list proposals are finalised it is not possible to say in what ways implementation may need to vary in Northern Ireland. It is clear, however, that there will need to be some variations — for example, to take account of the fact that, unlike their counterparts in Great Britain, hospital doctors in Northern Ireland do not issue prescriptions.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what is the procedure for keeping her informed if papers are sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions and later to the Attorney-General under the Official Secrets Act.

The Prime Minister: The Director of Public Prosecutions does not keep me informed about cases that have been referred to him. It is always open to the Attorney-General, in his discretion, or his Department, to inform me or my office about cases that have been referred to him or to the Director of Public Prosecutions which may raise matters of public importance or interest. The Attorney-General could ask me or other relevant Ministers whether I, or they, know of any considerations which he might want to take into account before he decides whether or not a prosecution would be in the public interest. There is no set procedure.

Sudan (Ethiopian Refugees)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise as a matter of urgency with the Common Market Commission the failure of the Common Market to provide more than 17,000 tonnes of aid to date to Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Community and its member states have earmarked 160,000 tonnes of grain for Sudan in 1985. The Foreign Affairs Council, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is attending in Brussels today, will discuss the needs of the Sudan.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister how many tonnes of food aid have been provided to the Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan by the European Economic Community, the United States of America and the rest of the world, respectively.

The Prime Minister: The European Community, as the first step in providing food aid pledged under the commitment made by the European Council on 4 December, has recently purchased 13,700 tonnes of cereals for refugee relief in the Sudan, 3,500 tonnes of which are now being delivered. It has also provided £1·5 million to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for food purchases. The United States has pledged 45,000 tonnes of cereals for the Ethiopian refugees which is due to arrive in April and 157,000 tonnes for other parts of Sudan.

Her Majesty's Government have provided 15,000 tonnes through the World Food Programme which is now in Port Sudan, and pledged a further £2 million in food aid to UNHCR's programmes in Sudan. No figures are available yet for food aid pledges by other donors to Sudan as a whole or to the Ethiopian refugees there.

Absence from Office (Contact)

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister what arrangements are made when she is on holiday to be contacted by telephone and telex by Ministers and officials and for her to contact by telephone and telex Ministers and officials.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Members for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on Friday 15 February at column *300*.

Classified Information

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister on what date she was first made aware that a leak of official information from the Ministry of Defence had taken place during the summer of 1984; how this information was communicated to her; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister on what date she first learned that there had been a leak of official information from the Ministry of Defence to the hon. Member for Linlithgow; and whether she expressed any view as to whether the culprit, if identified, should be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act.

Specimens Received by VI Centres in England and Wales 1975-1979

VI Centre	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Newcastle	12,111	11,838	14,999	20,821	17,790
Penrith	19,685	28,824	26,881	31,438	25,679
Thirsk	19,061	16,512	40,207	23,815	19,322
Leeds	32,647	38,452	32,472	34,415	42,268
Liverpool	23,830	25,274	29,621	23,763	21,112
Sutton Bonington	32,089	31,018	27,764	32,537	55,005
Shewsbury*	22,203	26,091	40,449	26,405	32,659
Chester	8,513	5,133	5,280	8,056	15,912
Worcester	22,135	19,489	21,578	23,537	26,569
Northampton	14,904	12,378	9,873	12,040	14,557
Lincoln	11,399	10,790	10,911	10,138	16,556
Cambridge	17,827	15,906	15,257	23,178	36,354
Norwich	18,268	20,225	24,428	30,537	26,811
Wye	11,960	10,509	11,732	10,401	13,033
Reading	24,768	21,238	18,288	22,352	27,927
Winchester	15,068	15,645	14,400	13,284	14,525
Starcross	23,048	20,971	29,230	21,335	27,225
Bristol	42,729	39,642	57,434	40,276	40,788
Truro	14,901	12,172	11,085	10,959	14,867
Gloucester	26,171	21,224	23,439	24,797	29,966
Bangor	12,521	12,355	14,309	10,806	13,132
Cardiff	5,543	5,785	7,914	9,055	10,398
Aberystwyth	12,323	9,679	8,693	8,175	10,906
Carmarthen	19,698	20,445	18,641	14,860	21,559

* The specimens for 1975-1978 are for Wolverhampton VIC

Specimens Received by VI Centres in England and Wales 1980-1984

VI Centre	1980	1981	1982	1983	*1984
Newcastle	22,793	16,701	18,484	23,600	23,015
Penrith	22,400	17,759	27,439	30,574	26,949
Thirsk	19,087	18,414	23,842	29,090	43,457
Leeds	26,166	52,599	42,883	35,987	34,628
Liverpool	21,997	22,484	20,057	17,203	14,757
Sutton Bonington	35,666	21,658	40,443	51,486	48,246
Shrewbury	28,383	30,381	24,173	23,340	18,039
Chester	19,858	13,597	11,724	11,885	7,258
Worcester	23,148	23,554	28,205	25,447	22,788
Northampton	8,594	9,730	10,904	11,913	11,648
Lincoln	11,296	11,061	15,566	29,330	40,770
Cambridge	30,604	30,484	30,785	27,724	36,873
Norwich	25,499	27,049	24,265	25,053	37,714
Wye	14,587	14,775	16,015	16,818	11,873
Reading	26,358	23,545	20,226	21,845	21,369
Winchester	13,522	16,044	21,392	28,287	31,697
Starcross	26,581	25,429	29,021	35,530	27,424
Bristol	41,926	42,629	41,953	49,879	44,699
Truro	16,016	16,992	15,376	19,911	17,263
Gloucester	23,491	25,232	28,320	26,563	20,345
Bangor	13,315	10,818	8,216	12,183	19,799
Cardiff	11,770	6,135	4,641	5,741	3,946
Aberystwyth	9,995	12,160	16,076	20,592	19,175
Carmarthen	19,676	15,265	12,914	14,070	12,715

* Provisional Figures

Dairy Quotas

Mr. Conway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that sufficient time is allowed for applications to the dairy produce quota tribunal for England and Wales for a review of the estimation of secondary quotas by a local panel.

Mr. Jopling: Yes. The vast majority of appellants have succeeded in submitting their requests for review within the permitted 21-day period.

Mr. Conway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions the dairy produce quota tribunal for England and Wales has exercised its discretion in allowing applications for a review of the estimation of secondary quotas by a local panel, when such applications did not conform to the present timetable.

Mr. Jopling: I understand that a very small number of appeals which were received more than 21 days after notification of local panel decisions have been considered by the tribunal where the tribunal was satisfied that such consideration was justified by the circumstances.

Mr. Conway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications have been considered to date for a review of the estimation of secondary quotas by local panels of the dairy produce quota tribunal for England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: Up to 13 February 1985, the dairy produce quota tribunal for England and Wales had received 5,738 appeals against the secondary quota decisions of local panels. Of these, 240 have so far been withdrawn by the appellants and 229 have been rejected as out of time. The tribunal completed the bulk of its hearings in England on 14 February and reached the same point in Wales today. I understand that the secretariat to the tribunal has so far identified fewer than 50 cases for which hearings cannot take place during February.

Mr. Conway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for a review of the estimation of secondary quotas by the dairy produce quota tribunal for England and Wales have so far been considered.

Mr. Jopling: The Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1984 (SI 1984/1047) do not provide for a review of decisions made by the dairy produce quota tribunals.

Mr. Conway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications have been received from Shropshire for a review of the secondary quotas estimation by the local panels of the dairy produce quota tribunal for England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: I regret this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the details of the discretionary element that has been introduced into the regional development grant.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As under the previous development grant scheme, grant will continue to be paid on an automatic basis. It will be paid in respect of all projects where application is made within the specified time limits and where the published criteria are satisfied. These criteria are contained in the "Guide for Applicants" (RDG/Guide), a copy of which I have placed in the Library.

The Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984 gives discretion on certain aspects to Ministers in regard to the payment of regional development grants as did earlier legislation. The "Guide for Applicants" indicates how such discretion will be exercised.

Teachers (Appointment Procedures)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward proposals for changes to the present procedures through which teachers and head teachers are appointed in primary and secondary schools in Wales.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Comments on the Green Paper "Parental Influence at School" (Cmnd. 9242), which include proposals relating to the procedure for the appointment of teachers and head teachers, are being considered and an announcement will be made in due course.

IDC Company

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the contracts undertaken directly for his Department, or for public agencies answerable to his Department, by the IDC Company, over the past five years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: IDC has undertaken only one such contract in the last five years. This was the building of the residential accommodation at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor. Work on the contract started in October 1978 and was completed in March 1982.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Prescriptions

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *298*, if he will now list in ascending order the number of prescription items per capita for each member country of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Figures are not available for each member country of the Council of Europe. Those that are available come from a variety of non-official sources, relate to different years and are not directly comparable because of the many factors which influence prescribing such as different eligibility rules and public subsidy arrangements. The most recent figures available for prescription items per capita per year are:

	Numbers
Netherlands	4·0
Sweden	4·8
United Kingdom	6·6
Denmark	7·8
Belgium	9·0
Spain	9·6
France	10·0
West Germany	11·2
Italy	11·3
Ireland	11·9

For the reasons set out above, no great significance should be attached to these figures.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to encourage dose-related quantities on prescriptions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The National Health Service prescription form (FP10) contains a box which doctors can use to specify the period for which a drug is to be provided. We reminded all doctors of this facility and encouraged them to use it in a leaflet sent to them in 1983.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will advise general practitioners to issue triple prescriptions whereby the patient receives three prescriptions each for one month in place of obtaining a three months' supply.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We see no need for such specific advice. Doctors have been asked to consider economy and safety when making prescribing decisions and they do not need reminding that they are free to issue multiple prescriptions in appropriate cases.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether every product in the limited list will meet the quality standards of the specifications in the British Pharmacopoeia.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All but four of the medicines included in the provisional limited list published for consultation when my right hon. Friend made his announcement and set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) on 10 December 1984 at columns *381-2* are subject of monographs published in the British Pharmacopoeia and must therefore comply with the standards specified in those monographs. Of the remaining four products, three have to meet standards specified in monographs published in the British Pharmaceutical Codex 1973; I understand that these are currently being reviewed by the British Pharmacopoeia Commission with a view to the inclusion of monographs in a future edition the Pharmacopoeia. I also understand that the commission is currently preparing a monograph on the fourth product.

We are considering the advice of the Chief Medical Officer's panel of advisers before deciding which medicines should remain available under the National Health Service from 1 April 1985. The quality of all products on that list will have to comply with the requirements of the Medicines Act and relevant directives of the European Commission.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions about his proposal for a limited list he has had with the Standing Medical Advisory Committee; and what was its advice.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Standing Medical Advisory Committee advises my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on the provision of medical services under the National Health Service Acts. Its deliberations are and always have been confidential.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many notifications he has received of cancelled or deferred investment by the pharmaceutical industry as a result of his announced decision on a limited list of prescribed medicines.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Some companies have claimed to us in discussion that investment plans have been deferred and are likely to be cancelled. We have pointed out that most other advanced countries are also trying to reduce their drugs bills and that this country retains several advantages so far as inward investment is concerned such as its attractiveness as a base for pharmaceutical research and development, sound economy, stable political environment, and links with Europe and the Commonwealth.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what account he will take in drawing up the final limited list of the clinical implications of the differing sedative profiles of tranquillisers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The medical and pharmaceutical experts consulted by the Chief Medical Officer on the contents of the limited list have given full consideration to the clinical effects of different tranquillisers.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how, pursuant to his answer of 12 February to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight) *Official Report*, column *151*, he will ensure that money saved on the cost of drugs prescribed by general practitioners as a result of the proposed limited list will be spent elsewhere in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The estimated savings from the limited list have been taken into account in the levels of spending in the NHS for 1985-86 announced in the Autumn Statement on 12 November 1984 at column 415. The savings will therefore enable us to maintain the increased expenditure on the Service which that Statement set out.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from general practitioners in rural areas who prescribe and dispense drugs regarding the proposal to ban prescriptions to National Health Service patients of brand-name products which will be excluded from the Government's limited list scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received about 3,500 letters from doctors commenting on our proposals to limit the range of drugs available in certain therapeutic categories. Some of these letters have come from general medical practitioners in rural areas but it would not be possible to identify these without disproportionate cost.

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will allow doctors freedom to prescribe on the National Health Service any drug in cases which, in their clinical opinion, could only be effectively treated by a particular drug or formulation, and the doctor so certifies.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We intend to make a comprehensive announcement shortly which will cover the point raised by my hon. Friend.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what meetings he or his ministerial colleagues and officials held in Copenhagen with representatives of the World Health Organisation before he produced his statement on a limited list for prescription drugs; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Chief Medical Officer and I visited the World Health Organisation regional office for Europe in Copenhagen on 2-4 September 1984. Amongst other subjects, we discussed measures being taken in various countries in Europe to control drug costs.

Rent and Rate Rebate Scheme

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of people employed by local authorities on the administration of the rent and rate rebate scheme in June 1982 for *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales; and what are the numbers currently employed for the most recent figures available on the housing benefit scheme in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the number of people employed on the administration of the rent and rate rebate schemes in England and in Wales in June 1982 is not held centrally. It is estimated that about 7,800 people were employed on the administration of housing benefit in Great

Britain in 1983-84, the latest date for which estimates are available. Separate estimates for England and for Wales are not available.

Departmental Manpower and Costs

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of manpower and costs in his Department were devoted to *(a)* health services and *(b)* social security in the last year.

Mr. Fowler: In 1983-84, the last full year for which figures are available class XII manpower and costs for health services and social security were as follows;

	Manpower		*Costs*	
	Staff	*Percentage*	*£ million*	*Percentage*
Health	4,909	5·7	90	7·3
Social Security	81,382	94·3	1,144	92·7
Total	86,291	100	1,234	100

The figures do not include class XI manpower or costs used to run special hospitals, youth treatment centres, artificial limb and appliance centres and some smaller units. In 1983-84 these were:

Manpower: 4,183 staff
Costs: £51·4 million

Patients (Rent)

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department, when paying rent for elderly or infirm patients who have been in hospital, has in operation any system to monitor the length of time for which rent is paid for such tenants.

Mr. Whitney: No, assistance with rent is provided through the housing benefit scheme which is administered by local authorities. It is for authorities to decide, in the light of the circumstances of the individual case, whether, and if so for how long, housing benefit should continue to be paid whilst a claimant is in hospital.

Public Relations Staff

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the annual cost of his Department's public relations section during each of the last five years.

Mr. Fowler: My Department has no section which can be separately identified as public relations. Functions commonly associated with public relations are carried out by Information Officers as part of their duties in the Department's information division.

The following table contains total costs for all professional Information Officers employed in the Department's press office and publicity branch, 1980-84, plus the director and deputy director of information, and the staff of the Departmental house journal.

The figures are average salary costs* and take account of the inner London pay area but do not include costs for common services nor for non-professional support staff.

Year	*Information officers in post*	*Total average salary (£)*
1980	20	323,077
1981	20	252,245
1982	19	342,521
1983	19	361,242
1984	19	370,365

*Ready Reckoner for staff and other costs: HM Treasury — 1980.1981.1982.1983.1984.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present establishment of press officers and public relations staff in his Department.

Mr. Fowler: My Department has no section which can be separately identified as public relations. The Department's Information Division comprises a press office, a publicity branch which is responsible for advertising, preparation of leaflets, making films, exhibitions etc, and a section producing the Departmental House journal.

The division is headed by a director and deputy director. The establishment of professional information officers for the division on 1 February 1985 is as follows:

	Staff Allocation	*Staff in post*
Director of information	1	1
Deputy director	1	1
Press office	12	10
Publicity	8	6
House journal	3	3

Administrative Costs

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the administrative costs of the National Health Service and the administrative costs of health services in each member country of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We know of no precise figures which would enable this comparison to be made, and indeed the administrative costs of the National Health Service are not capable of precise definition.

Hay Fever Vaccines

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidance to doctors to ensure that hay fever vaccines are refrigerated when held in stock by a general practitioner.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Guidance is already available. Regulations made under the Medicines Act require that vaccines, in common with all medicinal products, should be clearly labelled with any special requirements relating to storage and handling. Information about special

requirements must be included in the product data sheets produced by the companies and which are supplied to all general practitioners. It is advised in the British Pharmacopoeia that vaccines should be protected from light and, unless otherwise stated in a specific instance, should be stored at temperatures between 2°-8°C and should not be allowed to freeze.

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Fowler: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the code are already in hand following the publication on 9 February 1984 of the programme of action on women in the Civil Service.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in each of his Department's 23 resettlement units, how many of the individuals accommodated during the four-week period ended 20 November 1984 had not been accommodated in the same resettlement unit *(a)* in the previous four-week period, *(b)* in the previous six months and *(c)* in the previous year.

Mr. Whitney: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each year from 1978 to 1983 inclusive, how many of those whose unemployment benefit claims have been disallowed suffered this decision because they were deemed to be seasonal workers.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

	Total disallowances	*Seasonal worker disallowances*
1978	902,100	2,700
1979	930,300	2,900
1980	1,241,700	3,400
1981	1,156,000	3,300
1982	1,174,300	4,000
1983	1,092,500	5,100

Supplementary Benefit (Residential Care)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for the latest year for which figures are available and for each of his Department's local offices, what is the total number of residents of *(a)* private and voluntary residential care homes and *(b)* private and voluntary nursing homes which are claiming supplementary benefit as boarders to help them meet the homes' charges;

(2) for the latest year for which figures are available and for each of his Department's local offices, what is the total amount of supplementary benefit paid out to help residents meet the charges of *(a)* private and voluntary residential care homes and *(b)* private and voluntary nursing homes.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the information which is available, although not in the precise form requested, is that at December 1983, the latest date for which we have figures, there were 25,800 residents in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes in receipt of supplementary benefit in Great Britain. The average weekly benefit payment was £75·80 and on this basis, estimated annual expenditure was £102 million.

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry. 1983 figures are provisional.

Note: Average benefit payments include an amount paid for personal expenses but are net of any other resources, such as retirement pension, which fail to be taken into account.

AIDS

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the question of Government guidance to workers in the National Health Service dealing with patients suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome was raised at the Health Services Industrial Advisory Committee on Wednesday 13 February; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will meet a delegation of National Health Service trade unions to discuss Government guidelines to National Health Service staff dealing with acquired immune deficiency syndrome sufferers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The interim guidelines on AIDS were published jointly by Health Ministers and the Health and Safety Commission. The Health Service Advisory Committee advises the Health and Safety Commission. I understand, however, that at their meeting on 13 February the interim guidelines were drawn to the attention of that committee's members. Health Service trade unions are represented on the Health Services Advisory Committee. They are also represented on the advisory committee on dangerous pathogens which produced the interim guidelines. We therefore have no plans for separate meetings about the Guidelines with trade unions representing Health Service staff.

Association of Community Health Councils

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has completed his consideration of the more detailed information about levels of expenditure and income of the Association of Community Health Councils; and whether he has reconsidered his decision on funding the association.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our view remains that in the long-term the association should be funded from the budgets of its member community health councils. Grants totalling £35,000 have been paid during the current financial year. A further sum of up to £7,500 is available if necessary to clear the association's accumulated deficit and enable it to begin the new financial year on a sounder basis. Representations have been received from the Association about funding for 1985-86, and we are considering them.

Directors of Social Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of directors of social services who have quit their job since 1979 and as to the length of tenure in their post at the time of their leaving.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not centrally available.

Severe Weather Allowance

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average payment made under the exceptionally severe weather allowance scheme in 1985; and if he will provide a regional breakdown of this figure.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. When the period during which payments could be made is over, local offices will be asked to make a return so that the total number of payments made this winter and the cost can be ascertained.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether heating payments for severe weather are to be made for the week ended 17 February.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that on the basis of the criteria set out in paragraphs 7426-7459 and appendix 19 of the S Manual (a copy of which is in the Library) the chief adjudication officer has decided to advise local adjudication officers that the "exceptionally severe weather" condition in Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulation 26 has been satisfied in the following areas.

Weather station—Aberporth

Wales and South West
Aberystwyth ILO
Ammanford AO
Bridgend ILO
Carmarthen ILO
Dollgellau ILO
Haverfordwest ILO
Llanelli ILO
Morriston ILO
Neath ILO
Newtown ILO
Pembroke Dock ILO
Porthmadoc ILO
Port Talbot ILO
Swansea ILO

Weather station—Birmingham

London North
Banbury ILO

Midland
Birmingham—Bradford St AO
Birmingham—Edgbaston ILO
Birmingham—Erdington ILO
Birmingham—Handsworth ILO
Birmingham—Ladywood ILO
Birmingham—Northfield ILO
Birmingham—Perry Barr ILO
Birmingham—Ravenhurst ILO
Birmingham—S Yardley ILO
Birmingham—Sparkhill ILO
Birmingham—Washford Heath ILO
Birmingham—Burton-on-Trent ILO
Cannock ILO
Corby ILO
Coventry (East) ILO
Coventry (West) ILO
Derby (London Road) ILO
Dudley (North) ILO
Dudley (South) ILO
Hereford ILO
Ilkeston ILO
Kidderminster ILO
Leamington ILO
Leicester (Burleys Way) ILO
Leicester (Lower Hill St.) ILO
Leicester (Norton St.) ILO
Leicester (Yeoman St.) ILO
Lichfield ILO
Loughborough ILO
Newcastle ILO
Northampton AO
Nottingham (Castlegate) ILO
Nottingham (David Lane) ILO
Nottingham (Shakespeare St.) ILO
Nottingham (Station St.) ILO
Nuneaton ILO
Redditch ILO
Rugby ILO
Shrewsbury ILO
Smethwick ILO
Stafford ILO
Stoke-on-Trent (North) ILO
Stoke-on-Trent (South) ILO
Telford ILO
Walsall (East) ILO
Walsall (West) ILO
Wellingborough ILO
West Bromwich ILO
Wolverhampton (North) ILO
Wolverhampton (South) ILO
Worcester ILO

Weather station—Bournemouth
London South
Andover ILO
Fareham ILO
Havant AO
New Forest ILO
Newport (IOW) ILO
Portsmouth ILO
Southampton ILO
Winchester ILO

Wales and South West
Bournemouth ILO
Poole ILO
Salisbury ILO
Weymouth ILO
Yeovil ILO

Weather station—Bristol
Wales and South West
Aberdare ILO
Abertillery ILO
Bargoed ILO
Barry ILO
Bath ILO
Blackwood ILO
Bridgwater ILO
Britsol Central ILO
Bristol East ILO
Bristol Horfield ILO
Bristol South ILO
Bristol West ILO
Caerphilly ILO
Cardiff Central ILO
Cardiff East ILO
Cardiff West ILO
Cheltenham ILO
Chippenham ILO
Cwmbran ILO
Ebbw Vale ILO
Gloucester ILO
Merthyr Tydfil ILO
Newport (Gwent) ILO

Pontypridd ILO
Porth ILO
Rhondda West ILO
Stroud ILO
Swindon ILO
Taunton ILO
Trowbridge ILO
Weston Super Mare ILO

Weather station—Finningley

North East
Barnsley (East) ILO
Barnsley (West) ILO
Bradford (East) ILO
Bradford (South) ILO
Bradford (West) ILO
Bridlington ILO
Castleford AO
Dewsbury ILO
Doncaster (East) ILO
Doncaster (West) ILO
Goole ILO
Grimsby ILO
Halifax ILO
Hemsworth ILO
Huddersfield ILO
Hull (East) ILO
Hull (West) ILO
Keighley ILO
Leeds (North) ILO
Leeds (North West) ILO
Leeds (South) ILO
Leeds (South East) AO
Leeds (West) ILO
Pontefract ILO
Rotherham (North) ILO
Rotherham (South) ILO
Scunthorpe ILO
Sheffield (North East) ILO
Sheffield (North West) ILO
Sheffield (South East) ILO
Sheffield (South West) ILO
Wakefield ILO
Wath-on-Dearne AO

Midland
Boston ILO
Chesterfield ILO
Grantham ILO
Lincoln (Newland) ILO
Lincoln (Orchard St.) ILO
Mansfield ILO
Skegness ILO
Sutton-in-Ashfield ILO
Worksop ILO

Weather station—Heathrow

London south
Aldershot ILO
Ashford ILO
Balham ILO
Basingstoke ILO
Battersea ILO
Bexley ILO
Bloomsbury AO
Bognor ILO
Bracknell ILO
Brighton ILO
Brixton ILO
Bromley ILO
Camberwell AO
Canterbury AO
Chatham ILO
Chelsea ILO
Chichester ILO
Crawley ILO
Croydon ILO
Crystal Palace ILO
Dartford ILO
Dover ILO
Eastbourne ILO
Eltham AO
Epsom ILO
Folkestone ILO
Gravesend ILO
Greenwich Park ILO
Greenwich West AO
Guildford ILO
Hastings ILO
Hounslow ILO
Hove ILO
Kennington AO
Kennington Park ILO
Kensington ILO
Kingston ILO
Lewes ILO
Lewisham ILO
Maidstone ILO
Morden AO
Newbury ILO
Orpington ILO
Peckham ILO
Reading ILO
Redhill ILO
Rochester AO
Sittingbourne ILO
Slough ILO
Southwark ILO
Streatham ILO
Surbiton AO
Sutton AO
Thames South AO
Thanet ILO
Tunbridge Wells ILO
Twickenham ILO
Wandsworth ILO
Westminster ILO
Wimbledon AO
Woking ILO
Woolwich ILO
Worthing ILO

London north
Acton ILO
Aylesbury ILO
Barking ILO
Barnet ILO
Canning Town ILO
Cricklewood ILO
Ealing ILO
Edgware ILO
Edmonton ILO
Euston ILO
Finsbury Park ILO
Hackney ILO
Harlesden ILO
Harrow ILO
Hemel Hempstead ILO
Hendon ILO
Hertford ILO
Highgate ILO
High Wycombe ILO
Hoxton ILO
Ilford ILO
Leytonstone ILO
Milton Keynes ILO
Neasden ILO
Oxford AO
Paddington ILO
Plaistow ILO
Poplar ILO
Romford ILO
St. Albans ILO
Shoreditch AO
Southall ILO
Stepney AO
Stoke Newington ILO
Thames North AO
Tottenham ILO
Uxbridge ILO
Walthamstow ILO

Watford ILO
Westbourne Park AO
Woodgrange Park ILO
Wood Green ILO

Weather station—Honnington

London north
Basildon ILO
Bedford ILO
Braintree ILO
Bury St. Edmunds
Cambridge ILO
Chelmsford ILO
Clacton-on-Sea ILO
Colchester ILO
Diss AO
Grays ILO
Gt. Yarmouth ILO
Harlow ILO
Ipswich ILO
Kings Lynn ILO
Lowestoft ILO
Luton, ILO
Norwich (Chantry) ILO
Norwich (Mountergate) ILO
Peterborough ILO
Southend-on-Sea ILO
Stevenage ILO

Weather station—Plymouth

Wales and south west
Barnstaple ILO
Devonport ILO
Exeter ILO
Launceston ILO
Penzance ILO
Plymouth ILO
St. Austell ILO
Torbay ILO
Truro ILO

Mr. Ernest Trevor Smart

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the appeal by Mr. Ernest Trevor Smart, of Newtown, to be heard by the Pensions Appeal Tribunal; and if he will take steps to reduce the delay between the notification and hearing of appeals.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. and learned Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Chatterton Hey

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he received an application for funding under the central funding initiative on drugs misuse from Manchester and Salford Methodist mission in respect of improvements at Chatterton Hey; and when he plans to come to a decision on this application.

Mr. John Patten: An incomplete application from the Manchester and Salford Methodist mission for funding in respect of improvements at Chatterton Hey was received on 13 July 1983. Further information was sought in December 1983 and on subsequent occasions as late as 11 February but has not so far been received. A decision cannot be made until the necessary information is available.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what directives he has issued on the question of financing kidney patients being treated by dialysis machines;

(2) what directives he has issued governing the use of dialysis machines.

Mr. John Patten: The financing of haemodialysis services and the use of haemodialysis machines are matters for health authorities, and we have issued no directives. We have, however, asked health authorities to develop services for patients suffering end stage renal failure as a priority within the acute sector, and all regional health authorities have recently agreed a target of accepting new renal patients for treatment at an annual rate of at least 40 per million population by 1987.

Key Housing Association Ltd.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan may expect a reply to his letter of 14 December 1984 regarding the Key Housing Association Limited and board and lodging charges.

Mr. Whitney: I have written to the right hon. Member today.

NHS (Energy Conservation)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the 10-year energy conservation programme in the National Health Service.

Mr. John Patten: The Department made special allocations of £13·3 million over the three-year period 1978-79 to 1980-81 to health authorities in England for energy conservation measures.

Health authorities were expected to supplement these allocations from 1979-80 onwards from their own savings resulting from the programme to achieve a minimum average investment of £8 million annually. The programme was intended to secure a total investment for hospitals in England of £28 million over the four years 1978-79 to 1981-82. Thereafter it was considered that the investment of savings resulting from this programme would enable an energy saving programme to continue at this level. This programme is part of the National Health Service's continuing effort in this field which overall has led to a current annual saving of £68 million.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate what measures he is taking to promote both the identification of energy savings in the National Health Service and reinvestment of savings arising from the energy conservation programme in the National Health Service.

Mr. John Patten: The Department continues to issue guidance that will enable hospitals to monitor their energy consumption and establish targets for reducing it. A computer programme has been made available for making decisions locally, when planning long-term investment in energy saving measures.

The Department's guidance indicates the financial advantages to be obtained from energy conservation and encourages health authorities to re-invest savings along with other cost reduction measures.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings have been made in each year since 1977 in the National Health Service as a result of the

energy conservation programme; how much has been reinvested in the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Savings resulting from the energy conservation programme in the National Health Service since 1977 are as shown in the following table.

Savings £ million

Year	*Over 1972-73 (at 1982-83 price levels)*	*Over each previous year (at 1982-83 price levels)*
1978-79	37·222	11·777
1979-80	48·528	11·306
1980-81	54·499	5·971
1981-82	60·216	5·717
1982-83	67·925	7·709
Totals	268·390	42·480

The figures do not take account of changes in the size of the NHS estate. Figures for 1983-84 are not yet available.

Records are not kept centrally of the amount spent by the NHS on energy conservation, but as the average annual saving over the five year period was £8·5 million substantial investment by the NHS would have been required to achieve these savings.

State Retirement Pension Scheme

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to continue operating the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Whitney: The Government's decisions on the future of the state retirement pension scheme will be announced as part of the outcome of the social security reviews, which we hope to publish in the early part of this year.

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what amount of state earnings-related pension is currently in payment to people retiring in 1985 who have paid into the scheme at the highest contribution rate since its inception.

Mr. Whitney: A person who has paid at the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions since April 1978 and has retired in 1985 would currently be entitled to an earnings related additional component of £16·21 per week. Very few, if any, people will actually be receiving this maximum amount. In September 1983, the latest date for which information is available, the average payment was £2·50 per week.

Pensions

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the United Kingdom Government spending goes to paying for pensions for retired persons; and how this compares with other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *732*]: Comparative information for member states of the European Community are not available in the precise form requested. However, harmonised comparative statistics are published by the European Community as part of the European system of integrated social protection statistics. The Eurostat publication "Social Indicators for the European Community: 1984" includes comparative statistics for both gross domestic product at market prices and the relative expenditure of the old age programme within social protection expenditure.

A full definition of the old age programme is in paragraphs 520-522 of the Eurostat publication "European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS): Methodology — Part I: 1981". It is not synonymous with state retirement pensions but also includes the cost of private and occupational pensions and cash payments to the elderly, the cost of staying in old peoples or nursing homes, early retirement payments and a range of local authority services such as home helps or benefits in kind; it does not include the expenditure on medical care for old people or increases in pensions for dependants. The table indicates for member states the proportion of gross domestic product at market prices allocated to the old age programme at 1981.

European Community: expenditure on programmes for old age as a proportion of gross domestic product at market prices: 1981

Country	*Percentage*
West Germany	8·6
France	9·4
Italy	8·4
Netherlands	8·7
Belgium	7·5
Luxembourg	8·0
United Kingdom	9·4
Ireland	6·0
Denmark	10·6
Average of the nine countries	8·9

Source:
Tables VII-12 and VII-13: Social Indicators for the European Community: Eurostat 1984.

United Nations Decade for Women

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the range of child-care facilities described in Her Majesty's Government's answer to question A 3.2.6 of part II of the United Nations end of decade for women questionnaire.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to the reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *167*]: We are satisfied as to the range of child-care facilities. We are concerned that working mothers should be able to make the best arrangements possible for their children, and that these arrangements should be stable and flexible enough to fit in with the parents' requirements. It is however particularly important that these requirements should provide a good standard of care for the individual child. Day-care will continue to be primarily a matter of private arrangement between parents and private and voluntary resources except where there are special needs, but we should like to see local authorities continuing to develop their supporting, supervisory and information roles alongside their registration functions. The Department is currently reviewing its long-standing guidance on day-care provision and the opportunity will be taken in publishing revised guidance to encourage the continuation of these developments.

In October 1983 we began a special initiative at a total cost of £6 million up to March 1987 to help stimulate voluntary sector provision for families with pre-school children including particularly families with working mothers on low income.

Unemployed Persons (Statistics)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take in response to the recent publication of statistics from the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys longitudinal study showing a 20 per cent. excess of death in unemployed men and their wives.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *168*]: I have studied these research findings carefully. We will continue to monitor research in this field. We are also considering with the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys whether further analysis of the longitudinal study data, including that from the 1981 census now available, would be worthwhile. The Government's priority, however, is to continue to pursue the policies which they believe to be the best way to bring down unemployment, and to continue to meet the health needs of the population.

Dental Undergraduates

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he implemented the recommendation to reduce the intake of dental undergraduates in 1984; and what means he used to secure that reduction;

(2) how many new dental undergraduates were admitted for dental education in England and Wales in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *281-2*]: Implementation of the 10 per cent. reduction in dental school intake, which I announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 22 July 1983, at column *272*, is a matter for the University Grants Committee. I understand the reduction is expected to be fully achieved by the academic year 1985-86.

The number of new dental undergraduates starting in the Autumn term in England and Wales for each academic year was as follows:

	Number
1982-83	798
1983-84	766
1984-85	741

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor or the Exchequer if he will compare, giving the latest figures available, the gross income in pound sterling equivalent at which income tax on earned income becomes payable at 30 per cent. and 50 per cent. in the United Kingdom, with the levels in the United States of America, France, Germany and Japan, for (*a*) a single person, (*b*) a single-wage married couple and (*c*) a single-wage couple with two children.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is given in the following tables.

Table 1

Gross income in £ sterling at which income tax on employment income becomes payable at 30 per cent.

	Single person	*Married couple*	*Married couple with two dependent children*
United Kingdom	2,006	3,156	3,156
United States of America	21,965	28,485	30,270
France	14,790 (29·7)	19,625 (29·7)	27,700 (29·7)
Germany	8,310	16,160	16,740
Japan	30,520 (27)	31,810 (27)	34,345 (27)

Table 2

Gross income in £ sterling at which income tax on employment income becomes payable at 50 per cent.

	Single person	*Married couple*	*Married couple with two dependent children*
United Kingdom	25,106	26,256	26,256
United States of America	74,595	148,110	149,910
France	32,180 (48·2)	54,605 (51)	54,605 (51)
Germany	17,605	34,805	35,440
Japan	81,980 (52·25)	83,190 (52·25)	85,600 (52·25)

Notes:

1. The figures relate to income of the year 1984 (1984-85 in the case of the United Kingdom).

2. Conversions to sterling were made at the exchange rates prevailing on 4 February 1985. They do not fully reflect differences in purchasing power between sterling and the other currencies.

3. It is assumed that the income of the married couples is wholly employment income of the husband.

4. Personal reliefs (including child tax allowances, where given, but not child benefits) employment income reliefs and other standard reliefs have been taken into account, as well as income tax relief for social security contributions in certain countries.

5. (i) The rates of 30 per cent. and 50 per cent. in the tables are actual tax rates, that is, nominal rates adjusted where appropriate for the reliefs mentioned above.

(ii) Where the actual tax rate is never precisely 30 per cent. or 50 per cent., the rate applicable to the income level in the table is given in brackets.

6. (i) The figures in the table reflect national (Federal) income taxes only.

(ii) Local income taxes are levied in Japan and the United States of America. The figures for combined national (Federal) and local income taxes at typical rates are as follows:—

Year	Total living in voluntary and private organisations homes	Numbers maintained by Health and Social Services Boards			
		Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
1976	1,059	464	36	89	4
1977	1,035	458	56	79	4
1978	1,054	471	58	87	13
1979	982	505	61	85	10
1980	1,038	520	50	88	14
1981	1,047	513	107	88	34
1982	1,082	523	60	88	43
1983	1,168	549	68	87	73

Note:
The figures for 1983 are provisional.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the average cost of keeping a person in a board-run old people's home in each of the last eight years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is:

Average Running Cost per resident per week

Year ended 31 March	£
1977	51·95
1978	59·91
1979	64·97
1980	78·20
1981	100·77
1982	111·19
1983	119·86
1984	126·75

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been accommodated in old people's homes run by each of the health and social services boards in each of the last eight years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The answer is as follows:

Number of People Accommodated in Old People's Homes

Year	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
1976	957	797	461	416
1977	1,032	795	463	424
1978	1,043	823	466	430
1979	1,056	896	467	451
1980	1,200	903	524	487
1981	1,263	894	525	519
1982	1,357	892	532	512
1983	1,351	885	520	512

Note: Figures for 1983 are provisional.

Property Conversions

Mr. Killedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many conversions from houses or other buildings to flats have taken place since 1956; and how many new flats or apartments have been built since that date.

Mr. Chris Patten: Such statistics are not maintained.

Mr. Killedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to update the provisions of the Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, in regard to property conversions that took place since 1956.

Mr. Chris Patten: No.

Job Creation

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied that present procedures permit early revision of new proposals for further assistance for job creation in those local enterprise development unit-assisted companies which reach previously agreed targets ahead of schedule; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: The local enterprise development unit is not debarred from making additional assistance available to companies reaching agreed targets ahead of schedule. However, the attainment of employment targets is only one of the factors that need to be considered in deciding whether further assistance should be offered. Each case is judged on its merits.

Transport Bill

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if it is his intention to introduce all or any of the measures contained in the Transport Bill in Northern Ireland either by separate legislation or by Order in Council.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Capital Grants

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the uptake of capital grants for local enterprise development unit-sized companies; and if he will make it his policy to maintain the present levels of such grants for such companies.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *270*]: I estimate that some 40 per cent. by value of payments under the Standard capital grants scheme in 1983-84 were made to companies with fewer than 50 employees. The value of these payments was £16 million. In addition, capital and other grants are available on a selective basis from the local enterprise development unit; in 1983-84 the total value of these grants was £9·4 million.

I am conscious of the importance of maintaining a simple and predictable scheme of assistance with capital costs, particularly for smaller companies. This has been an important consideration in our review of the standard capital grants scheme, the outcome of which I hope to announce soon.

Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the current size of the present

prison population in Northern Ireland, categorised by age and by sex in the following groups: aged under 18 years, 18 to 25 years, 25 to 30 years, 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years; and if he will give a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by percentage of the total prison population;

(2) what is the number of prisoners in Northern Ireland prisons, the age structure of convicted prisoners in the prisons of Northern Ireland and the number of convicted prisoners serving sentences for terrorist offences.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *713*]: The latest date for which the information requested is available is 2 December 1984. On that date the total prison population — including unconvicted inmates and persons detained under sentence in young offenders centres and under section 73 of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968 — was 2,185. The details requested in respect of sentenced inmates are set out in the following table.

Sentence length

Age	*Up to 3 months*		*Over 3 months up to 6 months*		*Over 6 months up to 12 months*		*Over 12 months up to 18 months*		*Over 18 months up to 4 years*		*Over 4 years up to 8 years*		*Over 8 years*		*Life*		*Totals*		*Grand total*
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*	
Under 18 years	—	—	2	8	—	5	1	1	7	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	12	17	29 —
18 years and under 25 years	12	21 (2)	16	53 (3)	24	62	14	19	19 (1)	62	87	8	82 (2)	4	26 (1)	—	340 (4)	229 (5)	569 (9)
25 years and under 30 years	2	9	1	11	6	11	7	6	38	13	64 (1)	19	211 (9)	3	183 (1)	—	512 (11)	72	584 (11)
30 years and under 40 years	—	7 (2)	1	10	1	16	—	3	14	20	49 (1)	11	137 (3)	—	180	—	382 (4)	67 (2)	449 (6)
40 years and under 50 years	2	4	—	7	—	7 (1)	1	3	5	9	13	4	20	1	29 (1)	1	70 (1)	36 (1)	106 (2)
50 years and under 60 years	—	—	—	2	—	2	—	3	—	2	2	—	1	2	5	—	7	11	18 —
60 years and over	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	5	6
Totals	16	42 (4)	20	93 (3)	31	103 (1)	23	35	143 (1)	110	216 (2)	42	451 (4)	11	424 (3)	1	1,324 (20)	437 (8)	1,761 (28)
Percentage of population	0·9	2·6	1·1	5·4	1·7	5·8	1·3	2·0	8·0	6·1	12·2	2·3	26·0	0·6	23·9	0·1	75·1	24·9	100

Notes:
1. The figures in Columns A relate to those serving sentences for scheduled offences and those in Column B to all other offences.
2. The figures without brackets related to male inmates and those in brackets to female inmates.
3. The figures include those detained in Young Offenders Centres.
4. Persons detained at the Secretary of State's pleasure are included in the life sentence figures.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereal Substitutes

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the principal cereal substitutes with the prices paid by the compounders, imported into (*a*) the United Kingdom and (*b*) the European Economic Community; and if there is any likelihood of a levy system being introduced to bring these products into the cereal regime.

Mr. MacGregor: The principal cereal substitutes imported into (*a*) the United Kingdom, and (*b*) the European Community as a whole, together with price information where this is available, are as follows:

Average import (cif) price, December 1984

United Kingdom	*(£/tonne)*
Maize Gluten feed	109·17
Manioc	*101·00
Brans and Sharps	77·77
Citrus Pulp	107·72
Brewers' and Distillers' Grains	99·87

Source: Customs and Excise Home Grown Cereals Authority.
* February (ex-store).

Market price, 1 February 1985

European Community	*($US/tonne)*
Manioc	88
Maize Gluten Feed	119
Brans and Sharps	n.a.
Citrus Pulp	104
Maize Germ Cake	n.a.

Source: EC Commission.

Community imports of manioc in excess of levels agreed with supplying countries attract the full import levy for barley. A levy system operates for all Community imports of brans and sharps. The European Commission has been given a mandate to negotiate annual import quotas for maize gluten feed and other by-products of maize refining which would involve a modification of the present zero tariff binding.

Horse Breeding

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund grants have been made by dairy farmers to take up horse breeding.

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of no such applications in the United Kingdom and I have no information about any in other member states.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of specimens each veterinary investigation centre has handled since 1975.

Mr. Jopling: The information is as follows:

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested but the number of persons proceeded against for non-scheduled offences in the year 1984 was 54,112. Records on findings of guilt relate only to the principal offence in each case; on that basis, the number of persons found not guilty of non-scheduled offences was 2,367.

Remanded Persons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, for 1984, how many prisoners were remanded in custody prior to each trial for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively.

Mr. Scott: 1,005 persons were first remanded in custody in 1984 charged with scheduled offences, and 905 with non-scheduled offences. Of the 868 persons who were remanded in custody at the time of trial during 1984, 411 were charged with scheduled offences and 457 with non-scheduled offences.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, for 1984, what percentage of prisoners on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, were *(a)* given a non-custodial sentence, *(b)* given a custodial sentence and *(c)* found not guilty or not proceeded against.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the exact form requested. However, the following details are available for those persons on custodial remand at the time of trial in 1984:

Disposal	*Scheduled Offences*		*Non-Scheduled Offences*	
	Number of persons	*per cent.*	*Number of persons*	*per cent.*
Non-Custodial sentence	58	14	92	20
Custodial sentence	275	67	282	62
Discharged at Court (including acquittals or Absolute discharge)	78	19	83	18
Total	411	100	457	100

Fair Employment Agency (Membership)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has appointed a member of a secret society, the Knights of St. Columbanus, as a member of the Fair Employment Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Appointments to the Fair Employment Agency are made on the basis of an individual's personal qualities, experience and likely contribution to the work of the agency, and individual members have varied interests and backgrounds. One recent appointee is a member of the Knights of St. Columbanus. I am satisfied that members of the agency discharge their responsibilities competently and with the integrity which the task requires.

Home Helps

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are being provided with a home help by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland; and how this compares with each of the last four years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Year ending 31 December.

Health and social services board	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Eastern	10,712	11,163	13,299	14,619	13,388
Northern	3,870	3,742	4,560	4,778	4,949
Southern	5,247	4,409	4,909	5,032	5,730
Western	3,479	3,162	3,416	3,805	3,956

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many home help hours have been provided in each of the last five years by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table shows the recorded number of hours for which home helps were paid in each of the last five years by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland. Paid hours do not necessarily represent hours of service to clients as they may include hours credited for "double" time, statutory holidays, annual leave and sick leave.

Home Help Hours Paid in:

Year ending 31 December.

Health and social services board	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Eastern	2,860,228	2,854,244	2,960,545	3,017,107	2,836,134
Northern	1,210,633	1,457,295	1,333,842	1,363,328	1,391,094
Southern	1,422,514	1,554,328	1,559,803	1,605,338	1,641,920
Western	1,054,856	1,148,486	1,179,950	1,176,932	1,150,653

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many home helps are employed by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland; and how this compares with five years ago.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures are:

Health and social services board	*Home helps receiving pay at*	
	31 December 1979	*31 December 1984*
Eastern	5,168	4,743
Northern	2,430	2,626
Southern	2,474	2,814
Western	1,787	2,016

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the total spent on the home help service by each of the health and social services boards in each of the last five years has been paid in salaries to those actually working as home helps.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on the home help service by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information is not available covering all the costs of the home help service. The following figures represent expediture on home help salaries and incidental expenses and do not include items such as the salaries of professional and clerical staff involved in providing the service.

Health and Social Services Board	*Expenditure in the Financial Year ended*				
	31 March 1980	*31 March 1981*	*31 March 1982*	*31 March 1983*	*31 March 1984*
	£	£	£	£	£
Eastern	4,771,576	5,693,287	6,637,044	7,200,508	7,349,699
Northern	1,893,389	2,232,907	2,938,992	2,843,703	3,083,577
Southern	2,187,959	2,586,826	3,003,696	3,390,658	3,689,195
Western	1,686,338	1,874,056	2,337,646	2,554,349	2,584,367

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made by the joint working group set up by the Department of Health and Social Services to review home help provision in Northern Ireland; and when the publication of its report is expected.

Mr. Chris Patten: The joint board/Department working group has completed its report which should be published by the end of February 1985.

Geriatric Care

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average cost per week of keeping an old person in geriatric care in hospitals in each of the health and social services board areas; and how this compares with each of the last eight years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The average cost per week of keeping an old person in hospitals which are wholly providing geriatric care for each of the last eight years is as follows.

Year ended 31 March	*Board*			
	Northern	*Southern*	*Western*	*Eastern*
1977	110	74	94	118
1978	120	83	104	135
1979	131	90	114	147
1980	158	113	135	179
1981	215	137	169	242
1982	235	158	211	250
1983	248	177	211	255
1984	271	188	237	269

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average duration of stay of old people in geriatric wards in hospitals in each of the health and social services board areas.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

*Average duration of stay for year ended December 1983 (days)**

Health and Social Services Board	*Numbers*
Eastern	170
Northern	204
Southern	177
Western	107

* A small number of the patients involved may have been under the age of 65.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in each of the health and social services board areas are occupying geriatric beds in hospitals; and how this compares with each of the last eight years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The available information is as follows:

Average daily number of persons occupying geriatric beds

Year	*Eastern*	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*
1976	948	450	407	351
1977	969	472	405	378
1978	1,027	476	401	390
1979	1,064	470	394	390
1980	1,070	467	398	395
1981	1,058	470	395	375
1982	*	473	373	395
1983	1,116	515	409	394

Note:
* Figures not available due to industrial action.

Old People's Homes

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are presently living in old people's homes run by voluntary and private organisations; how many of those people have been referred to these homes by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland; and how this compares with each of the last eight years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The available information is as follows:

production in response to a further defence requirement. It would not be in the national interest to give details of future production of plutonium, which will be kept at the minimum level required to meet defence needs.

Soil Survey

Mr. Lilley asked the Prime Minister if, in view of their departmental interests in the services provided by the Soil Survey of England and Wales, she will extend the joint Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Department of the Environment Committee considering its funding to include officials of the Ministry of Defence, Department of Education and Science and Welsh Office.

The Prime Minister: In my reply of 13 December at column 547, to my hon. Friend I made clear that I did not favour the idea of joint departmental funding. In the light of the decision announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on future funding by his Department, I believe the right way forward is for all potential customers, whether in the public or in the private sector, to examine their future needs and to consider whether the Soil Survey might undertake any work which is required.

Sir Ewen Broadbent (Ponting Case)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister who authorised the statement made by Sir Ewen Broadbent concerning the Ponting case on the BBC 1 o'clock news on 15 February; and whether she was consulted or in any way involved in the decision that that statement should be made.

The Prime Minister: Sir Ewen Broadbent was approached by BBC Radio 4 on the morning of 15 February with a request for an interview about his involvement in the circumstances leading up to the decision to prosecute Mr. Ponting under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. Sir Ewen Broadbent sought, and obtained, the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to his taking part in this interview. I was not consulted about, nor involved in any way, in the handling of Sir Ewen's request.

Gipsies

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the resolution, of the European Parliament (document 1-1544/83 (PE79.328/fin)) on the situation of gipsies in the community.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Government have noted the resolution referred to by the hon. Member. Present policies remain unchanged.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the reduction in manufacturing output between *(a)* 1973 and 1983 and *(b)* 1979 and 1983, together with the smallest reduction over any period of 10 years and four years, respectively, in the period 1955 to 1973.

Mr. Channon: The information on changes in manufacturing output is as follows. In the period from 1955 to 1973, there were no reductions in manufacturing output over any 10 year or four-year span.

*Changes in Manufacturing Output**

Year	*per cent.*
1973 to 1983	−15
1979 to 1983	−12

* Manufacturing is defined as divisions 2-4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980).

Home Taping

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he is taking to deal with the problem of unauthorised private recording of copyright material.

Mr. Pattie: A Green Paper, entitled "The Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material", is to be published this afternoon. The paper examines in depth the problem of unauthorised home taping of copyright material and puts forward a possible solution. It also discusses the related issues of recording of broadcasts for educational purposes and rental of pre-recorded copyright material.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further plans he has for changing the role and resources of the British Overseas Trade Board; what representations he has received on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 February 1985, c. *304*]: My right hon. Friend keeps under continual review all parts of his Department, including the BOTB. He has no present plans to change the role of the British Overseas Trade Board. The financial resources expected to be made available for the export promotion programme were included in the White Paper on public expenditure published in January 1985. The BOTB itself gave further details and made proposals for allocating its budget to individual schemes in a consultation document of 3 December 1984, which is available in the Library of the House. It has received a large response to the proposals and will take full account of the views expressed in deciding how best to use the funds available.

Regional Assistance (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the total planned reduction of £300 million in the cost of regional assistance is expected to occur in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *363-66*]: Estimates of the reduction in expenditure on regional assistance are not available in respect of individual planning regions in England.

Tourist Industry

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will broaden the definition of regional assisted areas eligible for European Economic Community

tourism assistance to include both rural development areas and the textile industry and coal and steel industry restructuring areas.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *363*]: Aid for eligible categories of tourism projects (which vary between areas) is available in all areas which receive national regional aid as defined in the regulation governing the application of the European regional development fund. In the United Kingdom this comprises all assisted areas, including the whole of Northern Ireland, certain small areas covered by the operations of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Development Board for Rural Wales, and some non-assisted areas in which ERDF non-quota schemes are in operation. As well as many rural development areas, this includes all the important coal, steel, shipbuilding and textile restructuring areas. In addition, special loan facilities are possible in coal and steel restructuring areas under arrangements made by the ECSC. Neither the ERDF regulation nor the ECSC schemes provide for a situation in which only EC tourism assistance can be made available in any area.

ENVIRONMENT

Ronan Point and Tower Blocks

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Newham, South of 23 October 1984, *Official Report*, columns 553-54, from the Minister for Housing and Construction, he will make a further statement concerning the progress made by the Building Research Establishment into Ronan Point and other Taylor-Woodrow-Anglia blocks.

Mr. Gow: The Building Research Establishment has examined reports prepared for the London borough of Newham by the Building Design partnership and Thomas Akroyd and for the Newham Tower Blocks Tenants' Association by Mr. Sam Webb. It has also made its own assessment of the structural behaviour of Ronan Point under the loads, both normal and abnormal, to which the building might be subjected. The BRE's report of its assessment will be published as soon as possible.

The BRE concludes that, although Ronan Point has since 1968 carried all the loads, including high wind loads, to which it has been subjected and that these loads have approached the maximum which it might be expected to encounter, without showing any signs of distress, the ends of the H2 joints in the flank walls of the lower storeys of the building do not provide that wide margin of safety which is generally considered acceptable for buildings of this type.

The BRE has considered the likely performance of Ronan Point under abnormal loads such as could be caused by an explosion or fire. Though explosion in any building may cause serious damage, the BRE concludes that, in view of the measures taken already to strengthen the building, the risk that an explosion could cause progressive collapse of Ronan Point, such as occurred in 1968, is remote, provided steps are taken to prevent the use of liquefied petroleum gas for heating. The BRE concludes that it is extremely unlikely that such collapse could be caused by fire.

The BRE considers that the gaps which occur at junctions between cladding panels and floor slabs are unacceptable, since they could allow the spread of fire and fumes between adjacent flats.

The BRE concludes that certain remedial works are necessary at Ronan Point.

The conclusions drawn from the assessment of Ronan Point are likely to apply in some degree to other Taylor Woodrow Anglian buildings, depending on the details of the construction in each case. Proper standards of safety should apply in all these buildings. In particular, all Taylor Woodrow Anglian buildings of 14 or more storeys in height in which H2 joints are of the same design as those in Ronan Point should be appraised to establish whether these joints provide adequate margins of safety.

All Taylor Woodrow Anglian buildings should be appraised to establish whether the joints between panels can resist the spread of fire and fumes adequately.

The BRE is ready to discuss with authorities methods of inspection and appraisal and the extent to which their conclusions apply to particular Taylor Woodrow Anglian buildings.

The Department is writing today to those authorities which own Taylor Woodrow Anglian buildings to inform them of the action which we consider necessary. Copies of the Department's letter are being placed in the Library.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in setting targets for local authorities and their grant-related expenditure, he takes account of the expenditure which those authorities which are designated under section 11 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 may face.

Mr. Macfarlane: The principles on which targets and GREs have been calculated are set out in the rate support grant report for each year. No separate account is taken of expenditure under that section.

Site Examination, Elstow

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to make, under section 24 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, a special development order for the geological examination of a site at Elstow in Bedfordshire.

Mr. Macfarlane: The special development order will cover geological investigations both for Elstow and for at least two other sites which NIREX has been asked to select for consideration along with Elstow. It will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible after NIREX has announced the other sites it wishes to investigate.

West Midlands (Industrial Land)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the amount of available industrial land in the west midlands county council area.

Mr. Macfarlane: This information is not collected by my Department. However, I understand that surveys by local authorities show that there are about 3·500 acres of vacant industrial land in the Black Country and a further 500 acres in Birmingham. Much of this land is not immediately available for development because of dereliction and other problems.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received from those wishing to develop high technology industrial sites in the midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The Department's policy on high technology development is contained in the annex to circular 16/84.

Structure Plans

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to abolish the structure plan system.

Mr. Macfarlane: No, but in Greater London and the metropolitan counties it is proposed that structure and local plans should be replaced by unitary development plans.

West Chellaston, Derby

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the inquiry into the planning application at West Chellaston, Derby.

Mr. Macfarlane: The report of the inspector who held the inquiry has been received and my right hon. Friend will issue his decision as soon as possible.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to ensure that only persons with adequate qualifications and experience are involved in making recommendations or issuing licences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Waldegrave: Existing procedures ensure that advice is obtained from suitably qualified organisations or persons before any decision to issue a licence is reached, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

General licences are issued only after consultation with the Department's statutory adviser, the Nature Conservancy Council.

Leicester (House Building)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing starts were reported by Leicester city council in each of the past five years.

Sir George Young: The numbers of housing starts reported by Leicester city council for the years 1979 to 1983 appear in issues 53, 57, 65, 66 and 70, respectively, of "Local Housing Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for January to September 1984 are in the latest issue No. 72.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from any individual local authority, or local authority association, about difficulties encountered in implementing the Housing Defects Act fully; what steps he is taking to resolve those difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gow: My Department has received a number of representations from local authorities and the local authority associations about various aspects of the implementation of the Housing Defects Act 1984 which came into force on 1 December last. As I explained in my reply of 30 January, at columns 179-80, to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) we plan to consult the local authority associations on the arrangements being made by the National House Building Council to provide for approval of methods of repair and an associated warranty scheme for prefabricated reinforced concrete houses just as soon as those arrangements are finalized.

Council House Sales

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the following information on sales of dwellings by each local authority in England up to September 1984 *(a)* the number of right-to-buy claims received since October 1980, *(b)* the number of right-to-buy claims admitted, *(c)* the number of right-to-buy sales completed, *(d)* the number of right-to-buy sales with a council mortgage, *(e)* the total number of sales, right-to-buy and voluntary, completed since April 1979, *(f)* the total number of sales of flats, right-to-buy and voluntary, completed since April 1979, *(g)* the total number of dwellings owned by each authority in April 1984 and *(h)* the total number of sales as a percentage of the total number of dwellings owned.

Mr. Gow: The information provided by local authorities and requested by my hon. Friend is contained in the table which I have placed in the Library today.

ENERGY

Newark (Oil, Gas and Coal)

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites of exploration for, and excavation of *(a)* oil, *(b)* gas and *(c)* coal in the Newark constituency.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Sites for the exploration of oil and gas are as follows. We do not differentiate between oil and gas sites before wells are drilled. Excavation of coal reserves is taking place in the Newark constituency at Bevercotes colliery and since the beginning of 1984 seven boreholes have been sunk in the constituency at the locations shown on the list. There are no NCB opencast activities in the constituency.

(a) and (b) Oil and Gas Sites

No differentiation is made between oil and gas sites before wells are drilled:

High Marnham
Claypole
Maplebeck
Caunton 1
Egmanton
Rolleston 1,2,3
Normanton 1,2,3,4
Thorpe 1
Farndon 1,2
Averham Park G1
Springwood 1
West Drayton 2
Bothamsall 1
Eakring 1
Oxton 1
Kirklington
Newark
Thorney
Farleys Wood 1,2,3,4
Caunton G1
Sutton on Trent 1,2,3
Parkhill
Upton 1,2
Kelham 1
Rolleston G1, G2
Knapthorpe G1
Winkburn G1
Kelham Hills 1
Perlethorpe
Apleyhead 1
Norwood
Hockerton 1,2
Clarborough

(c) Coal
Sites for coal are located:
2 near Rufford Colliery
2 near Bilsthorpe Colliery
1 near Thoresby Colliery
2 at Bathley, near Newark

North Sea Oil

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the average dollar price per barrel of oil from the North sea fields sold to the British National Oil Corporation in each month in 1984; and what was the price the British National Oil Corporation paid for it.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The average dollar price per barrel of oil purchase by the British National Oil Corporation under the participation agreements was $30·00 from 1 January to 17 October 1984 and $28·65 from then to the end of the year for Brent blend. (Prices for other grades were set at appropriate differentials varying between $1·00 less than Brent blend and $0·35 more than Brent blend). Prices paid for other oil, and prices received by BNOC in respect of its sales, are commercially confidential.

Cash Limits

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of any details of any changes to his Department's cash limit.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply,* 12 November 1984, c. *93*]: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit on Class IV, Vote 5 will be increased by £20 million from £142,869,000 to £162,869,000.

The increase represents provision for a further grant of £25 million to the British National Oil Corporation, the reasons for which were explained in the minute which my Department laid before the House on 13 February 1985.

The corporation's external financing requirement for 1984-85 is revised from £41 million to £66 million. There are reduced requirements amounting to £5 million elsewhere on Class IV, Vote 5. The net increase of £20 million in public expenditure will be charged to the Reserve.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Nuclear Burst

14. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate what effect a one megaton nuclear burst at a height of 300 miles would have on the equipment and resources in his care.

Sir Keith Joseph: The resulting nuclear electromagnetic pulse would damage electronic and electrical equipment.

University Funding

15. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the change in real terms in the annual university funding between 1978-79 and 1984-85.

Mr. Brooke: Recurrent grant to universities in Great Britain allocated by the University Grants Committee is estimated to have increased in 1983-84 cost terms by about 5 per cent. between the financial years 1978-79 and 1984-85, when adjusted to take account of the increases in grant to compensate for changes in the level of the undergraduate home tuition fee. The figures have not been adjusted to take account of other funding changes in this period.

Mathematics and Science Training

16. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the teaching of mathematics and science in the fourth and fifth forms of secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: We believe that mathematics and a broad and balanced course in science have an essential place in the curriculum of all pupils up to the age of 16.

Church Primary Schools (Capital Works)

17. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by what date within the next 12 months submissions must be made for consideration for inclusion in the list of church primary schools for capital works in the year 1987.

Mr. Dunn: The Department will write to all local education authorities in June inviting them to submit details of their expenditure plans for 1986-87 for county and voluntary controlled schools, and to list projects submitted by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools. Authorities will be asked to respond by late August so that the allocations for 1986-87 can be announced by the end of the year.

European Space Agency

18. **Dr. Bray** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money has now been committed from the science budget for the research programme of the European Space Agency, and in which years; whether the total science budget has been increased to accommodate the additional expenditure; and which other areas of research have been cut.

Mr. Brooke: At the Ministerial Council meeting of the European Space Agency held in January in Rome, which was attended by my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology, it was agreed that the budget of the agency's science programme would rise steadily from its 1984 level of 127 million accounting units to 162 million accounting units (at constant prices) by 1989. In 1984-85 the sum paid to the agency from the science budget, through the Science and Engineering Research Council, is estimated at £11·96 million. The size of the United Kingdom's contributions to the agency's increased science programme in 1985-86 and later years, and how those sums will be found, have yet to be determined.

Departmental Services (Privatisation)

19. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the common services in his Department contracted out to private contractors.

Sir Keith Joseph: The list is as follows:
Most office and window cleaning
Laundry

Maintenance of vehicles
Maintenance of computers and office machinery
Maintenance of buildings for which my Department is responsible
Out-of-hours security in the Darlington office
The staff restaurant in the Darlington office
Some provision of hospitality (buffet, lunches, etc.)
Provision of typists, by private agencies
Provision of telephonists for the Department's main office
Periodic use of management consultants
Computer bureaux and consultancy services
Some external training
Some graphic design work
Some work on video production
Some use of private carriers for the transit of material

In addition, the Department purchases services from other Government Departments (such as Her Majesty's Stationery Office, the Property Services Agency, and the Central Office of Information) which those Departments in turn often contract out to the private sector.

NATFHE (Discussions)

20. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next intends meeting representatives of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education to discuss the effects of the Government's expenditure plans on further and higher education.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present but he has frequently met representatives of the association in the past and is always ready to do so again.

Student Statistics

21. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students were in full-time education in October 1979 and October 1984, respectively.

Mr. Brooke: In 1983, the latest date for which information is available, there were 866,000 (full-time and sandwich) students at universities in Great Britain and further education establishments in England compared with 765,000 in 1979.

Medical Students (Grants)

22. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will review the grants to medical students.

Mr. Brooke: Grants to medical students are paid at the same rates and under the same conditions as for other mandatory award-holders. Rates of grant for the coming academic year 1985-86 will be announced as soon as practicable.

54. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of grant paid to medical students.

Mr. Brooke: Medical students' entitlement to grant is calculated in the same way as for other students. Students undertaking clinical medical training qualify for higher than average awards because of longer than standard terms.

Teachers (Pay)

23. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has recently held discussions with the teachers' representatives on the Burnham committee regarding teachers' pay and the industrial action of the teachers' unions.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. Teachers' pay is a matter for the Burnham committee and not therefore one that I normally discuss with the teachers' unions.

24. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in the negotiations on teachers' pay and conditions.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

32. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average teacher's salary at present; and how that compares, in cash terms and in real terms, with the average teacher's salary for 1978-79.

Sir Keith Joseph: The average salary (excluding allowances) of full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales at 1 April 1979 was approximately £5,400. The average at 1 April 1984 is some £9,650, an increase of about £4,250 or some 79 per cent. in cash terms. This represents an increase in real terms, measured against the rise in the retail price index over the same period, of about 9 per cent.

43. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate the latest position on the teachers' pay claim; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' pay negotiations.

50. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current position in negotiations on teachers' pay.

68. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' pay dispute.

73. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the negotiations over teachers' salaries.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Science and Engineering Graduates

25. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures have been taken to increase the supply of science and engineering graduates from polytechnics and universities.

Sir Keith Joseph: The numbers of such graduates are being increased as a result of the information technology in higher education initiative, which I announced on 16 December 1982 at columns 187-89; the change in subject emphasis following the National Advisory Body's advice on academic planning in 1984-85; and through the invitation of the University Grants Committee to universities to admit additional students in science and technology in 1984-85 and 1985-86. The case for further measures is currently under review.

Universities (Recurrent Grant)

26. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals for the recurrent grant to the universities.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's expenditure plans (Cmnd. 9428) include provision for recurrent grant in cash terms by financial years of £1,280 million for 1985-86, £1,315 million for 1986-87 and £1,348 million for 1987-88. The figure for 1985-86 is subject to parliamentary approval and those for later years to review in future public expenditure surveys in the usual way.

Teachers (Professional Standards)

27. **Mr. John M. Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to improve professional standards in the teaching service.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government's policies were set out in the March 1983 White Paper "Teaching Quality." They include improvements in initial and in-service teacher training, measures to promote a better match between qualifications and the needs of schools, and the development of appraisal of teachers' performance.

Action to improve initial teacher training has been taken through the issue of rigorous criteria for the assessment of courses and the establishment of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to review all existing courses against the criteria. A scheme of Government grants to local education authorities to stimulate in-service teacher training in designated national priority areas has been introduced. Future arrangements for in-service training are currently under review in the light of recommendations from the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers. A research project has been commissioned to explore the approaches to performance appraisal, and resources are available for 1985-86 through education support grants to finance further research and development work by selected local education authorities.

Teachers' Organisations (Discussions)

28. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met leaders of teachers' organisations; and what was discussed.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

University Tenure

29. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce his final decisions concerning university tenure.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend announced on 1 August 1984 at column 268 the Government's decision to introduce, when the parliamentary timetable allows, legislation to limit academic tenure in the form in which it is granted in some universities. Detailed proposals for legislation will be brought forward in due course.

Education (Expenditure)

30. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total expenditure on education in 1978-79 and 1984-85, both at 1984-85 prices.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information is as follows:

	£ million—1984-85 cost prices	
	1978-79	*1984-85*
Total expenditure on education	13,268	13,198

Nursery Education

31. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number and proportion of full-time places in nursery education compared to part-time places.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1984, there were 42,992 full-time pupils and 215,609 part-time pupils in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes of maintained primary schools in England. Full-time pupil numbers were just under 17 per cent. of the total.

Public Expenditure White Paper

33. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications of the White Paper on public expenditure, for primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's plans for local authority expenditure in 1985-86 and the later years allow authorities to develop and implement policies to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils of all abilities in primary and secondary schools. In particular, provided that costs are contained and savings made where feasible, the plans permit a continuing modest improvement in pupil-teacher ratios and improved levels of expenditure per pupil on books and equipment, and on repairs and maintenance. The position will vary between authorities depending on factors such as their expenditure targets and their progress in taking out of use surplus places, and redeploying resources, as school rolls fall.

Medical Research Council (Grants)

34. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the recent White Paper on public expenditure plans will affect research grants available to the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Brooke: The White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans 1985-86 to 1987-88 (Cmnd. 9428) allow for a net increase in the funding of science through the Department's science budget, above previous projections, of £11 million in 1985-86 and £8 million in each of the two subsequent years. On 10 January my right hon. Friend announced, in the light of advice from the Advisory Board for Research Councils (ABRC), that in 1985-86 the Medical Research Council (MRC) is to receive a grant-in-aid from the science budget of £122·3 million, which represents an increase of £2·1 million over the previously published planning figure for that year. The MRC's grant-in-aid in 1986-87 will be decided by my right hon. Friend in the light of further advice from the ABRC in late 1985, and that for 1987-88 a year later. It is, however, for the

MRC to decide on the distribution of its resources among the various modes of supporting research, of which research grants is one.

Science Research Budget

35. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning the adequacy of the science research budget for 1985-86.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has received about 50 letters concerning the adequacy of the science budget for 1985-86.

Misuse of Drugs

36. **Mr. Dover** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what new measures he proposes to take in schools and colleges as a contribution to the prevention of the misuse of drugs by young people.

Mr. Dunn: The Government attach great importance to combating this problem. I represent the Department on the interdepartmental ministerial group on the misuse of drugs. We have funded jointly with the Department of Health and Social Security a programme of market research to establish how a prevention campaign should be targeted. Further action is now in hand in several areas.

i. A contract is being negotiated with the National Foundation for Educational Research to undertake work to analyse and evaluate the types and level of activity by local education authorities in combating drug misuse.

ii. Further research work by the Health Education Council, in collaboration with others, for the preparation of suitable curriculum materials is being discussed.

iii. The Department is playing its part in the preparation of a training film for professionals.

A booklet of advice for teachers and others in the education service is being prepared by the Department. This will be sent to local education authorities with more general advice on how they can play their part in combating drug misuse.

Further action is under consideration.

Literacy and Numeracy

37. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what current proposals there are for the improvement of the standard of literacy and numeracy in schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's policies are designed to secure improvements in the standards achieved by pupils of all abilities across the whole of the school curriculum. In English, Her Majesty's Inspectorate's paper "English from 5 to 16" (published in October 1984) sets out, for discussion, objectives to be reached by most pupils at the ages of seven, 11 and 16. In mathematics, measures taken in the three years since the Cockcroft report was published include dissemination of the report's findings; support from September 1985, under the education support grant scheme, for additional advisers and advisory teachers in almost all LEAs; the inclusion of mathematics in the in-service training grants scheme; and sponsorship of research and development work. The introduction of the GCSE examination will encourage further improvements in both subjects.

Universities (Grant)

38. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total grant to British universities in 1979, at 1985 prices; and what it is for the current year.

Mr. Brooke: Recurrent grant to universities in Great Britain by the University Grants Committee is estimated to have increased in 1983-84 cost terms from £1,022 million in the financial year 1978-79 to £1,074 million in the financial year 1984-85, when adjusted to take account of increases in the grant to compensate for changes in the level of the undergraduate home tuition fee. The figures have not been adjusted to take account of other funding changes in this period.

Medical and Dental Students (Grants)

39. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had regarding grant levels for medical and dental students.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has received some 260 such representations since the increase of £2·80 in real terms in the extra weeks allowance payable to clinical medical and dental students and others was introduced on 1 September 1984.

Under-fives

40. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the change in the number of under five-year-olds in education, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the year group, from 1979 to date.

Mr. Dunn: The number of pupils aged under five years in maintained nursery and primary schools in England has increased from 428,640 in January 1979 to 495,018 in 1984 — an increase of 66,378. The corresponding proportions of the under-five population are 37 per cent. and 42 per cent.

Teachers (Industrial Action)

41. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the effects of the current industrial action by certain teaching unions on pupils' education.

Sir Keith Joseph: The National Union of Teachers has called on its members to refuse to supervise pupils at lunchtime, take part in any school activity out of timetabled school hours, handle school meals payments or stand in for absent colleagues. I understand that the effects of this action vary between and within local education authorities. While the disruption does not seem to have had a significant or widespread effect, I am very concerned that children's education should be subject to any interruption or uncertainty and I deplore the intention of the two largest teacher unions to cause further disruption by taking strike action from next week.

University Grants Committee

42. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met members of the University Grants Committee; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend last met the University Grants Committee on 1 November 1984 when a number of issues of current interest were discussed.

Grammar Schools

44. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he issues any guidance about the proportion of pupils who go to grammar schools to those local education authorities where selection still takes place.

Mr. Dunn: No. It is for local education authorities which retain selective secondary education to decide what criteria to adopt in considering whether pupils are suitable for admission to grammar schools. The proportion of pupils attending such schools will necessarily vary from time to time and place to place.

Open University

45. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what reduction in expenditure will be required of the Open University in the period 1984 to 1986.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has not set an amount by which the university is required to reduce its expenditure. The university set itself a savings target of £13·2 million for the period which took into account reductions in grant, its own estimates of inflation and additional costs above inflation. The reduction in grant on a comparable basis, allowing for Government estimates of inflation, was £4·7 million. The university has the freedom to increase its income through higher fees.

Student Earnings

46. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much is the maximum a student can earn during term time before his grant is reduced.

Mr. Brooke: A maximum of £400 earned during term time in respect of any year.

Iranian Students

47. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will assist Iranian students who no longer receive grant aid from their Government and who are unable to return to Iran to continue their studies.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has no funds at his disposal from which such assistance could be given.

Expenditure

48. **Mr. Michael Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the change, in real terms, of education spending per secondary school pupil and primary school pupil since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The average net expenditure per pupil, in real terms, shows an increase of 14 per cent. for primary and 11 per cent. for secondary schools during the period from 1979-80 to 1982-83, the latest year for which complete data are available.

General Teaching Council

49. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he supports the establishment of a General Teaching Council.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am aware that there is support among teachers for legislation to establish a teaching council which would enable the profession to become more self-regulating, but so far the profession itself has been divided on substantial issues concerning the functions and composition of such a body. Before I could consider supporting the establishment of a council, I would need to receive proposals from the interested parties which commanded wide agreement, and which were designed to protect the interests of the consumer as much as those of the producer.

Local Authority Expenditure

51. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications of Cmnd. 9428 for local authority capital spending on education.

Sir Keith Joseph: In the light of overspending on all services in 1983-84 there has been some reduction, as compared with previous plans, in provision for local authority capital spending on education for the years 1985-86 to 1987-88.

Present plans should allow authorities to continue with policies for the removal of surplus school places and to give continuing priority to meeting equipment needs in local authority further and higher education.

Voluntary Schools, Liverpool

52. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the provision of funds for repairs to reorganised schools in the voluntary sector in Liverpool.

Mr. Dunn: As the hon. Member is aware, my right hon. Friend regards repairs which are required to bring the newly established Roman Catholic secondary schools in Liverpool up to the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 as an integral part of the work required to implement the proposals made under section 13 of the Education Act 1980 under which the schools were established. Such works are eligible for grant aid under section 1 of the Education Act 1967 and have to be met from within the annual allocation made for approved projects undertaken by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools. An allocation of £2·08 million has been made for such projects in Liverpool in 1985-86, mostly for projects arising from Roman Catholic secondary reorganisation.

School Closures

53. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with procedures for appeal against school closures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the statutory procedures provide sufficient opportunity for the views of the proposers and of local objectors to be fully taken into account before proposals are decided. Advice

on the operation of the procedures is set out in circulars 2/80 and 2/81, and most recently in administrative memorandum 4/84.

Science Budget

55. **Mr. Batiste** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total science budget for 1984-85; and how this compares, in cash terms and real terms, with the science budget for 1978-79.

Mr. Brooke: The total science budget for 1984-85 is £550 million compared with £296 million for 1978-79. This represents an increase in cash terms of 86 per cent. or an increase in real terms of 4·5 per cent.

School Attendances

56. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with teachers' organisations about school attendances.

Mr. Dunn: None recently. But the Department intends, in the very near future, to consult the local authority and teacher associations and other interested organisations about the issue of a circular on the role of the education welfare service and improved school attendance.

Nuclear Electromagnetic Pulse

57. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to harden vulnerable equipment in his charge against the effects of nuclear electromagnetic pulse.

Sir Keith Joseph: This is a general issue which is being considered interdepartmentally.

Special Education

58. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications of Cmnd. 9428 for special education provision.

Mr. Dunn: Provided cost increases can be contained the Government's plans provide, in the great majority of authorities in aggregate, for some improvement in the special school pupil-teacher ratio in 1985-86 compared with 1982-83, and for the level of non-teaching services per pupil to be maintained at the 1982-83 level.

Primary School Teachers (Computer Skills)

59. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average length of time which teachers in primary schools have spent in training to teach computer skills.

Mr. Dunn: Under the Department of Trade and Industry's micros in primary schools scheme, each school was supplied with a microcomputer, ancillary equipment and a self study pack designed to provide some 20 hours of instruction. A school was also required to provide two teachers for one or two days' training which was carried out by the LEA. Some teachers have also received additional training from their LEAs or from the microelectronics education programme primary unit. I regret, however, that it is not possible to supply a figure for average length of training overall.

Youth Unit

60. **Mr. Gale** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps have been taken to establish the youth unit announced on 11 July 1984, *Official Report*, column 1036; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I expect to make an announcement about this soon.

Scientific Research

61. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications of Cmnd. 9428 for scientific research.

Mr. Peter Brooke: The plans set out in Cmnd. 9428 include provision for an additional £45 million over the next three years for scientific research funded through the research councils, the Royal Society, and the Fellowship of Engineering; and through the University Grants Committee. The additional resources for the research councils and so on—£11 million in 1985-86 and £8 million in each of the two following years — will primarily be used for capital equipment, restructuring and to fund more top quality research proposals from universities. The advisory board for the research councils has said that the additional funds will broadly maintain the present level of funding for the science Vote in 1985-86.

The additional resources for the universities — £4 million in 1985-86 and £7 million in each of the two following years—are to help to equip some of our most highly regarded university researchers to the highest standards.

Higher Education

62. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his Department's revisions of the estimates of student demand for places in higher education.

Mr. Brooke: Revised projections of future demand for higher education based on final data for 1983-84 were contained in the letters that my right hon. Friend sent to the chairmen of the University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Body on 30 January. Copies have been placed in the Library. The revised projections are slightly higher than variant Y in "Report on Education 100."

67. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions he has had with the University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Board with a view to closer collaboration in the planning of future higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In his published letters to the chairmen of the University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Body of 30 January my right hon. Friend has welcomed the continued development of co-operation between the two bodies and stressed its importance to the future planning of higher education.

Student Unions

63. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received about the automatic membership of students' unions.

70. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has yet made a decision on whether to make membership of student unions voluntary.

Mr. Brooke: Since I answered my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on 12 February at column 114, my right hon. Friend has continued to receive representations from hon. Members and student organisations. As I informed the House then, the Government propose to consult higher education interests about student unions. In reaching their decisions they will take into account the representations they have received.

Teachers (Appraisal System)

64. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in his proposals for an appraisal system for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) and for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson).

Secondary Education (Expenditure)

65. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current average expenditure per secondary school pupil in English local authorities; what is the lowest figure; and what is the highest.

Mr. Dunn: The average net expenditure in 1984-85 on a secondary school pupil in England is estimated to be £1,100. The range of costs is from £950 to £1,860.

Capital Expenditure (Leicestershire)

66. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will reconsider the education element of the 1985-86 prescribed capital expenditure to Leicestershire.

Sir Keith Joseph: As I informed Parliament on 10 January at column 526 in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), I have retained a small reserve largely against the possibility of any local education authority being able to demonstrate that the reduction of the prescribed proportion of capital receipts will make it impossible to fulfil contractual or statutory obligations. It is open to Leicestershire to send me its case for assistance from this reserve.

Polytechnic Students

69. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the change in the number of polytechnic students over the last five years; and what are the forecast numbers for the next five years.

Mr. Brooke: The total number of students in polytechnics in England and in each of the last five years was as follows:

Year November	*Number*
1979	199,500
1980	202,100
1981	213,600
1982	220,800
1983	231,900
1984*	237,800

* Provisional.

The national advisory body for public sector higher education has set targets for 1985-86 for advanced work only, which imply a 3·3 per cent. increase in full-time equivalent student numbers in polytechnics compared to 1984-85. Plans for subsequent years have yet to be determined.

Adult Education

71. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current level of provision of adult education classes.

Mr. Brooke: In November 1983, course enrolments at local authority adult education and youth centres totalled 1,628,000; and there were 276,500 enrolments for courses provided by responsible bodies (university extra-mural departments and WEA districts) during the academic year 1982-83.

Universities and Polytechnics

72. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are now in universities and polytechnics; and how this figure compares with that for 1979.

Mr. Brooke: In 1983, the latest date for which information is available, there were 558,000 full-time and part-time students at universities in Great Britain and polytechnics in England compared with 522,000 in 1979. These figures exclude the Open University and the university of Buckingham which do not come under the University Grants Committee.

School Meals

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils have received free school meals in each of the past six years; and what proportion of the total school population these figures represent.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 30 January 1985, at column 191.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Cautioning Practices

Mr. Mark Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to bring about greater consistency in police cautioning practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In June 1984 my right hon. and learned Friend published a consultative document "Cautioning by the Police". This document contained a report of a working group of chief officers of police and Home Office officials; a draft circular and guidelines to

Family Income

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will update the answers to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) of 6 February 1984, *Official Report*, columns *439-42* and 15 February 1984, *Official Report*, columns *203-4*, concerning income statistics, to show net earnings at the lowest decile, median and highest decile of the earnings distribution for each year since 1978 for different household types, using constant April 1984 prices; and whether he will also give the same information for the following additional household types: *(a)* a married couple with two children, where one partner works full-time and the other part-time and *(b)* a married couple with both partners in full-time work;

(2) if he will publish an index in the same manner as his answer of 5 April 1984, *Official Report*, columns *631-32*, about taxation changes and the related earlier answer, for tax changes for each group from 1978-79 onwards, and in the case of a married couple, where both partners are working, giving the information at multiples of one half, one third, one, five and 10 times the average earnings.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

EC (Budget Contributions)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money was required from each of the 10 member countries of the European Economic Community arising from the intergovernmental agreement to top up the EEC budget for 1984; which of the 10 countries have completed these payments; whether a similar intergovernmental agreement is expected for 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: The contributions of each member state are set out in Cmnd. 9395, Treaty Series No. 80(1984). All member states have now paid their agreed contributions. Council discussions are continuing about the best way of financing Community expenditure in 1985.

EC (Own Resources Payments)

Mr. Tracey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about an advance of own resources payments to the European Communities in February.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Commission has, in accordance with article 10(2) of Council Regulation 2891/77, invited member states to advance from 20 March to 20 February payments of own resources other than VAT in respect of agricultural, sugar and isoglucose levies and customs duties collected by the Government on their behalf in January. The Government are complying with this request.

The advance will reduce the Commission's current cash flow difficulties and enable the Commission to meet its commitments for payment, including those to United Kingdom recipients.

Pending Parliamentary approval of a spring supplementary estimate, payment of £125 million will be made by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund. The payment of levies and duties on 20 March 1985 which is made directly from the consolidated fund under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972 will be reduced by the amount of the advance. Forecast public expenditure is not therefore affected.

Customs Staff and Posts

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of customs staff at seaports, airports and inland premises in Scotland in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. 292]: The information required for other than the last two financial years ending 31 March 1985, is not recorded separately. Moreover there have been numerous changes both in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom customs administration during the period in question. The figures appearing below for the first three years listed have been derived from applying percentages, which are kept historically, to the total customs staff at seaports, airports and inland premises in the United Kingdom. The last two years show the approved complement.

Year ending 31 March	*Staff*
1981	496
1982	480
1983	470
1984	439
1985	440

Child Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what level per week child benefit could be raised if both *(a)* it were taxed and the proceeds of taxation were allocated to raising its level and *(b)* the married man's tax allowance were reduced to the rate of a single man's for men below retirement age and the savings allocated to raising the levels of child benefit.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1985, c. 592]: If the changes had applied in 1984-85, and on the assumption that the wife's earned income allowance could not be set against child benefit if it was brought into tax, the increase in child benefit would have been about £10 per week. It has been assumed that scale rates of supplementary benefit for dependent children would also have been increased by a similar amount.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 February 1985

PRIME MINISTER

Higher Education

Q45. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Prime Minister when she expects the age participation rate for higher education to reach 22 per cent.

The Prime Minister: The number of students currently in higher education is an all-time record. Future projected demand based on final data for 1983-84 implies an age participation index rising to 15·5 per cent. in 1997, compared with 13·5 per cent. in 1983-84 and 12·6 per cent. in 1979-80. The public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) reaffirms the Government's objective of maintaining access to higher education for those who want it and are suitably qualified.

Limited List Prescribing

Q56. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister how many direct representations she has received concerning the Government's proposals to limit the drugs which doctors may prescribe on the National Health Service.

The Prime Minister: I have received about 600 such representations.

British Airways

Q73. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Prime Minister if she will consider deferring the Government's decision to privatise British Airways for at least two years; if she will invite Lord King to remain as chairman and Mr. Colin Marshall to remain as chief executive; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It remains the Government's policy to privatise British Airways as soon as practicable in the next financial year. The Government have every confidence in the present chairman and chief executive, and both their appointments cover this period.

Essendon

Q100. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay a visit to the parish of Essendon.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Damascus

Q101. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will seek to make an official visit to Damascus.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Skeet asked the Prime Minister whether she proposes to transfer responsibility for the Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate from the Health and Safety Executive to the Department of the Environment; and how many representations have been received on this issue.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so. A number of representations on this issue have been received recently by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment, Environment and for Wales; and by the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission.

Engagements

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 19 February.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

Mr. Leigh: asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the TUC. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be leaving for Washington this afternoon.

Local Authority Finance (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister how much money in cash terms the Government have made available to each local authority within the Greater Manchester county area in each year since 1979.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 28 January 1985, at columns 26-34.

Public Expenditure (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to assess the impact of Government spending in Greater Manchester since 1979 on the quality of life of people who live there.

The Prime Minister: The impact and level of Government spending is kept under constant review.

Plutonium Production

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister (1) pursuant to her answer of 15 February, if there has been a change in Her Majesty's Government's policy on the gradual termination of the production of plutonium for military purposes since the statement made by the then Prime Minister Lord Home of the Hirsel as he is now is, on 21 April 1964, *Official Report*, column 1098;

(2) when she expects the production of plutonium for military purposes to be terminated finally as envisaged by the then Prime Minister on 21 April 1964, *Official Report*, column 1098.

The Prime Minister: There has been no change in Her Majesty's Government's policy on the production of plutonium for defence purposes, which is that it is kept at the minimum required to meet defence needs.

Defence plutonium production was stopped for a period subsequent to the then Prime Minister's statement on 21 April 1964 and following the fulfilment of defence requirements. There has been one subsequent period of

	United States of America £	Japan £
30 per cent.		
Single person	16,930	20,690 (29·7)
Married couple	23,750	20,690 (29·7)
Married couple with two dependent children	25,535	22,790 (29·7)
50 per cent.		
Single person	31,620 (49)	54,090 (52·25)
Married couple	47,930 (49)	55,290 (55·25)
Married couple with two dependent children	47,930 (49)	57,700 (52·25)

European Community (Budget Rebates)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the projects, and the money spent on them, arising from the payment of the United Kingdom European Economic Community budget rebate in 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The refunds paid out of the 1983 and 1984 Community budgets related to the United Kingdom's excessive contributions to the Community in 1982 and 1983 respectively. They supported the following projects:

1. 1983 Community Budget—Supplementary Measures for the United Kingdom: Regulations 624/83

£ million

Sub-programme	North	North West	South West	Yorkshire and Humberside	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total
Roads	5·9	16·4	6·4	8·3	24·9	33·0	9·3	104·2
Rail	6·5	6·7	0·6	10·0	11·1	2·3	0·9	38·1
Water and sewerage	11·7	19·1	3·9	14·0	—	7·4	5·5	61·6
Telecommunications	29·3	65·8	5·1	49·8	58·4	31·9	23·5	263·8
Housing	—	—	—	—	—	—	44·2	44·2
Total	53·4	108·0	16·0	82·1	94·4	74·6	83·4	511·9

2. 1983 Community Budget—Special Measures for Energy Strategy Regulations 625/83

	£ million
Heysham I power station	8·3
Heysham II power station	44·0
Torness power station	38·6
Hartlepool power station	7·3
Dungeness power station	6·2
Drax power station	112·2
Cross-channel electricity interconnector	24·4
Dinorwig power station	6·6
Fort Dunlop combined heat and power station	1·2
Morecambe gas terminal	20·4
St. Fergus gas terminal	0·4
Rough gas terminal	12·8
Hornsea gas storage facility	1·8
Dungeness gas storage facility	2·8
Nantgawr gas storage facility	2·9
Avonmouth III gas storage facility	2·4
Isle of Grain gas storage facility	3·4

3. 1984 Community Budget—Special Measures for Employment: Regulation 1988/84

	£ million
UK Job release schemes	163·0

4. 1984 Community Budget—Special Measures for Transport Infrastructure: Regulation 1989/84

	£ million
Rail	
Victoria–rail/air link	0·5
East Croydon–signalling	17·7
Balham–signalling	4·5
Roads—England	
A12—Copdock-Washbrook	4·2
M25—London orbital motorway	
Dartford tunnel approaches	1·1
A10–M11 junction	19·9
M4 Heathrow spur	21·7
Swanley links	4·3
Chertsey–Wisley	9·3
Leatherhead	8·8
Wisley–Leatherhead	8·8
A13–A12 junction	2·6
M11–A12 junction	3·4
M27—Chilworth	13·2
M5—Tiverton	4·7
A38—Tamar bridge	10·8
A41—Newport bypass	2·1
A47—Yarmouth bypass	4·5
A47—Wisbech bypass	3·7
A63—Hull docks road	6·6
M3—Popham–Bar End	7·7
M42—Bromsgrove	20·5
M65—Whitebirk	8·8
A45—Ipswich bypass	2·0
A11—Attleborough	1·9
Roads—Scotland	
M74—Draffan–Millbank	3·8
A94—Lawrance Kirk	10·2
Roads—Wales	
A5/55—Harwarden bypass	7·7
—Colwyn bypass	28·9
—Bagnor bypass	7·2
M4—Baglan–Lonlas	3·1
A470—Abercynon	13·8
A40—Camarthen	5·0

5. 1984 Community Budget—Special Measures for Energy: Regulation 1890/84

	£ million
Projects—England	
Grimethorpe coal gasification	1·8
Offshore technology	2·6
Richborough windmill	0·2
Power station improvements	9·7
Cross Channel electricity interconnector	41·1
Fort Dunlop combined heat and power station	2·1
Drax coal fired power station	41·7
Morecambe bay gas terminal	8·0
Rough gas terminal	6·0
Heysham II nuclear power station	33·4
Projects—Scotland	
Longannet power station	0·7
Westfield coal gasification	2·5
Hunterson B nuclear power station	0·02
Projects—Wales	
Dinorwig pumped storage power station	1·1

Tax Inspectors

Mrs. Peacock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the fall in the number of tax inspectors due to voluntary resignations.

Mr. Moore: The number of tax inspectors who left the Inland Revenue due to voluntary resignation in 1984 and in recent years was as follows:

	1984	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*
Fully-trained inspectors	61	22	20	18
Trainee inspectors	26	16	14	11
Other inspector grades	52	20	16	21
Total	139	58	50	50

The total number of inspectors of taxes at 31 December 1984 was 6,421 compared with 6,343 at 31 December 1983.

National Insurance Surcharge

Mr. Richard Wainwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer approximately how many additional jobs are estimated to have resulted from the abolition of national insurance surcharge to the nearest convenient date.

Mr. Moore: No such estimate can sensibly be made. But the abolition of NIS, and the other business tax changes in the last Budget, lessen discrimination against the employment of labour, and so are bound to be helpful to jobs.

Value Added Tax

Mrs. Peacock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many claims by do-it-yourself housebuilders for refunds of value added tax under the provisions of Customs and Excise notice No. 719 were met in whole or in part during the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of claims by do-it-yourself builders for refund of value added tax paid in the years specified were:

	Number
1982	7,519
1983	7,712
1984	8,743

Investment Income

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the loss of tax revenue if the investment income of husband and wife were taxed independently is attributable to persons over retirement age.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Silvester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of creating a personal tax allowance at current levels for wives drawing a retirement pension based on their husbands' contributions.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Construction Industry

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he will not meet the group of eight representing the construction industry.

Mr. Lawson: While I recognise the group of eight's concern about the level of public expenditure on construction, I believe the group's main channel of communication with the Government should be through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction. I understand that the Secretary of State for the Environment will be meeting representatives of the group of eight on 25 February. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury will also be present.

Inland Revenue (Staffing)

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contingency instructions his Department has given for essential staffing levels in Inland Revenue offices in the event of an emergency leading to the need to introduce power cuts.

Mr. Moore: In an emergency, departmental standing instructions require all officers in charge to designate certain staff as essential consistent with the aim of trying to maintain the flow of money to the Exchequer and a service to the public. As a general rule, not more than 20 per cent. of staff should be so designated. Adequate levels of emergency heating and lighting for essential staff are provided by the Property Services Agency.

Personal Taxation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer given on 10 December 1984, *Official Report*, columns *372-4*, concerning changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions, if he will publish a similar index for the same household type at an increased level of half the average earnings.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Norfolk Broads

Mr. Weetch asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Offical Report* details of the statutory powers under which he has agreed to provide half of the cost of the experimental livestock support scheme for the Norfolk Broads, as outlined by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 30 January, *Official Report*, column 179.

Mr. Jopling: Parliamentary approval will be sought in the 1985-86 Supply Estimates for provision of £220,000 to cover my Department's contribution to this experimental scheme. Provision will be sought under the sole authority of part I of the Estimates and of the confirming Appropriation Act, and no payment will be made until the Act has been passed.

Pesticides

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidance he issues on the use of pesticides in the public health and industrial field for the control of food poisoning organisms, microbial contamination and the transmission of pathogenic organisms.

Mrs. Fenner: The distribution and use of pesticides in the public health and industrial fields is regulated at present by the non-statutory pesticides safety precaution scheme in the same way as agricultural pesticides. Recommendations for safe use on each product are agreed by nine Government Departments and agencies acting together, including the Agricultural and Health Departments, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in view of the identical nature of some of the active ingredients used in pesticides and in animal health products sold or supplied under the Medicines (Exemptions from Restrictions on the Retail Sale or Supply of Veterinary Drugs) Order 1984 (S.I., 1984, No. 1861), where he approves or co-operates with a scheme for the listing of both premises and of qualified personnel, he now intends to introduce similar measures under the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*.

Mrs. Fenner: The Food and Environment Protection Bill, if enacted, will be implemented through regulations. The Government have, in the drafting of clauses 15(2)*(d)* and *(e)*, provided powers to impose conditions on a wide range of activities in the pesticides sector including sale or supply. Interested parties will be consulted on the scope and content of these regulations at the appropriate time.

EC (Food Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much European Economic Community surplus food and grain was shipped to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other Eastern bloc countries in each month of the last five years.

Mr. MacGregor: Prior to 1984, data on Community trade for individual months are not readily available in the detail necessary to provide the information requested. Monthly figures are available for the first three months of 1984 and these are as follows:

1984 ('000 tonnes)

	European Community Exports to Soviet Union			*European Community Exports to Eastern Europe (including USSR)*		
	January	*February*	*March*	*January*	*February*	*March*
Wheat	348	385	375	527	621	538
Barley	0	..	..	..	..	1
Wheat flour	12	40	61	12	40	61
Rice	..	0	..	3	..	1
Malt	1	..	0	1	..	..
Whole milk powder	0	0	0	..	..	..
Skimmed milk powder	0	0	0	..	..	..
Condensed milk	..	..	0	..	..	..
Butter	8	0	6	8	..	6
Beef	11	5	14	13	9	21
Pigmeat	..	0	..	1	1	..
Poultrymeat	..	0	..	1	..	..
Refined sugar	116	61	46	116	61	46
Wine	16	..	7	17	3	9

Source: Eurostat SIENA.
.. denotes less than 500 tonnes.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total quantity of grain currently in intervention stores *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the rest of the European Community; and what is the cost to United Kingdom taxpayers of each of those stocks.

Mr. MacGregor: A note giving the most recent figures on the level of stocks of cereals and other agricultural products held in intervention in the United Kingdom and in the Community as a whole was deposited in the Library on 13 February. The cost to the United Kingdom taxpayer of the stocks of cereals currently held in intervention cannot be assessed because it depends on how long those stocks remain in store and at what prices they are sold.

Milk Quotas (Outgoers Scheme)

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many producers have now decided to go out of production under the milk outgoers scheme; and whether more are to be invited to join the scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: By 15 February, 1,297 producers in England and Wales had undertaken to surrender 166·5 million litres of quota in a full year. Last week we sent further invitations to another 290 producers with up to 500,000 litres each. As individual producers take their decisions about whether or not to go out of production we may need to replace those who drop out. In preparation for this we are now writing to all those larger producers who have not yet been invited to join the scheme, to ask them to indicate definitely whether they still wish to join. By the end of March all those with a continued interest in the scheme will be given a firm indication as to whether or not they can surrender their quota as outgoers.

TRANSPORT

Driving Tests

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the current waiting time for driving test applications before receiving their test in *(a)* each English region, *(b)* nationally, *(c)* west Yorkshire and *(d)* the Huddersfield area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker The information for the 18 January, the latest date for which full information is available, is as follows:

	"L" Test Waiting Period (Weeks)
(a) Traffic Area	
North Eastern (Newcastle)	6½
North Eastern (Leeds)	18½
North Western	9½
West Midlands	15½
Eastern (Nottingham)	12
Eastern (Cambridge)	14
South Wales	12¼
Western	11¾
South Eastern	14½
Scotland	11½
Metropolitan London	20½
(b) National	15
(c) West Yorkshire	21
(d) Huddersfield Driving Test Centre	18

I am concerned about the length of waiting periods generally. The backlog of test appointments has arisen mainly because of a much higher than forecast demand for tests coupled with a temporary shortage of examiners. Additional examiners have already been trained, and more are being recruited in order to reduced delays.

Road Passenger Services

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has received on his policy relating to the organisation of road passenger services.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since my answer to the hon. Member on 1 February, at column 339, I have received several hundred further letters, many of them based on a complete misinterpretation of the Government's proposals.

British Rail (Customer Communication)

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of the British Railways Board, he will raise the standard of the Board's communications with its customers.

Mr. David Mitchell: If my hon. Friend has a specific point of concern about the Railway Board's communications with its customers I will be glad to draw it to the attention of the chairman.

Aerial Spraying

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends meeting representatives of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the further regulation of aerial spraying companies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall be meeting the chairman of the authority shortly to discuss a number of matters, including aerial crop-spraying. My Department has been fully involved in the authority's review of the procedure which operators must follow, and the authority intends to bring into force strengthened and more precise rules before the beginning of this year's crop spraying season. My Department will closely monitor the impact of these measures.

Bitumen (Costs)

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications of the higher sterling price of bitumen on the ability of his Department to carry out on schedule and within budget trunk road projects.

Mrs. Chalker: The price of bitumen is only one among many factors which influence the overall cost of trunk roads. To date, however, tender prices have remained very competitive and do not prejudice our ability to carry out projects on time and within the cash limit. Indeed, at 1 February, 40 per cent. of our major contracts were running ahead of schedule.

M20 (Hollingbourne to Ashford)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the total amount spent on design, testing, preparation and soon of the M20 motorway Hollingbourne to Ashford section to date.

Mrs. Chalker: Following are the costs to date:

	£
Design fees	752,000
Surveys and testing	294,000
Side road strengthening	113,000
Other expenses	12,000
	1,171,000

Staff and other costs in the period up to 1980 when detailed design was undertaken by the Department's Kent sub-unit are not available.

M11 (Fog)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a study of the M11 to identify any stretches of that motorway liable to fog.

Mrs. Chalker: I am having a survey carried out of all motorways in service, including the M11, to identify stretches which are prone to fog.

Transport and Road Research Laboratory (Reports)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of places where Transport and Road Research Laboratory reports are available for public reference.

Mrs. Chalker: Transport and Road Research Laboratory reports are available for public reference in the four national libraries:

The British Library
The National Library of Scotland
The National Library of Wales
The Bodleian Library

They are also available from the central library of the Department of Transport and from the library of the laboratory to bona fide enquirers.

The laboratory's reports have also been supplied widely to university, professional, local authority, industrial and some public libraries throughout this country and overseas.

M25 (Land Purchase)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much was paid by his Department for land at the M25/M1/A405 interchange; and how many acres are now available for sale.

Mrs. Chalker: The purchase price is a matter between the vendor and the Department. Approximately 42 acres of Department-owned land are now available for sale.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chile

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out in the *Official Report*, chronologically, the timings and substance of negotiations with Chile about the sales of goods to Chile, since April 1982.

Mr. Renton: Negotiations by the private sector over the sales of goods to Chile are a matter for the individual firms concerned. It has not been the practice of this or previous administrations to make public the details of negotiations over the sales of goods by the Government.

Sellafield (Nuclear Safeguards Inspectors)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has received any representations either from British citizens or Ministers of foreign Governments on the barring of nuclear safeguards inspectors from the Magnox reprocessing line at Sellafield by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Luce: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has received no such representations. However, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy said in answer to the hon. Gentleman's question to him on 18 February, at column 353, discussions on the implementation of safeguards at Sellafield are under way.

Arms Reduction Talks (Vienna)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the 34th session of the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna; and what is the latest position in these negotiations.

Mr. Luce: There is no significant progress to report from the 34th round of the mutual and balanced force reductions talks in Vienna. Unfortunately the East continues to reject all Western efforts to resolve differences between the sides over the existing level of Eastern forces. We shall of course study carefully the East's 14 February proposal. But at first sight it seems to amount to little more than a repackaging of part of its 1983 proposals.

UN Decade for Women

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will appoint the British delegation to the United Nations end of Decade for Women's conference; and what criteria he will use in selecting the members of the United Kingdom's delegation to the conference.

Mr. Renton: We hope to announce the composition of our delegation shortly. But the delegation will include people familiar with the ground to be covered at the conference and the views of interested British organisations. The delegation will be well able to represent the views expressed by such organisations.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ensure that the membership of the British delegation to the United Nations end of Decade for Women's conference reflects fully the interests of British women.

Mr. Renton: We intend to include in our delegation a number of people familiar with the views of a wide range of interested organisations and individuals. We have also made arrangements whereby interested organisations and individuals can put their views to the Government so that these views can be taken into account in the preparations for the conference.

Women (Elimination of Discrimination)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will make an announcement on the United Kingdom's ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 17 January at column 209-10, we are still considering this convention in the light of our existing legislation and hope to be in a position to make an announcement about ratification soon.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reviews have been undertaken by his Department on the separation of employment offices from benefit offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: These arrangements are primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and no specific review has been undertaken in this Department. However, the joint Department of Employment and Department of Health and Social Security study of "Payment of Benefits to Unemployed People" (of which the report was published in 1981) looked, inter alia, at the results of the separation of employment and benefit services, found that they had been generally satisfactory, and made no proposals for change in this respect.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any products on his proposed limited list will fall into the category of having licence of right.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. About half the medicines in the proposed list have product licences of right. These are mainly vitamins, antacids and antitussives: all well-established and widely used remedies. As part of our Department's review programme, these will be subject to review under the Medicines Act in the next few years. However, the great majority of analgesics, sedatives and tranquillisers on the list have already been reviewed and now have full product licences.

The proposed list must of course be regarded only as a basis for consultation. We are currently considering the composition of the final list and expect to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made in considering his proposals for a draft limited list of the extent to which clinically similar generic products can vary widely in size, shape and colour.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 5 February at column *525*.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to allow general retailers in remote areas to sell medicines not included in the limited list to be introduced in April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Under the Medicines Act 1968, medicines not on a general sale list are allowed to be sold only in pharmacies, under the professional supervision of a pharmacist, and this restriction must be maintained in order to protect the consumer. Medicines which are on a general sale list will be obtainable from general retailers.

General Manager (Swindon)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be able to make an announcement of the appointment of a general manager for the Swindon district health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The responsibility for such announcements lies with individual district health authorities. Regional health authorities are, however, required to let me have their recommendations on district health authority proposals and to take account of my views before decisions are taken and announcements made.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as he has on the level of provision by national health services in other industrialised countries of assistance with the provision of hearing aids; and how this compares with provision in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: Information on the provision of hearing aids in other countries is not held in the Department but I understand that some information is given from time to time in the *Hearing Aid Journal*, copies of which are held in the library of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf. In this country hearing aids provided under the National Health Service are issued on free loan and expenditure on the standard range in England totalled £10·5 million in the financial year 1983-84.

Hay Fever Vaccine

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the current price being paid by the National Health Service for a set of three vials of graded strength, together with a supply of disposable syringes and needles, for the hay fever vaccine, details of which have been supplied to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South;

(2) if, in considering payment for the hay fever vaccine, details of which have been sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent South, under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme full account is taken of a 20 per cent. discount offered to dispensing doctors and the cost of special sessions organised by general practitioners at which representatives of the manufacturers give injections.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The current National Health Service list price is £27·95. Our officials will shortly discuss with the company concerned the treatment under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme of the alleged 20 per cent. discount and the cost of the special sessions.

Barking Hospital

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will call for and publish a report from the Redbridge district health authority on the strike of domestic staff at Barking hospital; and if he will instruct the authority to seek to refer the matters to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Redbridge health authority has already received and discussed at its public meetings innumerable oral and written reports on the dispute at Barking hospital over the past year. We see no need to call for an additional report on the dispute. I understand that the health authority has already sought and obtained the assistance of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service on a number of occasions.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of persons referred to each of his Department's 23 resettlement units during *(a)* the four-week period ended 18 December 1984 and *(b)* the four-week period ended 13 March 1984 from each of the following sources: (i) hospitals, (ii) local authorities, (iii) police/probation services, (iv) voluntary organisations, (v) other resettlement units, (vi) his Department's local offices and (vii) self referrals.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of people referred to the Department's 23 resettlement units from the sources shown during the four week periods up to 18 December 1984 and 13 March 1984 are given in the table.

Four weeks ended 18 December 1984

	Hospitals	*Local authorities*	*Police/ probation services*	*Voluntary organisations*	*Other resettlement units*	*DHSS local offices*	*Self-referrals*
Alvaston	—	—	2	3	—	2	50
Brighton	2	1	4	2	1	5	376
Crown Quay Lodge	2	1	9	3	2	2	62
Fazakerley	3	3	2	11	1	1	60
Glasgow	2	8	1	9	—	3	21
Leeds	1	—	15	25	1	1	98
Leicester	4	—	3	13	—	—	54
Newbury	1	—	5	1	—	5	100
Plawsworth	—	1	27	1	—	2	42
Southampton	—	—	2	6	1	1	128
South Wales	—	1	9	—	—	2	46
Walkden	7	12	14	7	—	—	46
West Midlands	1	—	2	31	—	1	80
Winterbourne	3	—	3	7	1	2	160
Woodhouse	2	2	5	2	1	1	79
Bridge House	4	—	—	1	36	—	2
Camberwell	3	2	6	6	1	23	1,867
Camden	5	3	3	22	1	7	24
Cedars Lodge	11	6	2	—	34	—	—
Lancelot Andrewes House	1	3	15	44	2	100	845
Pound Lodge	2	5	9	30	1	—	88
Spur House	—	1	—	—	62	—	—
West End House	2	8	7	42	1	25	1,035

Four weeks ended 13 March 1984

	Hospitals	*Local authorities*	*Police/ probation services*	*Voluntary organisations*	*Other resettlement units*	*DHSS local offices*	*Self-referrals*
Alvaston	—	—	1	—	—	—	44
Brighton	3	2	14	7	6	3	417
Crown Quay Lodge	2	2	8	2	2	4	75
Fazakerley	—	3	3	5	—	—	30
Glasgow	1	9	1	9	—	3	44
Leeds	4	3	14	16	1	5	111
Leicester	5	—	1	4	—	—	54
Newbury	2	2	7	1	—	—	123
Plawsworth	—	4	22	3	1	3	45
Southampton	—	—	5	10	5	7	174
South Wales	2	1	7	—	—	3	66
Walkden	3	3	4	11	—	—	59
West Midlands	4	—	5	23	1	3	80
Winterbourne	—	—	4	9	1	5	161
Woodhouse	—	—	10	3	—	1	82
Bridge House	1	—	—	—	39	—	—
Camberwell	10	9	14	8	7	25	2,237
Camden	2	4	8	31	—	6	25
Cedars Lodge	—	—	—	—	49	—	—
Lancelot Andrewes House	—	—	—	—	13	—	—
Pound Lodge	—	2	13	55	5	4	81
Spur House	—	—	—	—	36	—	—
West End House	—	5	8	38	2	19	1,437

Supplementary Benefit (Awards)

Mr. Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show the total sum of money paid out in supplementary benefit awards to claimants at his Department's offices serving the Heywood and Middleton area for the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not available.

Pensioners

Mr. Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he publish in the *Official Report* a table to show the number of pensioners living in the area served by the Middleton district office of his Department who are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit and those who received benefit in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The figures for pensioners receiving supplementary benefit from the Middleton local office are as follows:

Year of December	*Number*
1984	3,075
1983	3,062
1982	3,385
1981	3,301
1980	3,278
1979	3,266

Sick Babies (Transfer)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time for transferring sick babies, including newly born, to specialist hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The requested information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Glyn Risely

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now reply to the letter sent to him on 17 November 1984 by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) regarding Mr. Glyn Risely, 56 Summerland Lane, Caswell, Swansea, a constituent of the hon. Member for Gower.

Mr. Whitney: I replied to the hon. Member on 12 December. I am sending him a copy of my reply.

Drugs (Safety)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps the Committee on the Safety of Medicine takes to ensure that all test data is reviewed before clearance of a drug.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chiselhurst (Mr. Sims) on 29 January at column *161-62*.

Brain-damaged Patients (Rehabilitation)

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take to meet the demand for rehabilitation of people who have survived brain injury due to the application of high technology medicine.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The needs of these patients are not easy to determine in terms either of their numbers or of the combination of rehabilitative services which they require. We are currently considering what steps might be taken to encourage health authorities to improve where necessary their services for brain-damaged patients who often present particular behaviour and other problems.

Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he approves of the proposed reduction in the service offered at Rivermead rehabilitation centre from 30 to 20 beds.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Oxford regional health authority's proposals for the future size and location of the Rivermead rehabilitation centre are shortly to be put to full and formal consultation. It would not be right to prejudge the matter in advance of that consultation.

NHS Property (Security)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North on 28 November 1984, *Official Report*, column 523, what is the total cost of all those measures taken to improve security of National Health Service property; and what is *(a)* the number of persons engaged in each of these initiatives and *(b)* the number of extra personnel recruited to carry out these examinations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are not able to identify specifically the manpower used and the costs incurred by our Department and by the health authorities on these initiatives.

Hexafluorosilic Acid

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if hexafluorosilic acid has ever been submitted to the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

AIDS

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures are currently taken to ensure appropriate staffing, both for treatment and counselling, at haemophilia treatment centres, in the light of the current situation regarding acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The staffing levels of haemophilia treatment centres are a matter for individual health authorities to determine in the light of their other priorities. We are urgently considering what advice to give to health authorities concerning AIDS-related counselling including the needs of haemophiliacs.

Factor VIII

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies the National Blood Tranfusion Service has undertaken into the economics of self-sufficiency in factor VIII; and if the results are to be published.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We decided in 1982 that this country should become self-sufficient in blood products. This will eliminate the health risks attached to the use of imported commercial products derived from blood provided by paid donors.

In order to achieve self sufficiency in England and Wales it was decided to redevelop the Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree. An economic appraisal of this

project demonstrated that this policy would be cost effective. This appraisal was prepared for internal purposes and is not in a form which others would find helpful without the addition of further explanatory and background material.

Doctors (Dispensing)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the total income received by general practices in the United Kingdom from the dispensing of National Health Service prescriptions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 February 1985, c. *318*.]: Information is not available for the United Kingdom. In 1983-84 for the supply of drugs and appliances in Great Britain the gross income from the taxpayer (excluding the cost of drugs) received by general medical practitioners was £21,247,000 of which £20,173,000 was received by dispensing doctors. Additional income was received by doctors from the varying levels of discount on the drug cost offered to them by wholesalers and manufacturers.

SCOTLAND

Rate Support Grant (West Lothian)

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of representations he has received on the rate support grant to West Lothian.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend has received 65 letters and about 1,200 printed postcards provided for residents by West Lothian district council.

Salmon Fishing

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with procedures for the quinquennial reassessment of rates for rod salmon fishing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The fixing of new valuations with effect from 1 April for salmon fishings, as for other rateable subjects, is the responsibility of the assessor for each area. Assessors have to take account of statutory provisions; if any person is dissatisfied with his valuation he will, of course, have the opportunity to appeal against it to the local valuation appeal committee. I understand that the assessors' arrangements are well in hand.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any powers for directing regional water authorities' spending of additional income derived from the increase of rates for rod salmon fishing.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend has no such powers.

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Younger: Arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the code are already in hand in my Department, following the publication on 8 February 1984 of the programme of action on women in the Civil Service.

Fluoridation

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has received from the Chief Medical Officer and from the medical and dental professions about the addition of fluoride to water.

Mr. John MacKay: There is a well-established convention that Ministers do not disclose the advice which they receive from their officials. It has, however, been the firm policy of successive Governments for over two decades that the fluoridation of the public water supply is a safe and effective means of promoting good dental health; and this policy has had the strong support of all the main medical and dental professional organisations.

Home Loans

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the amount of home loans granted by housing authorities in Scotland to public sector tenants in each of the past years for which figures are available since 1981.

Mr. Ancram: The table shows the amount of loans granted to private persons for the purchase, or purchase and improvement, of public sector houses. The fall in the amounts over the years quoted reflects the increasing proportion of public sector house purchase financed by private sector mortgages.

Amount of loans granted

£ million

Financial year	*Local authorities*	*New Towns**	*SSHA**
1981-82	10·97	11·88	7·26
1982-83	10·82	2·43	2·50
1983-84	6·35	4·14	0·39

* Purchase only.

Returns have not been received from Western Isles, Clydebank and West Lothian for 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84; Annandale and Eskdale for 1981-82, 1983-84 Tweeddale, Falkirk, Stirling and Bearsden and Milngavie for 1982-83, 1983-84; Inverness and Dumbarton for 1981-82; Strathkelvin for 1982-83; and North East Fife, Gordon, Badenoch and Strathspey, and Dundee for 1983-84.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the amount of arrears outstanding on mortgage payments due by tenants in the public sector buying their houses in each of the past years for which figures are available since 1981.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not held centrally.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish more details about the public expenditure figures in table 3.15 of the White Paper, "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd. 9828).

Mr. Younger: My Department is today issuing a commentary on the Scotland public expenditure programme which gives more information about the public expenditure within my responsibility. I have arranged for a copy to be sent to all right hon. and hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies and I shall be pleased to let any other hon. Member have a copy on request. Copies are also being placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Civil Servants (Personal Records)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) why the equal opportunities unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel is asking civil servants to declare which primary or preparatory school they attended;

(2) if he has authorised making available confidential information in civil servants' personal files to the equal opportunities unit of the department of finance and personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on 4 December 1984 at column 97.

Staff who have not returned the questionnaire on primary schools attended are being sent reminders which indicate that it may be necessary as a last resort to seek the data on their personal files. In that event the personal file would be consulted by the officer's own personnel division, not by the equal opportunities unit.

Sex Monitoring and Positive Action

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has prepared plans for the implementation in his Department of the recommendations for sex monitoring and for positive action, respectively, for the purpose of providing equal opportunities in his Department in accordance with the recommendations contained in the draft code of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Dr. Boyson: In respect of the Home Civil Service, arrangements which accord with the monitoring and positive action recommendations of the code are in hand.

In respect of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, arrangements have been made to introduce the monitoring and other action promulgated in the Northern Ireland Civil Service equal opportunities policy statement, copies of which were placed in the Library on 4 December 1984.

Job Creation

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many local enterprise development unit-supported companies in Northern Ireland reached their targets in job creation ahead of the projected plans submitted and approved by local enterprise development units in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Dr. Boyson: Information on client companies of the local enterprise development unit which reach job creation targets ahead of schedule is not maintained separately and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons have been killed by terrorist actions in Northern Ireland in each year since 1 January 1970;

(2) what has been the number of terrorist incidents in each year since 1 January 1980.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Kilroot Power Station

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has concerning the Northern Ireland electricity service's progress with their plans to convert Kilroot power station to coal.

Dr. Boyson: I shall be making an announcement about the future of Kilroot power station in due course.

THE ARTS

Arts Council and National Theatre

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what has been the increase in real terms since 1979 in the grants to the Arts Council of Great Britain and to the National Theatre.

Mr. Waldegrave: The increase in these grants in real terms since 1978-89 (measured against the GDP deflator of 86·2 per cent.) has been, respectively, 15·3 per cent. and 13·6 per cent.

Local Authority Investment

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what levels of investment have been allocated by individual local authorities towards activities in respect of the Arts *(a)* in London and *(b)* in the West Midlands county in each year since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *139*]: Capital expenditure by individual authorities in London and the west midlands on their museum and art gallery services for the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 is set out in the table. This is based on returns made by the authorities to the Department of the Environment. Details of their capital expenditure on other arts activities are not separately identifiable. The budget estimates of individual authorities for current expenditure on the arts are published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in "Leisure and Recreation Statistics Estimates", copies of which are in the Library.

Capital expenditure: museums and art galleries

	1978-79 £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £
(a) London						
Greater London Council	1,297	0	7,046	19,609	269,448	0
City of London	211,197	41,665	59,435	0	0	0
Camden	46,795	0	0	0	33,589	994
Greenwich	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hackney	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hammersmith & Fulham	16,240	47,370	14,202	1,934	0	7,770
Islington	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kensington & Chelsea	0	0	555	0	0	13,864
Lambeth	0	0	0	0	36,018	3,100
Lewisham	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southwark	0	5,382	0	0	0	0
Tower Hamlets	3,260	1,805	0	0	0	0
Wandsworth	16,156	3,252	0	0	0	1,201
Westminster	0	0	0	0	0	0
Barking and Dagenham	0	0	0	0	0	0
Barnet	490	4,317	14,477	117,382	433	5,794
Bexley	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brent	137	16	0	0	6,120	20,984
Bromley	0	0	0	0	0	0
Croydon	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ealing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enfield	0	0	0	0	0	0
Haringey	0	0	0	0	19,625	994
Harrow	0	0	0	0	0	0
Havering	0	0	0	596	0	0
Hillingdon	0	0	44,298	3,321	0	404
Hounslow	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kingston-Upon-Thames	2,957	0	0	0	0	10,300
Merton	0	0	0	0	0	15,552
Newham	62,215	7,416	71,321	126,632	6,759	263
Redbridge	0	0	0	0	0	0
Richmond-Upon-Thames	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sutton	6,944	3,885	0	0	0	0
Waltham Forest	0	3,298	73,915	84,748	0	4,909
Total	367,688	118,406	285,249	354,222	371,992	86,129
(b) West Midlands						
Birmingham	30,700	45,907	91,585	681,075	716,696	792,046
Coventry	30,942	104,180	241,188	24,062	12,327	85,897
Dudley	60,488	20,029	15,277	0	900	0
Sandwell	0	0	0	0	0	0
Solihull	0	0	0	0	0	0
Walsall	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	0	5,948	99,880	70,472	60,397	111,940
Total	122,130	176,064	447,930	775,609	790,320	989,883

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 February 1985

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

South Africa

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what proportion of the Church Commissioners' assets, since the debate in Synod in July 1982, has been withdrawn from companies trading in South Africa; and what this sum represents for each year, expressed as a proportion of the commissioners' portfolio in commercial companies.

Sir William van Straubenzee: It is not possible to say what proportion of the many millions of pounds of investments sold by the commissioners since July 1982 were in respect of companies trading in South Africa. It is, however, the commissioners' policy not to invest in companies operating wholly or mainly in that country.

PRIME MINISTER

Caribbean (Aircraft Purchase)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if, in her next discussion with the Heads of Government of the European Economic Community, she will insist on a full investigation into the Commission's decision not to support the Governments of the Eastern Caribbean, the Caribbean Development Bank and Leeward Islands Air Transport in their wish to purchase Super 748 aircraft; whether she is satisfied that the Commission's decision in this matter accords with responsibilities under the Lomé convention; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have asked the European Commission to make public its reasons for rejecting the view of the Leeward Islands Air Transport that the Super 748 offer from British Aerospace best fulfilled the procurement criteria of the Lomé convention. When we receive the Commission's reply we shall consider what further action is required. Meanwhile LIAT is making other arrangements to finance the purchase of the aeroplanes it requires, and we have offered support from the aid and trade provision for the purchase of Super 748s.

WALES

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* details for the latest available period of the average equated rate poundage in respect of unmeasured water supply for the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The equated rate poundage in respect of the unmeasured water supply charge for the Welsh water authority for 1984-85 is 37·80p.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Non-tariff Barriers)

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated cost of non-tariff barriers to trade within the European Community.

Mr. Channon: There are a number of published estimates of the cost of non-tariff barriers to trade as a whole within the European Community, though these have concentrated mainly on the costs incurred at border crossings. In particular, I refer my hon. Friend to the following publications which are available from the Library:

— European Commission Communication of the State of the Internal Market (COM(81)313)—June 1981.
— House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, Session 1981-82, 17th Report — Internal Market—July 1982.
— "Towards European Economic Recovery in the 1980s"— Report presented to the European Parliament by Mr. M. Albert and Prof. R. J. Ball—July 1983.

They put the cost at around 12 billion ecu pa (roughly £7 billion).

Industrial Assistance (Heywood and Middleton)

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further steps he is undertaking to assist industry in the Heywood and Middleton constituency.

Mr. Trippier: As a result of the recent review of regional industrial policy the travel-to-work areas covering the constituency now have intermediate area status and industry there is therefore eligible for selective financial assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982. In addition, that part of the constituency which was in the old Bury TTWA (Heywood) is eligible for assistance under the ERDF non-quota funds for closure areas, which were announced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State on 26 November last year.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the adoption by the United Kingdom of clause 9 of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisations's proposed international code on the use and distribution of pesticides.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Textile Producers (Aid)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the decision by the EEC Commission not to sanction Her Majesty's Government's £20 million aid package to small textile producers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I received preliminary notification on 15 February that the Commission had decided not to approve the clothing and footwear and textiles scheme. In discussions with the Commission I have repeatedly made it very clear that I would strongly disagree with a negative decision, and that in my view it

Because of the difficulties of defining "new equipments", the Department no longer analyses expenditure on this basis.

Harriers

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force Harriers are currently being ordered by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Lee: Contracts which provide for the development and production, collaboratively with the United States, of a total of 60 Harrier GR5 aircraft, were let in September 1981 and December 1983. There are also four Harrier GR3s and four two-seat Harrier trainers (T4s) on order for the RAF.

Alert Signs

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the difference between the state of alert signs bikini amber and bikini black alpha recently displayed at the Territorial Army barracks in Liverpool, Riverside.

Mr. Lee: It is not our practice to comment on detail on the differences between particular alert states applying to the armed forces.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current estimated cost of the plant being constructed for British Nuclear Fuels Limited at Capenhurst.

Mr. Lee: It has been the long standing practice of successive Governments not to disclose cost information of this nature.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. plant at Capenhurst to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The plant to which the hon. Member refers is the enrichment plant referred to in the then Secretary of State for Defence's statement in June 1982 at columns 128-29. Construction is on schedule and expected to be completed this year.

Classified Information

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what classification the papers from his Department sent by Mr. Ponting to an hon. Member carried; what are the normal reporting procedures observed in his Department when such information is discovered to have passed to a person whom his Department regards as being unauthorised to receive it; and what reporting procedures there are for notifying officials and Ministers in other Departments, including Law Officers;

(2) when officials in his Department first became aware that papers from his Department had been passed to an hon. Member; when Ministers in his Department first were informed that papers from the Department had been passed to an hon. Member; when officials in his Department first informed officials in any other Department that papers from his Department had been passed to an hon. Member; and when he or other Ministers first informed anybody in other Departments, including the Law Officers' Department, that papers from his Department had been passed to an hon. Member.

Mr. Heseltine: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he was first made aware that a leak of official information from his Department had taken place during the summer of 1984; how this information was communicated to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I assume the hon. Member is referring to events which led to the recent trial of Mr. Clive Ponting.

I was advised orally by the Chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on 26 July 1984 that what appeared to be copies of official documents had been passed to him by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he was first made aware that the papers relating to a leak of official information in his Department in the summer of 1984 had been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions; how this information was communicated to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I assume the hon. Member is referring to events leading to the recent trial of Mr. Clive Ponting.

The second permanent under-secretary of state advised me orally on the afternoon of 13 August 1984 that the matter had been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Clive Ponting

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he was first made aware that his Department's police had identified Mr. Clive Ponting as the person suspected of having leaked official information from his Department in the summer of 1984; how the information was communicated to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The second permanent under-secretary of state informed me orally on the afternoon of 13 August 1984.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he first was made aware that a prosecution was to be brought against Mr. Clive Ponting in respect of an alleged leak of official information from his Department; how this information was communicated to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: I was first informed officially, by means of a minute from my private office, on my return from a holiday in Cyprus on 28 August 1984. I was, however, aware that a prosecution was to be brought against Mr. Ponting from reports in the media while I was on holiday.

Reforger Exercises

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the United States army units training in Britain during the recent Reforger exercises; and whether those units have been trained in the airland battle doctrine.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 February 1985, c. *317*]: The two United States army units to which I

referred in my reply to the hon. Member on 21 January at column 323, comprised two companies from the 4th Mechanised Infantry Division and one company from the 197th Infantry Brigade. They undertook routine infantry training using Ministry of Defence facilities at Catterick and Longmore. The training of United States forces in relation to airland battle doctrine is a matter for the United States Government.

Remotely Piloted Vehicle

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is any nearer reaching a decision on the remotely piloted vehicle for the British Army.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to the reply*, 12 February 1985, c. *142*]: A contract for the development and production of a remotely piloted vehicle known as Phoenix has now been awarded to GEC Avionics.

RAF Basic Trainer

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what advice he has received from the Royal Air Force concerning the new basic trainer;

(2) whether he proposes to accept the advice of the Royal Air Force in his choice of the new basic trainer.

Mr. Lee: I am awaiting the evaluation of the revised offers received from the four suppliers, to which members of the Royal Air Force are naturally contributing. The needs of the Royal Air Force will, of course, be fully taken into account in reaching a decision.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's intentions with regard to the building known as the peace chapel at RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Heseltine: The structure known as the peace chapel at RAF Molesworth is a half constructed building erected on Ministry of Defence land without permission. My Department has no record of its having been accorded any official religious status. We have not decided what to do about this building.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Local Authority Mortgages

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the effect would be on *(a)* the money supply and *(b)* the public sector borrowing requirement if the funds currently lent on first mortgages by local authorities were transferred with the borrowers' consent to building societies or other approved financial institutions in the following sums in each respect (i) £1 billion, (ii) £2 billion, (iii) £3 billion and (iv) £4 billion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Rees: Providing other expenditure does not increase, then transferring local authority mortgages to the building societies or other approved financial institutions would reduce the public sector's borrowing requirement. The effect on the money supply would depend on the response of those who took on the mortgages, but it is likely that monetary conditions in the economy would be very little changed. If public expenditure did increase in line with the transfer of mortgages, then the PSBR would revert to its original level, but because monetary conditions had been largely unaffected by the initial fall in the PSBR this increase would imply some loosening of financial conditions, and would thus be inflationary unless offset by higher interest rates.

Unit Costs

Mr. Parris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the movement in United Kingdom unit costs, including non-wage factors such as employers' national insurance contributions, on a common currency basis compared with the United States of America, Canada, Japan, West Germany, France and Italy between 1975, 1977 and 1979, respectively, and the present day, extrapolating the cost trend in national currencies apparent over the last two quarters for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Tax

Mr. Wainwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the estimated full-year yield of income tax would be reduced if the tax threshold for a married man in a one-earner household were raised to equal the normal supplementary benefit maximum assuming two school age children.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Taxation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer given on 10 December 1984, *Official Report*, columns 372-74, concerning changes in the level of income tax and national insurance contributions, if he will publish a similar index for the same household type at an increased level of half the average earnings.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *403*]: The table shows income tax plus national insurance contributions less child benefit, where appropriate, as a percentage of gross earnings, for a married man on half average earnings whose wife has average earnings for part-time women. Assumptions are those specified in my earlier reply.

Half average earnings

	Married with no children	*Married with two children (both under 11)*
1978-79	15·9	7·1
1979-80	15·6	6·2
1980-81	16·9	8·5
1981-82	19·8	11·0
1982-83	19·8	10·8
1983-84	18·9	9·7
1984-85	17·9	8·6

chief officers on the cautioning of both juveniles and adults; and a summary of research conducted into police force cautioning policy and practice.

The consultative document was given wide circulation, and comments on it were received from agencies and individuals working in the criminal justice field.

The draft circular and guidelines have been revised in the light of comments received. The revised circular and guidelines were issued to chief officers of police yesterday. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

We are grateful to chief officers of police for their co-operation in taking this work forward and to all the organisations and individuals who offered their observations on the consultative document. We look to the new guidelines to help bring about more consistent and effective cautioning practices and have asked Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary to pay particular attention to this in their inspection of forces.

Prevention of Terrorism

(Temporary Provisions) Act 1984

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to the reply*, 15 February 1985, c. 296]: Copies of Sir Cyril Philips' report have been placed in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office. My right hon. and learned Friend will respond to it very shortly.

WALES

Council Housing

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the figures for major repairs to council housing in Wales from 1979 to date; and what is his estimate for the year 1985-86.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on expenditure on repairs alone is not available, but the following table gives the expenditure since 1979-80 by local authorities on conversions, repairs and improvements of housing revenue account stock carried out under section 105 of the Housing Act 1974. No estimates are available for 1985-86.

Year	*Expenditure under Section 105 £ million*
1979-80	19·9
1980-81	22·2
1981-82	21·0
1982-83	47·3
1983-84*	48·3
1984-85†	44·5

* Provisional.
† Estimated from local authority forecasts made in October 1984.

EMPLOYMENT

Catering Industry (Work Permits)

74. **Mr. Speed** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of employment permits issued last year for employment in the catering industry and give the breakdown of permits by country.

Mr. Alan Clark: The numbers of approvals granted under the main work permit scheme for employment in the catering industry in 1984 were as follows:

Country	*Permits issued*
Austria	3
Australia	1
Canada	3
China	1
Hong Kong	118
India	7
Japan	57
Jordan	1
Lebanon	2
Malta	1
Mauritius	1
North Korea	2
Norway	1
Pakistan	1
Portugal	1
South Africa	1
South Korea	1
Switzerland	5
Thailand	2
United States of America	33
Zambia	1
	243

Skillcentres (Closure)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many skillcentre places will be lost in Lambeth, Waddon and Deptford as a result of the proposed skillcentre closure programme of the Manpower Services Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission proposes to support training for around 4,400 adults in south-east London in 1985-86, compared with around 3,200 in 1984-85 and to increase provision further the following year. This will lead to a slight increase next year in the amount of training business commissioned from skillcentres in the area, with a further increase forecast for 1986-87.

The skillcentre training agency's proposals in south-east London envisage retaining Deptford skillcentre, opening a new centre in Lambeth, and closing the skillcentre at Waddon, its annexe at Sydenham and the young persons training centre in Lambeth.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in numbers of people employed in each local authority area in Greater Manchester in each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information on employment in local areas is from the June 1978 and the following September 1981 census of employment. Net

changes in the number of employees in employment in each local authority district in Greater Manchester in that period are as follows:

	Thousands
Bolton	−9·8
Bury	−4·7
Manchester	−22·5
Oldham	−16·6
Rochdale	−5·3
Salford	−15·4
Stockport	−2·2
Tameside	−9·8
Trafford	−7·7
Wigan	−12·8

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many job losses have been notified to his Department occurring in each local authority district in Greater Manchester in each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur from 1979 to 1984 in the Greater Manchester area*

Local Authority Area†	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*‡1984*
Bolton	2,063	3,581	4,637	2,607	2,747	1,105
Bury	897	1,966	1,166	1,543	1,318	815
Manchester	3,554	9,079	7,965	6,446	4,156	3,416
Oldham	1,607	3,871	4,115	1,801	1,707	1,760
Rochdale	1,521	4,367	2,899	2,055	1,160	964
Salford	1,636	7,177	3,700	3,206	2,995	1,254
Stockport	1,291	2,596	1,599	2,062	1,447	721
Tameside	1,099	4,909	3,295	1,864	2,362	1,328
Trafford	3,651	2,069	4,388	3,731	2,814	2,286
Wigan	1,424	5,690	4,157	2,200	2,732	1,889

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving 10 or more workers.

† Groupings of jobcentre areas approximating to the local authority area.

‡ Includes provisional figures for December 1984.

Pesticides

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that untrained operators will not be allowed to use potentially harmful pesticides in the fields of public health and industrial pest control.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 already places a duty on employers to provide such informtion, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of their employees. The Act also places a duty on employers and the self-employed to ensure that people other than employees are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. The Health and Safety Commission has issued for public consultation a draft approved code of practice on fumigation operations, which includes detailed guidance on training.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that premises used for the storage, sale or supply or pesticides will be required to conform to specific standards in order to minimise the risk of public hazard.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Section 2(2)*(b)* of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 places a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, safety and the absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances.

The Government are currently considering the need for specific measures to be taken under part III of the Food and Environmental Protection Bill, at present before Parliament.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that all firms engaged in the supply and use of pesticides are listed and known to the appropriate enforcing authorities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government are currently considering the need for specific measures to be taken under part III of the Food and Environmental Protection Bill, at present before Parliament.

Pest Control

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that adequate and recognised training courses are available to the pest-control industry and for all operators employed by commercial servicing companies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am satisfied that adequate training courses are already available and are widely recognised in the industries concerned.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present expected profile of expenditure on Trident; and if he will express the estimated expenditure in each year as a percentage of *(a)* total projected defence spending and *(b)* the projected new equipment budget.

Mr. Butler: It is not the practice to give cost profiles for projects on a year by year basis. Trident, over its procurement period, will account on average for about 3 per cent. of the defence budget and about 6 per cent. of the equipment budget, rising to 6 per cent. and 11 per cent., respectively, for the peak years of the programme.

	District	Police officers assigned* as at 31 December 1983 per 1,000 offences recorded in 1983
X	Ealing and Hillingdon	31
Y	Haringey and Enfield	30
Z	Croydon, Sutton, etc.	27

* Officers assigned to the royalty and diplomatic protection department and the central traffic department have been excluded from the calculations; those assigned to a district but allocated to traffic duties are included.

Political and Religious Asylum

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number of people from India who have been given *(a)* political asylum and *(b)* asylum on religious grounds in the United Kingdom during the last five years;

(2) what is the number of people from Pakistan who have been given *(a)* political asylum and *(b)* asylum on religious grounds in the United Kingdom during the last five years.

Mr. Waddington: Statistics are not kept of the particular grounds on which asylum is granted. The following table shows the total number of nationals of India and Pakistan granted asylum in the United Kingdom, for whatever reason, in the last five years:

	India	Pakistan
1980	Nil	18
1981	Nil	39
1982	Nil	44
1983	Nil	14
1984	Nil	7

Mr. Clive Ponting

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the dates on which Mr. Clive Ponting was interviewed by police; and if any officers of the Metropolitan police special branch were involved at any time.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that no Metropolitan police officers were involved in the investigations which led to the bringing of charges against Mr. Ponting. The only involvement of the Metropolitan police was in making administrative arrangements for Mr. Ponting to be questioned and subsequently charged by the Ministry of Defence police at Cannon Row police station on 17 August 1984.

Extradition

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the proposed consultative document on extradition.

Mr. Brittan: The consultative document (Cmnd. 9421) is published today and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. It discusses and seeks views on a number of proposals for the reform of extradition law. Comments are invited by 30 April on the matters covered in the document. These should be addressed to the Home Office, E5 Division, Room 426A, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with appointments to the new Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Brittan: I am glad to announce that the right hon. Roland Moyle and Rear-Admiral John Bell have accepted my offer of appointment as the full-time deputy chairmen of the new authority. They will take up their duties when the authority is established.

Sir Cecil Clothier has already agreed to serve as chairman.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan [*pursuant to his replies*, 15 February 1985, c. 296, and 19 February 1985, c. *427*]: Copies of my response to Sir Cyril Philips' first report have been placed in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office.

ENERGY

Electricity Consumers (Rebates)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has held consultation with *(a)* the London Electricity Board and *(b)* any other electricity board concerning rebates to low use customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Area boards determine their own tariffs, following consultation with their consumer councils.

Coal Boiler Conversion Scheme

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much grant aid has been given to how many projects under the coal boiler conversion scheme for each of the years 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. David Hunt: Grants made under the coal firing scheme are normally paid in stages over two years or more. The following table shows the total number of projects accepted for grant-aid under the scheme in each year, and the actual amounts paid out each year.

	Projects accepted	Amounts of grant paid £ million
1981	20	0·05
1982	82	1·01
1983	127	3·82
1984	94	6·72
Total	323	11·60

Coal Liquefaction Project

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the coal liquefaction project.

Mr. David Hunt: The National Coal Board has now begun work on the construction phase of the Point of Ayr coal liquefaction pilot plant. Detailed engineering design

is now in progress, and procurement has begun for key plant items. Site work is expected to begin later this year and a main contractor is scheduled to be appointed at about the same time. The pilot plant is expected to be completed in 1987.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Brazil

5. **Mr. Maginnis** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has plans to visit the Brazilian trade exhibition or the Brazilian embassy.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so, but I attended the reception given by His Excellency the Brazilian ambassador to mark the opening of the exhibition.

Mr. Sam Nujoma

6. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent visit to Southern Africa, he met Mr. Sam Nujoma, president of the South West Africa People's Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. and learned Friend did not meet Mr. Nujoma during his recent visit.

South Africa

12. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to discuss with the United States Government, United States policy toward South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: We regularly exchange views with the United States on Southern African issues. These may well be discussed during the visit my right hon. and learned Friend is paying to the United States at present.

14. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will make further representations to the South African Government about the decision of the South African Cabinet to renege on its agent's undertaking to return the South African citizens charged with offences under customs legislation for trial.

18. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has taken any action to seek to ensure the appearance in court of the four South African citizens charged with offences under customs and excise legislation further to the statement by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) in the House on 23 October.

Mr. Rifkind: The South African Government are in no doubt about our views on this matter. We shall continue to remind the South Africans at every opportunity that we expect them to honour the undertaking they gave to the court to ensure the return of the four defendants to stand trial.

17. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the continuing non-compliance of the South African authorities with their pledge to the British courts that the four South African citizens charged with offences under customs legislation would return to stand trial, has had any effect on United Kingdom bilateral relations with South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: The failure of the South African Government to comply with their undertaking to return the four men inevitably remains an obstacle to better relations with South Africa.

22. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations with South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: We have full diplomatic relations with South Africa. These are necessary to protect our major interests there and to make known to the South African authorities our views on matters of concern to us.

South Africa (UDF Trial)

13. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to send observers to the UDF treason trial in South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: We are very concerned at the arrest of a number of UDF leaders. Although we do not yet have full details of the trial, we expect to be sending an observer.

55. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any representations have been made to the South African Government concerning the trial on charges of high treason of eight South Africans including the six men who sought sanctuary in the British consulate in Durban.

Mr. Rifkind: No. As is our normal practice, we shall consider the possibility of representations only when the legal processes have been completed.

Namibia

15. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Namibia following his recent visit to Southern Africa.

24. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will report on the latest negotiations on Namibian independence under United Nations resolution 435.

Mr. Rifkind: Discussions are continuing between the United States, Angola and South Africa in an effort to achieve an agreement on Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola which will enable implementation of Security Council resolution 435. During his recent visit to Southern Africa, my right hon. and learned Friend urged other Governments in the region to support these negotiations, which offer the best prospect of progress towards Namibian independence.

23. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to attend a meeting of the Contact Group of Namibia; and what subjects he expects to raise.

Mr. Rifkind: There are at present no plans for a meeting of the Contact Group on Namibia, but we remain

in close touch with our Contact Group partners over developments in the current negotiations towards a Namibia settlement.

Disarmament Negotiations

16. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement of Her Majesty's Government's policy on the re-opening of disarmament negotiations between the United States of American and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Luce: We welcome United States and Soviet agreement to begin negotiations in Geneva on 12 March on the whole range of space and nuclear arms. We fully share the objective of these negotiations which is to work out effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space and reducing nuclear arms, and at strengthening strategic stability.

46. **Sir Peter Blaker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's latest assessment of the prospects for the forthcoming United States and Soviet Union disarmament talks in Geneva.

Mr. Luce: The Geneva talks represent a fresh opportunity for progress in arms control. We hope they will lead to agreement limiting and reducing nuclear weapons in the intermediate and strategic categories. We are also pleased that the talks will cover ways of preventing an arms race in outer space. As President Reagan has said, the negotiations will require patience and perseverance.

International Terrorism

19. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on international measures against terrorism taken since the economic summit in London.

Mr. Renton: We have maintained close contacts with our economic summit partners. We played a leading role in concluding the Ten's agreement on terrorism and are playing a full part in the continuing discussions in the Council of Europe. We are working closely with our partners to counter the current terrorist threat to NATO.

27. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to Governments in the middle east concerning the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards international terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: We take every appropriate opportunity to discuss the importance of combating international terrorism with other Governments. I have no doubt that our strong views on the subject are widely known.

76. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has recently notified all diplomatic missions in London of the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding terrorism and, in particular, of the attitude of Her Majesty's Government towards acts of terrorism in the United Kingdom involving groups of foreign nationals.

Mr. Rifkind: The text of the statement on international terrorism and the Vienna convention which I made on 18 July to the Foreign Affairs Committee was sent on 15 August to all diplomatic missions.

Acts of terrorism in the United Kingdom involving groups of foreign nationals are primarily matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Guatemala

20. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the resumption of diplomatic relations with Guatemala.

Mr. Renton: Consular relations were broken off unilaterally by Guatemala in 1981. Recently there have been discussions with the Guatemalan Government about a possible resumption of such relations but nothing has yet been decided.

Mr. Terry Waite

21. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has plans to meet Terry Waite, the Archbishop of Canterbury's special envoy to discuss recent visits to Libya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Mr. Terry Waite called on me on 11 February. I thanked Mr. Waite on behalf of the Government for the successful completion of his humanitarian mission in securing the release of four British citizens detained in Libya. I have nothing to add to the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on 8 February at columns 750-52.

Sri Lanka

25. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with the Sri Lanka Government.

Mr. Renton: We enjoy close and friendly relations as befits fellow members of the Commonwealth.

70. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received an invitation recently to visit Sri Lanka.

Mr. Renton: The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, during the meeting on 30 January, expressed the hope that my right hon. and learned Friend might visit Sri Lanka. However, my right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to do so.

Nicaragua

26. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of British diplomatic representation in Nicaragua; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Her Majesty's ambassador to Costa Rica and the defence and assistant defence attachés resident in Mexico City are accredited to Nicaragua. A first secretary accredited to the ambassador's staff in Costa Rica also resides in Managua as chargé d'affaires ad interim.

Human Rights

28. **Mr. Buchan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any representations have been made to the South African Government concerning human rights violations in Namibia or South Africa since 12 December 1984.

Mr. Rifkind: We have consistently condemned human rights violations in Namibia and South Africa and shall continue to do so. Since 12 December 1984 we have expressed concern to the South African Government about the arrest of Ms. Gwen Lister and made public statements about the alleged Koevoet atrocities and Archbishop Hurley's trial.

31. **Mr. David Young** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on human rights in Turkey.

Mr. Renton: We continue to take suitable opportunities to raise the question of human rights with the Turkish Government. My right hon. and learned Friend did so during his visit to Turkey from 11 to 13 February. They can be in no doubt as to our opinions and the importance we attach to progress in this area being maintained.

40. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the reasons for the abstention by the United Kingdom representative to the United Nations in votes concerning the human rights situation in Chile.

Mr. Renton; I have nothing to add to the replies given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 31 January at columns 293-94 to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

72. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has made representations to the Iranian regime about human rights in Iran since the revolution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: We have made clear to the Iranian Government on many occasions our concern at violations of human rights. We co-sponsored the United Nations Commission on Human Rights resolution on this question in March 1984. In addition, representatives of the European Community in Tehran have made a series of demarches on behalf of the Ten about the human rights situation in Iran, most recently on 2 October 1984.

Warsaw Pact (Negotiations)

29. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with Western European governments with a view to bilateral negotiations with individual Warsaw Pact countries.

Mr. Rifkind: We keep in close touch with Western European allies and partners on all aspects of the East-West relationship, including relations with individual Warsaw pact states. The discussions during the series of visits to Eastern European capitals by my right hon. and learned Friend will contribute to the East-West dialogue.

Afghanistan (Refugees)

30. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimates his Department has made of the total number of refugees who have fled from Afghanistan as a result of the Soviet invasion of that country.

Mr. Renton: There are now up to 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and up to another 1 million in Iran. Those in Pakistan constitute the world's largest single concentration of refugees. Over one fifth of the population of Afghanistan have now fled that country. This is tragic testimony to the immense suffering inflicted by the Soviet invasion and a clear demonstration that the Afghan people reject the Karmal regime.

"The Central American Crisis: A European Response"

32. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the recommendations of the document produced by the Transnational Institute, "The Central American Crisis: A European Response"; a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Renton: We believe that the Contadora process, rather than the selective approach put forward by the Transnational Institute, offers the best basis for a solution to central America's problems. The statement issued on 4 December by the European Council reiterated our strong and continuing support for the Contadora process.

Libya

33. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Libya.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend gave on 8 February, at columns 750-52, to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks).

British Embassies and High Commissioners

34. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the commercial work of British embassies and high commissioners abroad.

Mr. Rifkind: There has been increased interest and concern following my right hon. and learned Friend's answer of 18 December, at column 137, to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) in which he announced the closure of certain diplomatic service posts.

Lebanon

35. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, when he next meets his Syrian counterpart, he will seek to ascertain when that country's forces will leave the Lebanon.

74. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the Syrian

Government about their continued presence in the Lebanon; and if he will seek an assurance that they will leave the Lebanon in the same manner as Israeli forces.

Mr. Luce: We keep in touch with the Syrian Government about regional issues, including Lebanon. We have consistently called for the withdrawal from Lebanon of all foreign forces whose presence is not authorised by the Lebanese Government. I understand that the Lebanese Government of national unity have not called for the departure of Syrian forces from Lebanon.

41. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in the Lebanon, following the recent Israeli withdrawal.

Mr. Luce: We welcome Israel's withdrawal from the Sidon area, and look forward to the early, complete and orderly withdrawal of all Israeli forces to the international border. We have repeatedly emphasised to all parties the need for agreed and effective security arrangements in areas to be vacated by Israeli forces with full consideration for the safety of civilians, and to ensure the full restoration of Lebanese Government authority throughout the area in question.

50. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any request either from the Lebanese Government or from the United Nations for either a British troop deployment or British logistical support for a United Nations international force in the Lebanon.

Mr. Luce: We have received no request for a British troop contribution to UNIFIL or any other United Nations force in Lebanon. We have provided logistic support to UNIFIL since its establishment in 1978.

East-West Relations

36. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on East-West relations.

Mr. Rifkind: We continue to work, with our allies, for a better relationship between East and West. We welcome the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to resume bilateral arms control negotiations. We recognise that it will take time to consider fully the complex issues involved, and that patience and realism will be needed. We hope that meanwhile increased contacts, both between the United States and the Soviet Union, and between other countries of East and West, will lead to a broader understanding on arms control and other problems; and to the mutual confidence that can, over time, provide the basis for lasting progress.

Western European Union

37. **Mr. Hill** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when is the next meeting of the Council of the Western European Union; and whether he will be present there.

Mr. Luce: The next meeting of the Western European Union Council will take place in the last week of April in Bonn. My right hon. and learned Friend plans to attend.

Ethiopia

38. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Ethiopia.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 23 January at column 967.

Space Weapons

39. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the extent of Soviet research and development into space weapons.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 29 January at columns 148-49. Soviet efforts in the field of research into space weapons, and in some cases development, are, as in all other areas of military research and development, extensive. The United States strategic defence initiative should be seen in the light of Soviet research into ballistic missile defence. The Soviet Union is alone in deploying an anti-satellite weapon and nuclear-tipped ABM missiles capable of destroying targets in space.

Sudan

42. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with the Sudan.

51. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present relationship between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan.

Mr. Luce: We have good relations with Sudan. There is a long and friendly association between our two countries. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is at present visiting Sudan. We are proud of the contribution we have made to the economic development of that country and regret that this contribution may have been damaged by recent political and economic developments. As friends of Sudan we are doing all we can to help resolve her refugee and drought problems. We hope that the Sudanese authorities will take practical steps to resolve their difficulties peaceably and thus restore stability and prosperity to their country.

Stockholm Conference

43. **Mr. Forman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest developments at the Stockholm confidence building measures conference.

77. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the progress of the Stockholm conference on security and co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made

at the conference on confidence and security building measures and disarmament in Europe since the speech in Stockhom by the Minister of State, his hon. Friend, the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) on 13 September 1984.

Mr. Luce: In December agreement was reached on an agenda and timetable for two working groups. In this session — 29 January to 22 March — participants are circulating working papers on thier tabled proposals and more detailed discussion has begun. We welcome this and look forward to making progress on practical measures which would enhance confidence and thereby diminish the possibility of any future resort to force.

Central America

44. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to seek to visit states in Central America.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit Central America in the near future.

Venice Declaration

45. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to seek to implement the objectives of the Venice declaration.

75. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on steps being taken to assist in achieving a peace settlement in the middle east.

Mr. Luce: The Heads of State and Government of the European Community reaffirmed in Dublin in December 1984 their desire to see urgent efforts made to establish peace and stability in the middle east, and their willingness to assist efforts to that end. With our partners we shall continue to do all we can to encourage a negotiated solution on the basis of a balanced approach which safeguards Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised borders and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. But it must be for the parties themselves to take the initiative in peace efforts.

Test Ban Treaty

47. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are now taking to achieve a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 12 February 1985 at column 142.

Eastern Europe

48. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to improve relations with the countries of eastern Europe.

Mr. Rifkind: We attach importance to the development of relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and we have a regular programme of political consultations. My right hon. and learned Friend had valuable discussions during his recent visits to Romania and Bulgaria and he is looking forward to further useful exchanges when he visits the German Democratic Republic, Czhechoslovakia and Poland from 8 to 13 April. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited Hungary in February 1984, and in March we shall welcome the Hungarian Foreign Minister Mr. Varkonyi to Britain. We also continue to work for closer cultural and commercial relations with the countries of Eastern Europe.

USSR (Postal Communications)

49. **Dr. Blackburn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek to raise the subject of postal communications between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Mr. Rifkind: We have already made clear to the Soviet authorities our concern over several aspects of this subject which we find unsatisfactory. Most recently, the question of Soviet interference with mail from the United Kingdom to individuals in the Soviet Union was raised by our delegation to the universal postal union congress in Hamburg in July 1984. At that meeting the presidency also read out a statement by the Ten calling for an improvement in the Soviet record and clarification of its list of prohibited articles.

New Zealand

52. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to hold discussions with his counterpart in New Zealand on policy regarding relations in the South Pacific.

Mr. Renton: We are in continuing touch with the New Zealand Government on matters of mutual interest. The New Zealand Prime Minister will be visiting the United Kingdom at the end of this month and will call on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

South Africa (New Constitution)

53. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there has been a review of British policy towards South Africa's new constitution since the statement made as an explanation of vote on United Nations Security Council resolution 554.

Mr. Rifkind: We continue to regard the new constitution as seriously flawed by the absence of any provision for South Africa's black population. We have been encouraged by President Botha's speech of 25 January and hope that the ideas it outlines will be followed by major reforms affecting South Africa's black majority.

Arms Talks

54. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with the United States Government on the forthcoming arms negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: We remain in the closest touch with the United States Administration on all such issues. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is having talks with President Reagan in Washington today. My right hon. and learned Friend will be holding separate discussions with Secretary Shultz.

65. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there have been any positive developments at the mutual and balanced force reduction conference at Vienna.

Mr. Luce: Until there is agreement on the existing levels of Eastern forces, real progress in Vienna towards parity at lower levels of conventional forces in central Europe is not possible. Unfortunately, the East continues to reject all Western efforts to resolve this key issue. We shall, of course, study carefully the East's 14 February proposal. But at first sight it seems to amount to little more than repackaging of part of its 1983 proposals.

66. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart in preparation for the 12 March nuclear arms talks; and if he has yet indicated to the United States Government Her Majesty's Government's view on President Reagan's stategic defence initiative.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 9 January, at column 441, the strategic defence initiative was discussed during her last meeting with President Reagan on 22 December.

Chemical Weapons

56. **Mr. Parris** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Geneva disarmament negotiations on chemical weapons.

Mr. Luce: The negotiations resumed on 15 January. Although agreement in principle has been reached on a number of less central issues, there has been no significant progress on key problems of verification. We intend to concentrate on these areas in 1985. We trust the Soviet Union will join us in showing the flexibility and determination needed to achieve a total ban.

Falkland Islands

57. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will extend the territorial limits of the Falkland Islands to 200 miles.

Mr. Renton: We do not recognise the legality of claims to territorial sea of a breadth of 200 miles.

Middle East

58. **Mr. Cowans** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the role of the Soviet Union in the middle east.

Mr. Luce: A peaceful solution of the fundamental problem of the middle east, the Arab-Israel dispute, is in the interests of the whole international community. As a member of the Security Council the Soviet Union has an important contribution to make to a negotiated peace settlement.

78. **Mr. Nelson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, following the discussions held by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), during his recent visit to the Sultanate of Oman, he will make representations to the United States Government regarding peace initiatives in the middle east.

Mr. Luce: I had useful talks with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and the Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs on 14 January. Our policy is to promote solutions to regional conflicts and the restoration of stability in the middle east. We are ready to support all sensible moves by the parties towards a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute and the Iran-Iraq conflict.

We keep in close contact with the United States on the middle east and make our views on this and other matters clear. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend will be discussing the middle east during their current visit to Washington.

Small States

59. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other Commonwealth countries on the future of small states.

Mr. Renton: During the past year my right hon. and learned Friend and other Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers have taken every opportunity presented by visits to Commonwealth countries and the visits of Commonwealth colleagues to the United Kingdom to discuss the special needs of small states. My noble Friend Baroness Young led the United Kingdom delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference last autumn at which this was an agenda item. We look forward to holding further discussions later this year when the Commonwealth Secretary-General presents the results of the special study commissioned by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in New Delhi in November 1983.

UN Relief and Works Agency

60. **Mr. Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the work of United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Mr. Luce: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the near east (UNRWA) does irreplaceable humanitarian work in the interests of peace and international stability. We are the second largest contributor to the agency overall since its inception, and our present national contribution of £5 million per annum taken with the European Community contribution of over $20 million per annum, are evidence of our continuing commitment to it.

Cyprus

61. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations to discuss the situation in Cyprus.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend saw the United Nations Secretary-General on 23 January. There are no immediate plans to meet him again.

Syrian Nationals (Deportation)

62. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the note verbale given to the Syrian charge d'affaires by his Department on 5 February relating to the deportation of Syrian nationals from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) on 8 February, at column 749.

Saudi Arabia (British Nationals)

63. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why British consular officials in Saudi Arabia failed to visit the British nationals who were recently flogged and imprisoned.

Mr. Luce: The Saudi Arabian authorities have told Her Majesty's embassy in Jedda that they intend to introduce a new system, including special identity documents, for visits to detainees by foreign consular staff. There has been a certain amount of confusion about exactly how the new system is to work, and for some weeks our consuls were unable to visit some British detainees. Her Majesty's ambassador and members of his staff have been in regular touch with the Saudi authorities about this unsatisfactory state of affairs, and ad hoc arrangements have been made, pending the introduction of the new system, for visits to all prisons in Saudi Arabia.

I assume the hon. Member is referring in his question to a group of four men who were not visited by our consul while in prison in Taif. A member of our consular staff was, however, able to visit them at the deportation centre in Jedda before they left the kingdom.

Yugoslav Ambassador

64. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has plans to meet the Yugoslav ambassador.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so, but naturally meets ambassadors from time to time in the course of normal diplomatic business.

USA (Strategic Defence Initiative)

67. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the United States' current strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 9 January at column 441.

Afghanistan

68. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in discussions with the Government of the Soviet Union concerning the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Mr. Renton: This issue was most recently raised by my right hon. and learned Friend with Mr. Gorbachev who, regrettably, indicated no change in the Soviet position.

Commonwealth Foreign Ministers

69. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Foreign Ministers of Commonwealth countries to discuss matters of mutual Commonwealth interest.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet those Foreign Ministers who accompany their Heads of Government at the next Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which is being arranged for the autumn and to meet some of them at the United Nations General Assembly.

Gibraltar

71. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect on the economy of Gibraltar of the opening of the border with Spain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. and learned Friend said in his statment on 6 February, at column 937, the prospects for economic prosperity for the people of Gibraltar and the region have been substantially improved by the full opening of the border on 5 February.

Trident

73. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of article 1 of the non-proliferation treaty for the proposed acquisition, including design, of the Trident missile system from the United States of America.

Mr. Luce: We are satisfied that the acquisition of the Trident missile system is consistent with article 1 of the non-proliferation treaty. As the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the then right hon. Member for Sheffield, Park, (Mr. Mulley) told the House on 8 July 1968, at column 37, article 1 does

"Not deal with the transfer of nuclear delivery vehicles, provided that there was no transfer of nuclear weapons or control over them".

Baha'is (Persecution)

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Iran concerning the continued murder and persecution of members of the Baha'i faith in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: We have made clear to the Iranian Government on many occasions our concern at the reports of the persecution of the Baha'is community in Iran. We co-sponsored the resolution on Iran at the 1984 session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, which specifically referred to the Baha'is. In addition, representatives of the European Community in Tehran have made a series of demarches on behalf of the Ten

about human rights in Iran in general, and the situation of the Baha'is in particular. The most recent such demarche was made on 2 October 1984.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government are satisfied that representations made to Iran concerning the persecution of members of the Baha'i community in that country have evoked a positive response; what further action Her Majesty's Government intend to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: As I made it clear to the House during the Adjournment debate on 21 December 1984, at column 749-52, we continue to take whatever action we judge to be most helpful to the Baha'i community in Iran, both in conjunction with our partners in the Ten or with other like-minded countries, and by taking a leading part in the United Nations. We naturally hope that our efforts are having a positive effect, though firm evidence is hard to obtain. The Baha'i community in Britain frequently express their appreciation of the Government's efforts.

Diplomatic Posts

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 18 December, *Official Report*, column *137*, if he will give details of the potential cost savings involved in the closure of diplomatic posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) on 14 January, at column 41. Apart from this I have nothing to add to the answer of 18 December to which the hon. Member refers.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Spain and Portugal

84. **Mr. Ron Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made in the accession negotiations with Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Rifkind: The Community and Spain reached agreement on the arrangements for industrial tariff dismantling and Spanish steel restructuring at the ministerial conference on 18 December 1984. The customs union, external relations and European Steel and Coal Community chapters are now near conclusion with both Spain and Portugal.

Negotiations still continue between the Community and the applicants on agriculture, fisheries and social affairs.

Budget Discussions

86. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held at the Foreign Affairs Council concerning the financing of the 1985 budget.

Mr. Rifkind: The Foreign Affairs Council discussed the financing of the 1985 budget at its meeting of 18 to 20 February.

Priorities

87. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the current priorities of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) gave to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on 13 February, at column 203.

Financial Management

88. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, at the next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, he will raise the conduct of the financial management of the Community.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom is concerned to ensure sound financial management in all areas of Community activity. We shall continue to raise the issue as appropriate at meetings of the Council.

Farm Prices

89. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with European Economic Community Agriculture Ministers on the overall effect on European Economic Community expenditure of the proposed farm prices for 1985-86.

Mr. Rifkind: The expenditure implications of the agricultural price fixing proposals have been discussed separately by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in talks in recent weeks with most of his Community colleagues and at meetings my right hon. and learned Friend has had with Community Foreign Ministers.

Fontainebleau Agreement

90. **Mr. Terry Fields** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the benefits to the United Kingdom of the Fontainebleau agreement.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

Own Resources

91. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to discuss the increase in own resources at the Foreign Affairs Council.

Mr. Rifkind: At the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 and 19 March.

93. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he now expects the increase in EEC own resources to take place.

Mr. Rifkind: The conclusions of the Fontainebleau European Council stipulate that the new maximum VAT rate of 1·4 per cent. will enter into force as soon as the ratification procedures are completed and by 1 January 1986 at the latest. Discussion in the Council centres on how best to fulfil that requirement.

World Poverty and Arms Purchases

92. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with other European Economic Community Foreign Ministers regarding world poverty and arms purchases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Developmental issues are dealt with at ministerial level at meetings both of the Development Council, which are normally held twice a year, and of the Foreign Affairs Council and at the European Council. The most recent example was the discussion on the famine in Africa at the European Council on 3 and 4 December 1984, which resulted in the Community's pledge to supply 1·2 million tonnes of grain to the worst affected countries. Neither the Community nor the Ten discuss arms purchases.

Policy Development

94. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further proposals he intends to place before his European Community partners for the development of Community policies.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 23 January, at column 444.

Dublin Summit

95. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the implementation of the decisions reached at the Dublin summit.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend on 23 January, at column 979, to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd).

Integrated Mediterranean Programmes

96. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent discussions at the Foreign Affairs Council regarding the integrated Mediterranean programmes.

Mr. Rifkind: The January Foreign Affairs Council held an informal exchange of views on integrated Mediterranean programmes, during which the President of the Commission outlined his ideas on how the issue should be resolved. The Council is now waiting for a new formal proposal from the Commission.

ENVIRONMENT

Gipsies (Definition)

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the definition of gipsies in section 16 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Mr. Macfarlane: The definition in section 16 was examined by Sir John Cripps in his 1976 report on the working of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. He was unable to suggest any improvement.

More recently, my Department last year carried out a detailed study of this question. The resulting report, entitled "Defining a Gypsy" — a copy of which was placed in the Library—again reaffirmed the appropriateness of the existing definition.

GLC (Staff)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the Greater London council's budget is spent on staff costs; and what is the average cost per staff member.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available from the Greater London council's budget. Based on the latest complete outturn information received from the Greater London council (in respect of 1982-83), and information supplied to the Joint Manpower Watch, employee costs accounted for 16½ per cent. of gross revenue expenditure, and the average cost per staff member was about £10,500.

West Midlands Structure Plan

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations from the west midlands on the stability of planning in green belts under the west midlands structure plan.

Mr. Macfarlane: Yes, there have been representations from various organisations and individuals expressing concern about the green belt. However, a recent study by Solihull MBC has shown that the green belt policies have largely succeeded in preventing speculative developments.

Water Authorities

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, for each of the regional water authorities in England, the target return on capital required for 1984-85, the corresponding return for 1985-86, the relevant figures for capital employed for each authority for such a calculation, and the cash value of the change in revenue surplus required between the two years to meet the change in target return on capital.

Mr. Macfarlane: The information requested is as follows:

Water Authority	**Financial Target*		*‡Net Assets*		*‖Change in Surplus*
	1984-85 *Per cent.*	*1985-86* *Per cent.*	*1984-85* *£ million*	*1985-86* *£ million*	*£ million*
North West	0·95	1·43	4,147	4,452	24·3
Northumbrian	1·25	1·48	1,541	1,638	¶na
Severn-Trent	1·25	1·47	4,490	4,776	14·1
Yorkshire	1·00	1·43	3,197	3,428	17·1

Mr. MacGregor: If we make any proposals for the nutrition labelling of foods we shall consult representatives of all organisations that appear to be substantially affected by the proposals. This would include representatives of health consumer organisations.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with which health consumer organisations he is undertaking research in regard to nutritional labelling.

Mr. MacGregor: In conjunction with the Consumer's Association and the National Consumer Council, we have commissioned a survey by professional market research companies into consumer's attitudes towards and understanding of various formats of fat and nutrition labelling of foods. The results of this survey are expected in May.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on which consultative bodies relating to nutritional labelling his Department is represented; and with what status.

Mr. MacGregor: With my colleagues I appoint members to the Food Advisory Committee and my Department provides the administrative and technical secretariat. One of my officials has observer status at the meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education.

SCOTLAND

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total National Health Service expenditure per head of population in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Gross public expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland in 1984-85 is expected to be £369 per head of population.

Salmon

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has plans to commission future research into the declining numbers of salmon returning to Scottish rivers in general and the River Tweed in particular.

Mr. John MacKay: Extensive research into the factors affecting levels of juvenile salmon production and returning adults is already carried out by the staff of the freshwater fisheries laboratory of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. I understand that the Tweed Foundation has commissioned a survey of the salmon and trout stocks of the Tweed basin from the department of forestry and natural resources of the University of Edinburgh and that a report will be published shortly.

Limited List Prescribing

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date notification of the Government's proposals for limited list prescribing was sent to doctors in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for health and social work in Scotland wrote to the British Medical Association's Scottish office on 12 November 1984 explaining our proposals for limited list prescribing and my Department's Chief Medical Officer wrote to all Scottish doctors about the new measures on 14 December 1984.

Rents (Orkney and Shetland)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications to the rent officer for assessment of rents in *(a)* Shetland and *(b)* Orkney had still to be determined on 1 September 1984, 1 December 1984 and 1 February 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of applications still to be determined at		
	1 September 1984	*1 December 1984*	*1 February 1985*
(a) Shetland	26	28	29
(b) Orkney	—	1	1

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the dates when the rent officer visited *(a)* Shetland and *(b)* Orkney in 1984 to determine applications for assessment.

Mr. Ancram: The rent officer visited Shetland in July 1984. He last visited Orkney in December 1983 since when only one application for registration of a fair rent has been received, in November 1984.

Drug Misusers

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to provide additional funds to support projects concerned with the treatment and rehabilitation of drug misusers.

Mr. Younger: In April 1984 I announced that £1·5 million was being made available over a period of three years to provide financial support for local initiatives concerned with the treatment and rehabilitation of drug misusers. Some 13 projects were accepted for grant.

I now consider that it would be appropriate to provide additional funds to secure an expansion of these services, and offers of grant totalling over £500,000 over a four-year period have been made to the sponsoring bodies in respect of the following six projects.

Sponsors	*Project*	*Cost in First Year £*
Church of Scotland	Residential centre at Tynepark, Haddington for rehabilitation of drug misusers	30,000
Joint Voluntary Organisations Addiction Project, Ayr	Day centre in Ayr for advice and counselling of drug misusers and their families and rehabilitation service	62,000

Sponsors	Project	Cost in First Year £
Tayside Health Board	Transfer of drug misuse project from Ninewells Hospital to a day centre in Dundee	28,000
Strathclyde Regional Council Social Work Department	Detached worker with drug misusers, Gorbals, Glasgow	11,500
West Lothian Council of Social Service	Information, education and counselling service based in Livingston	42,000
Drug Problem Resource Group	Residential centre at Kilmahew House, Cardross for rehabilitation of drug misusers	40,000
	Appointment of two social workers	22,000

The variety in the schemes being supported has been extended by the inclusion of two projects providing residential facilities. Grants will be payable over a three year period, after which we would expect successful projects to be funded locally. A sum of £100,000 is also being set aside in each of the next three financial years to provide grants under the provisions of section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 for drug misuse projects sponsored by voluntary bodies, from which £22,000 has already been offered to the Drug Problem Resource Group.

The total planned expenditure by the Scottish Office in support of projects to assist drug misusers will now amount to around £2 million during the period from 1984-85 to 1987-88. This expenditure will make a significant contribution in the provision of services to assist drug misusers.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Iranians (Intimidation)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received alleging that Iranian groups in the United Kingdom are being intimidated by Iranian supporters of the Khomeini régime; and what response he has made.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have not received recently any representations making general allegations of this sort, although a number of applications for political asylum from Iranians have expressed individual fears of intimidation. Such applications are considered sympathetically.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the representations he received on the discussion document on immigration appeals.

Mr. Waddington: Yes, if those who submitted comments on the document, and whom we are consulting about the hon. Member's suggestion, wish us to do so.

Reconviction Rate

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in the *Official Report* the reconviction rate within two years for offenders given *(a)* community service orders, and *(b)* custodial sentences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information available is published in "Reconvictions of those given Community Service Orders" (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/83) and in chapter 8 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1983" (Cmnd. 9363). Copies of both these publications are in the Library of the House. In comparing reconviction rates, it needs to be remembered that the main factors related to subsequent reconviction (sex, age on conviction, the number of previous convictions and the type of offence) are also likely to have influenced the sentence of the court.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police are engaged in each Metropolitan police district expressed in terms of police per numbers of recorded crimes per annum and excluding police engaged on diplomatic, traffic and similar duties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the latest available information is for 1983 and is given in the following table. The number of officers assigned to districts who were deployed on traffic duties could be excluded from the calculations only at disproportionate cost.

Number of police officers assigned per 1,000 notifiable offences recorded by district, 1983*
Metropolitan Police District

District		Police officers assigned* as at 31 December 1983 per 1,000 offences recorded in 1983
A	(part) Westminster	96
B	Kensington and Chelsea	37
C	(part) Westminster	38
D	(part) Westminster	34
E	Camden	29
F	Hammersmith	40
G	Hackney	28
H	Tower Hamlets	34
I	Heathrow, etc.	69
J	Waltham Forest, Redbridge, etc.	34
K	Havering, Barking and Newham	29
L	Lambeth	27
M	Southwark	29
N	Islington	33
P	Lewisham and Bromley	26
Q	Brent and Harrow	33
R	Greenwich and Bexley	24
S	Barnet and Hertsmere	40
T	Richmond upon Thames nd Hounslow	38
V	Kingston upon Thames, Merton, etc.	31
W	Wandsworth	30

would be inequitable in view of the large amounts of sectoral aids given to these industries in other member states. When the full text of the Commission's decision becomes available I shall wish to study it carefully in close consultation with representatives of the industries concerned.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

British Council

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what contact his Department has with the British Council about its experience in the teaching of English as a second language overseas and the relevance of this experience to the teaching of English as a second language in maintained schools.

Mr. Dunn: The Department is in constant contact with the British Council. However, the council's experience of teaching English overseas is as a foreign language, where the objective is to furnish the student with a knowledge of English adequate for specific, limited purposes. English as a second language provision in maintained schools aims to equip children with a fluency in the language equal to all the social and academic demands made on them in school and, later, as adults fully participating in British society. It follows that the teaching of English as a foreign language has only limited relevance to English as a second language provision in this country.

Colleges of Education

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total annual cost of publicly financed colleges of education; and what is the cost of teacher training for each student.

Mr. Dunn: The estimated annual cost of providing an initial teacher training place in 1982-83, the latest year for which full information is available, was £2,950 (at 1982-83 prices). This is an average figure covering courses of various kinds in both the universities and the public sector. There were some 32,000 students in initial teacher training in 1982-83. Students taking in-service or other teacher training courses not leading to qualified teacher status, and the cost of such courses, are not included in the figures. Most teacher training, initial and in-service, is now provided in multi-faculty institutions: the information available to the Department does not allow the full costs of such training to be separated from other costs in those institutions.

School Meals

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, of those local authorities which provide school meals, if he will indicate which authorities also provide alternative meals for children who are in need of special food.

Mr. Dunn: LEAs make some provision for special dietary requirements in school meals where the diet is required for medical reasons. Detailed information on this is not collected centrally.

Teachers (Advisory Committee)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the decision not to reconstitute the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers at the end of its five-year term.

Mr. Dunn: None.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers concerning the number of new teachers and intake to initial training; what analysis has been made of the cost of the proposals concerning intake to initial training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, is currently considering the advice submitted by the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers on the future demand for primary and secondary teachers and on future levels of intakes to initial teacher training. Decisions on the size and broad shape of the initial training system from 1986 will be announced as soon as possible taking into account all relevant factors including resource implications.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers, with the estimated cost of implementation and his Department's response to each recommendation.

Mr. Dunn: During its five-year term the committee has submitted 10 substantial reports and some shorter pieces of advice to my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. Some of the recommendations contained in those reports have been of considerable significance for subsequent policy decisions. Owing to the number and scope of the recommendations, however, a full answer to the question cannot be given without disproportionate cost. I shall send the hon. Member copies of the committee's reports and of the responses made so far by my right hon. Friends.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Her Majesty's Government accepts the desirability of the abolition of monetary compensatory amounts procedures at European Community frontiers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Monetary compensatory amounts are necessary to avoid trade distortions arising when market rates of exchange diverge from the special green rates used for the common agricultural policy. The Government accept that over time it is desirable for green rates to be adjusted to take account of underlying exchange rate developments, so that producers in all member states are supported at the same real price levels. But the specific timing of such changes must be decided in relation to all relevant economic considerations.

Veterinary Investigation Centres

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will detail the annual savings which he expects to be achieved by the closure of the Itchen Abbas veterinary investigation centre;

(2) in the event of the closure of the Itchen Abbas veterinary investigation centre from what source or sources the veterinary practices and veterinary surgeons currently using the centre would obtain a comparable service;

(3) what additional costs would be involved in terms of relocating staff or travelling expenses if the work currently undertaken by the Itchen Abbas veterinary investigation centre was to be taken on by other centres.

Mr. Jopling: The report of the study of the veterinary investigation service, to which I have referred in answer to earlier questions, is being considered in my Ministry. No decisions on the future of individual centres will be taken until the report has been made public and there has been opportunity for consultation with all the interests concerned including consideration of the points raised by my hon. Friend.

EC (Trace Elements Directive)

Sir John Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends raising the question of the European directive on trace elements with the Commission; or what other steps he intends taking to obtain uniformity of application.

Mrs. Fenner: The European Commission has under discussion at a technical level with member states proposals for a directive on the composition and labelling of liquid fertilisers and the labelling of trace elements in all fertilisers. United Kingdom officials are participating in those discussions which should ultimately lead to a proposal to the Council.

Dairy Quotas

Mr. Watson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is currently engaged in any discussions regarding transferability of dairy quotas.

Mr. Jopling: I recently issued a discussion paper, copies of which are available in the Library of the House, which explains the possibilities that exist at present for transferring quotas and sets out options for changes to the rules. I am currently considering the views of the industry on this paper.

Environmental Projects and Integrated Farming

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he is making in the negotiations with the European Economic Community to obtain funds within the agricultural budget for environmental projects and integrated farming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I have made it perfectly clear to the Commission and other member states that any decisions on the structures proposals must include satisfactory provisions for conservation, and I shall continue to press the matter.

Beef

Mr. Marlow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will maintain the beef premium scheme at least at its current levels.

Mr. MacGregor: We shall be pressing to secure continuation of the scheme.

Salmon

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be able to announce his conclusions on the proposal to introduce a salmon tagging scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: We have been carrying out a very thorough review of the practical problems associated with a salmon tagging scheme and are still considering the results. There remain a number of considerable difficulties. I shall make an announcement just as soon as we have been able to reach a conclusion on them.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* the recorded catch of salmon for the north-east drift net fishery for the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor: The total catches of salmon recorded in the Northumbrian and Yorkshire water authority areas by both drift nets and inshore nets were:

	Catches
1974	52,747
1975	53,239
1976	15,703
1977	52,886
1978	51,640
1979	43,464
1980	45,790
1981	69,124
1982	50,167
1983	77,277

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what scientific evidence has been commissioned by his Department or has been received by his Department on the effect of drift net fishing on the salmon stocks returning to Scottish rivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: In 1982 my Directorate of Fisheries Research published its Fisheries Research Technical Report No. 67, which was titled "Effects of the English north-east coast salmon fisheries on salmon catches". A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Last year officials were asked to carry out a further examination of the effects of the fishery. As I explained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) on 20 November 1984, their report was an internal one, based, in part, on information provided in confidence and it will not be published. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office and I are reviewing the management arrangements. We hope to be in a position to announce our conclusions before long.

Nutrition Labelling

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with which health consumer organisations he is consulting in regard to nutritional labelling.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 February 1985

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Exports

67. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the volume of United Kingdom exports in 1984.

Mr. Channon: Between 1983 and 1984, total export volume increased by about 8 per cent.

Manufactures (Export Prices)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in United Kingdom export prices for finished manufactures between *(a)* 1970 and 1979, *(b)* 1979 and 1984 and *(c)* 1962 and 1970, and the comparable German prices to the latest available date in 1984, distinguishing exports to European Economic Community countries and exports to all countries, with all prices converted to pounds sterling at the appropriate rate of exchange.

Mr. Channon: United Kingdom export price data are not compiled on a world area breakdown basis. For Germany, only average value indices are published on this basis. The changes based on the available average value data are in the table.

*Exports of finished manufactures**
Increase in export average value indices† (per cent.)

	United Kingdom Exports to:		*FR Germany Exports to:*	
	European Community	*World*	*European Community*	*World*
Increases between:				
1962 and 1970	na	‡34·4	na	46·2
1970 and 1979	na	220·1	231·6	238·8
1979 and 1983‖	na	42·2	22·0	24·6

* Standard International Trade Classification, sections 7 and 8.
† In sterling terms.
‡ 1963 and 1970: based on unit value indices.
‖ Data for 1984 for the Federal Republic of Germany are not yet available. The increase between 1979 and 1984 for the United Kingdom is 51·9 per cent.
na Not available.
Sources:
1. United Kindom Department of Trade and Industry.
2. Federal Republic of Germany Federal Statistical Office "Foreign Trade According to the SITC (SITC Rev II)—Special Trade".

Arms Exports

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial assistance is given through the Export Credits Guarantee Department or other official bodies to the export of arms or related exports.

Mr. Channon: The general range of ECGD facilities is available for arms and related exports, provided underwriting criteria are satisfied, and that an export licence, where required, has been issued.

Corporate Debt

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation to permit holders of zero coupon corporate debt obligations to claim for the full repayment of accrued interest in the event of bankruptcy of the issuer.

Mr. Fletcher: Clause 144(2) of the Insolvency Bill provides that a creditor who has contracted for interest to be paid on his debt can prove for such interest in full in respect of any period up to the date of the commencement of the bankruptcy. By virtue of the provisions of paragraph 11 of schedule 3 to that Bill this provision will also apply in the case of a corporate insolvency.

Departmental Services

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *579*, if he will indicate the profit and loss or income and expenditure account and the balance sheet of the services and groups of services listed in his previous answer.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Soviet Union

Mr. Cockeram asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy over maintaining freedom of trade between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Fletcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the adoption by the United Kingdom of clause 9 of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation's proposed international code on the use and distribution of pesticides.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1985, c. *654*]: The Government welcome the intention of FAO that article 9 of the proposed code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides should conform to the United Nations environment programme's provisional notification scheme for banned and severely restricted chemicals. Arrangements are being made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to provide for the notifications of control actions and of first exports which the scheme requires.

CIVIL SERVICE

Select Committees

68. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether the advice given to officials appearing before Select Committees has been revised since 1978.

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes. A revised "Memorandum of Guidance for Officials Appearing Before Select Committees" was issued by the then Civil Service Department in May 1980. A copy was placed in the Library at the time.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Port Powers (Report)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the report from the Inspectorate of Constabulary concerning the application of port powers, which was requested following the Jellicoe review on the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Brittan: The report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary considers in detail the security arrangements at our ports and it is therefore not possible to make it available as the hon. Member suggests. But I intend to make known my conclusions on the report in due course.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those arrested on miners' picket lines since the beginning of the mining dispute gave their occupations as that of student.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Eighty-five of those arrested in connection with the mining dispute between 13 March 1984 and 12 February 1985 gave their occupation as that of student. These figures do not distinguish between those arrested on the picket line and those arrested elsewhere.

Private Functions (Policing Costs)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to charge the costs of policing private functions, such as party conferences, to the organisers thereof; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no proposals for changing the present arrangements, under which charges are made only for those police services which would not normally be provided in pursuance of the general duty of the police to preserve law and order.

Metropolitan Police Services (Payroll Facilities)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the current arrangements for maintaining computerised payroll facilities for police services in the Metropolitan police area; and what arrangements he proposes to make for the continuation of such facilities following the abolition of the metropolitan counties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The provision of payroll services to metropolitan county police forces is the responsibility of the police authorities for those forces and it will, therefore, be for the new joint boards, which would be created by the Local Government Bill, to secure the provision of these services after the abolition of the metropolitan county councils. We propose to use the powers which clause 80 of the Bill would provide for the first three years after abolition so as to ensure that these and other support services are provided effectively and economically.

Leeds City Council (Staff)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* those posts within the Leeds city council for which he currently authorises payments under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Waddington: Leeds city council currently has approval for grant to be paid on the following posts:

102 teaching staff (82*)
33 education ancillary staff (29*)
2 educational psychologists*
1 adviser (education)*
1 education welfare officer*
5 nursery officers*
8 primary ESL† nursery nurses*
22 nursery nurses in nurseries*
2 nursery nurses in primary schools*
8 workers in ESL† unit*
2 Bengali speaking language workers*
1 librarian*
1 librarian's assistant*
1 employment development worker*
1 equal opportunities training officer
1 training and development officer
4 housing officers (1*)
1 social worker and social worker's clerk*
1 child guidance social worker
5 social welfare officers
6 youth workers (Asians)*
8 centre based workers (2*)
2 adventure playground playleaders*
2 youth club workers*
1 ethnic minority liaison officer and secretary

(* indicates posts subject to the current administrative review of posts approved under the pre November 1982 guidelines)
ESL† = English as a second language.

Departmental Services

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 6 February, *Official Report*, column 573, he will state the cost or net revenue accruing to his Department in each of the past three financial years for each of the services listed.

Mr. Brittan: Where the costs are borne directly on my Department's Votes and the income accrues to them, the details requested for each of the services listed in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend on 6 February at columns 572-73 are as follows:

£000

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Firearms licences*	—	—	—
Issue of travel documents for stateless persons			
Costs	134	197	209
Income	−96	−140	−103
Net cost/net income	38	47	106
Clamping and removal of illegally parked vehicles*	—	—	—
Dealing with nationality applications in the Home Office†			
Costs	3,463	4,523	5,085
Income	−1,934	−10,949	−4,593
Net cost/net income	1,529	−6,426	492
Inspection of premises under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971			
Costs	200	204	205
Income	−197	−204	−203
Net cost/net income	3	—	2
Accommodation of passengers refused entry under the Immigration Act			
Costs	944	822	821
Income	−1,136	−820	−833
Net cost/net income	−192	2	−63
Issue of Liquor licences by magistrates' courts	—	—	—
Issue of betting licences by Gaming Board and magistrates' courts‡			
Costs	1,833	1,905	1,795
Income	−1,752	−1,590	−1,996
Net cost/net income	81	315	−201
Issue of aliens registration certificate*	—	—	—
Issue of Police reports on road traffic accidents*	—	—	—
Issue of passports‖			
Costs	31,565	41,222	42,432
Income	−32,803	−33,233	−37,073
Net cost/net income	−1,238	8,089	5,359

* No expenditure incurred by, or receipts accruing to, the Home Office in respect of these services.

† This service was included under *(b)* of my reply of 6 February because, in 1983-84, in line with policy, full cost recovery was achieved for successful applicants, the cost of processing unsuccessful applications being subsidised. The figures given for this service are, consistently with the other figures in the table, on a cash basis. The calculation of the nationality fees is now on an accruals accounting basis (see annex B of the Government's reply to the third report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1982-83, HC 248: "British Nationality Fees" (March 1984, Cmnd. 9183)).

‡ Available figures include estimates of costs incurred by, and income from fees to, magistrates' courts.

‖ The issue of passports was a Foreign and Commonwealth Office responsibility until 1 April 1984 and the costs were borne on and income accrued to that Department's Votes. I regret that the issue of passports was placed erroneously under *(b)* of my reply of 6 February, when it should have been placed under *(a)*.

Interception Warrants

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons, holding office under the Crown, are expressly authorised by the Secretary of State to issue warrants in emergencies in his stead.

Mr. Brittan: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the procedure proposed in clause 4(1)*(b)* of the Interception of Communications Bill for the issue of interception warrants in urgent cases. This procedure is intended to replace the existing arrangements (as described, for example, in paragraph 9 of the White Paper "The Interception of Communications in Great Britain" —April 1980, Cmnd. 7873) under which the Secretary of State may give oral authority for interception. Under the new procedure, the official to whome the Secretary of State conveys his oral authority will sign a temporary warrant valid for a maximum of two working days, after which it must be renewed personally by the Secretary of State over his own signature if it is to remain valid. As under the present arrangements, only the Secretary of State personally will be empowered to authorise interception, and the official chosen to sign a warrant under clause 4(1) *(b)* will have to be expressly designated and instructed by the Secretary of State to sign a specific warrant. It is not possible to say in advance how many officials, over a given period of time, might be called on to sign warrants.

Seat Belts

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drivers have been prosecuted within the Metropolitan police area for failing to wear a seat belt in the last 12 months.

Mr. Mellor: In 1983 there were 84 prosecutions in the Metropolitan police district for driving or riding in a motor vehicle while not wearing a seat belt. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Civil Defence

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those local authorities in Wales which have established local authority emergency centres.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The list is as follows.

County Councils
- Clwyd
- Dyfed
- Gwent
- Gwynedd
- Powys
- South Glamorgan
- West Glamorgan

District Councils
- Aberconwy
- Arfon
- Brecknock
- Cardiff
- Colwyn
- Dwfor
- Glyndwr
- Ynys Mon—Isle of Anglesey
- Meirionydd
- Montgomery
- Radnor
- Wrexham Maelor

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those local authorities in Wales which have indicated that they will take part in the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation exercise programme for 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Clwyd county council is expected to take part in the forthcoming Intex 85, which is an international warning and monitoring exercise. No other information is available.

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (Incident)

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the incident at the offices of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children on Friday 15 February; how many people were involved; how many people have since been arrested; on what charges they were arrested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that at 12.20 pm on Friday 15 February 12 people entered the premises of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children and wrote slogans and sprayed foam in the offices; a tape recorder was also damaged. At 1.54 pm that afternoon nine people in the vicinity who were thought to answer the description of those seen leaving the premises were arrested for burglary. They were detained for questioning and were released from custody later than afternoon. No charges have yet been brought in respect of the incident, but police inquiries are continuing.

Parole

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the effect of his new policy for restricting parole in the first six months of its operation.

Mr. Brittan: My announcement of 30 November 1983 made it clear that from that date I intended that prisoners sentenced to more than five years for offences of violence or drug trafficking would not be released on parole licence before the last few months of their sentence unless there were exceptional circumstances.

Comparative figures have been specially obtained for the outcome of parole reviews of cases within the scope of the new policy considered in the periods January to June 1983 and 1984. These show that, in the first six months of 1984, only 13 prisoners within the scope of the new policy were granted release eight months or more before the end of their sentence. This compares with 113 of corresponding cases considered in the first six months of 1983.

EMPLOYMENT

Young People (Training)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the number of young people in all training schemes by year since 1977.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The number of young people entering Manpower Services Commission training schemes in each financial year since 1977 is given in the following table:

Entrants to training schemes for young people

	1977-78	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	**1984-85*
Youth Training Scheme†	—	—	—	—	—	—	370,220	380,000
Training for Skills‡	35,742	35,002	18,256	20,146	21,400	25,212	374	440
Threshold Scheme	379	579	874	1,750	1,460	1,386	1,358	1,175
Unified Vocational Preparation¶	—	—	—	4,500	6,034	10,000	240	—
Total	36,121	35,581	19,130	26,396	28,894	36,598	372,192	381,615

* Latest estimates.

† The youth training scheme commenced in April 1983 and covers 16 and 17-year-old school leavers and some older disabled leavers.

* The training for skills programme provides support for both apprentices and adults. The figures relate to 16 to 19-year-olds and cover first year apprentices (up to 1982-83), redundant apprentices and unplaced award holders.

The threshold scheme provides computer training for 17 and 18-year-olds.

† The unified vocational preparation programme has been superseded by the youth training scheme.

Community Programme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people on the community programme are currently undertaking training.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At the end of December about 1,000 people on the community programme were receiving specific off-the-job training under the adult training arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) on 30 July 1984, at columns 121-22. The Government plan to make available off-the-job training for 50,000 community programme participants. The community programme continues to provide a significant contribution in helping long-term unemployed people into permanent jobs and the addition of this training element should further improve the effectiveness of the programme.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many women currently occupying places on the community programme will become ineligible under the new criteria.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The new criteria do not affect people, irrespective of sex or marital status, who have already entered the community programme while they are employed on the programme. Once they have left the programme, everybody has first to satisfy the unemployment eligibility criteria before they can requalify for a place. In addition, they will now normally need to satisfy the benefit eligibility criteria for priority entry to the programme if they wish to take up a further job opportunity under the programme.

Our latest information shows that over 85 per cent. of entrants to the community programme over the last 12 months were benefit recipients just prior to entry. To this should be added those where the head of the household receives benefit payments which enable the partner if unemployed to claim priority and the posts where waivers may have been given for manager, supervisor and key worker jobs where it does not prove possible to recruit benefit recipients. It is therefore not possible to give precise estimates by sex of the numbers who will be unable to claim priority status.

National Freight Corporation

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Employment what score was given by the Health and Safety Executive at its last basic inspection of the premises of the National Freight Corporation, Brightside Lane, Sheffield, under the headings: potential risk to the public and potential risk to employees on the Health and Safety Executive's hazard rating form.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall write to the hon. Member about the inspection of the National Freight Warehouse and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Wages and Jobs (Research)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what research his Department has carried out or studied into the relationship between the abolition of the wages councils and the creation of jobs;

(2) what research his Department has carried out or studied into the relationship between a reduction in youth wages and the creation of new jobs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is extensive relevant literature. Of the studies which deal specifically with the possible effects of wages councils on jobs and with the link between youth pay and employment, the Department is currently considering the following in particular.

H. Neuburger. *From the Dole Queue to the Sweatshop*. Low Pay Pamphlet No. 30: Low Pay Unit 1984.

D. Forrest and S. R. Dennison. *Low Pay or No Pay*. Hobart Paper No. 101: Institute of Economic Affairs 1984.

C. Craig and F. Wilkinson. *Pay and Employment in Four Retail Trades*. DE Research Paper (forthcoming).

P. Makeham. *Youth Unemployment*. DE Research Paper No. 10: 1980.

Ashton, Maguire and Garland. *Youth in the Labour Market*. DE Research Paper No. 34: March 1982.

W. Wells. *Relative Pay and Employment of Young People*. DE Research Paper No. 42: December 1983.

OECD. *Employment Outlook: Chapter 5*. A survey of international evidence: September 1984.

Continuing Departmental evaluation of the young workers' scheme.

Motor Vehicle Industry

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment why the reduction in real earnings in the motor vehicle industry relative to the economy generally in recent years has not led to an increase in employment in that industry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cost of labour is an important determinant of employment, but it is not the only one. Other elements such as productivity, international competition and the design and reliability of the final product also play a part.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state, from the date of its inception and on an annual basis, the percentage of those who complete a youth training scheme course who go on to further education.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This information is not yet available. A regular follow-up programme of young people leaving the youth training scheme is now under way. Questionnaires are being sent to a 15 per cent. sample of leavers in each month a few months after they leave. Results from this programme will include the percentage of young people in full-time education or training at the time of the survey. Most of the trainees who completed their programme under the first year of the scheme left in August and September 1984 and information relating to these trainees should be available from late May.

Departmental Services

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his reply of 8 February, *Official Report*, column 705, he will specify (i) the cost to his Department of the major services listed for which no fees are charged or for which fees are charged which do not cover the cost, and (ii) the precise revenue and expenditure figures including all allocation of overheads for the past three fiscal years relating to services for which fees are set exactly to cover the costs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

(i) List of services for which no fees are charged or for which fees are charged which do not cover the cost.

	1983-84 £ *million*
Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	12·8
Health & Safety Executive: Advice and information provided on health and safety matters	*85·9
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service	1·0
Jobcentre service	147·7
Employment Rehabilitation	19·8
Services to Disabled People	2·9
Sheltered Employment Procurement and Consultancy Service	72·7
Industrial Tribunals and Employment Appeal Tribunal	9·6
Sponsored training	1·5
Mobile Instructor Service	0·5
Industrial Language Training	2·4

* Total net HSE expenditure, as all work, including any enforcement action is a service either to the general public or to organisations.

(ii) Revenue and expenditure relating to services for which fees are set exactly to cover the cost.

£ *million*

	1981-82		*1982-83*		*1983-84*	
	Revenue	*Expenditure*	*Revenue*	*Expenditure*	*Revenue*	*Expenditure*
Testing and Research Work (HSE)	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·8	0·9	0·9
Employment Medical Advisory Service (statutory Examinations)	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Professional and Executive Recruitment Service	4·8	10·3	5·2	9·5	8·6	8·6
Training within industry	0·4	0·8	0·4	0·6	0·4	0·6
Careers and Occupational Information Centre	0·4	0·5	0·3	0·3	0·8	1·0
Training for overseas students	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Training for Redundant Steel Workers	1·2	1·6	0·8	0·9	0·8	0·7
Instructor Training Colleges	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1

Power Stations (Demolition)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Employment what responsibility he has for ensuring the safe demolition of disused power stations, including the removal of asbestos.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Responsibility for ensuring the safe demolition of disused power stations, including the removal of asbestos, lies with those undertaking the work. Such work is subject to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation. The Health and Safety Executive is the enforcing authority at these sites.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the tonnages of pesticide active ingredients used in *(a)* timber treatment, and *(b)* other non-agricultural uses, made up by (i) pentachlorophenol, (ii) dieldrin, (iii) lindane and (iv) TBTO in the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

WALES

Civil Defence

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution his Department will be making to the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation exercise Wintex 85.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department will not be making any contribution to the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation in connection with the exercise Wintex-Cimex 85.

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of National Health Service amenity beds, deaths and discharges of patients and average daily occupancy, giving numbers and percentages, for each region for the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

	Number of amenity beds	*Discharges and deaths*	*Average daily occupied beds*	*Percentage occupancy*
*1979**				
Clwyd	26	104	10·72	41·2
Dyfed	19	45	5·25	27·6
Gwent	1	—	—	—
Gwynedd	17	16	3·81	22·4
Mid Glamorgan	3	36	2·59	86·3

	Number of amenity beds	Discharges and deaths	Average daily occupied beds	Percentage occupancy
Powys	11	—	2·02	18·4
South Glamorgan	3	8	1·58	52·7
West Glamorgan	11	17	0·94	8·5
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
*1980**				
Clwyd	16	98	8·38	52·4
Dyfed	18	43	3·82	21·2
Gwent	1	—	—	—
Gwynedd	15	33	5·02	33·5
Mid Glamorgan	10	30	2·29	22·9
Powys	12	—	0·04	0·3
South Glamorgan	3	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	11	22	1·16	10·5
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
*1981**				
Clwyd	24	94	9·79	40·8
Dyfed	18	45	3·09	17·2
Gwent	1	—	—	—
Gwynedd	15	35	3·56	23·7
Mid Glamorgan	10	43	6·29	62·9
Powys	10	—	0·76	7·6
South Glamorgan	3	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	11	27	1·54	14·0
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
*1982**				
Clwyd	20	95	5·37	26·9
Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	15	19	1·79	11·9
Mid Glamorgan	10	22	1·25	12·5
Powys	12	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	3	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	11	21	1·17	10·6
East Dyfed	17	39	2·89	17·0
Pembrokeshire	6	8	0·41	6·8
*1983**				
Clwyd	15	95	7·29	48·6
Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	15	19	1·29	8·6
Mid Glamorgan	10	18	1·04	10·4
Powys	6	—	0·04	0·7
South Glamorgan	3	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	11	20	0·73	6·6
East Dyfed	17	32	2·01	11·8
Pembrokeshire	6	18	0·55	9·2

*At 31 December.

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of private hospitals which offer acute surgical care and the number of beds and occupancy rate for all facilities offering such care, by region, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information is given in the following table. Details of occupancy rates are not held centrally.

Numbers

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983	
	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	1	56	1	56	1	56	1	56	1	56
Gwynedd	1	61	1	61	1	61	1	61	1	52
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	1	54	1	50	2	98	2	98	2	98

Water Authority	*Financial Target 1984-85 Per cent.	1985-86 Per cent.	‡Net Assets 1984-85 £ million	1985-86 £ million	‖Change in Surplus £ million
Anglian	1·36	1·62	3,170	3,376	11·6
Thames	†0·50	1·37	4,411	4,671	•32·7
Southern	0·91	1·41	1,923	2,047	11·4
Wessex	†0·61	1·40	1,044	1,110	•6·0
South West	1·26	1·54	961	1,018	3·6

Notes:

* As per Water authorities (Return on Assets) Orders 1984 and 1985.

† Temporary reductions from 0·71 (Thames) and 0·91 (Wessex) were agreed to deal with negative balances following 1983-84 accounting adjustments and other factors.

‡ The Return on Assets Orders require the return to be expressed as a percentage of the mean of the beginning and end-year net assets. The figures given in this table incorporate estimates of the movements of the relevant repricing indices and of additions to assets less depreciation. Precise figures will only be available when the accounts for these years are published in July 1985 and July 1986 respectively.

‖ It should be noted that these figures include the effect of inflation and new investment less depreciation on the value of net assets as well as the effect of the change in target rate of return. Also the effect of the target rates of return will be modified to the extent that authorities add to or draw down balances during each year.

¶ In both years, Northumbrian WA needs to over-achieve the target rate of return to break even.

• Change relative to 1984-85 targets given in note 2 above.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing, for each water authority in England, the cost effect for each of the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 of *(a)* the change in external financing limit compared to 1984-85, *(b)* the change in approved capital expenditure compared to 1984-85, *(c)* the extra income compared to 1984-85 corresponding to the change in target return on capital and *(d)* cash to be generated from cost savings or other sources, compared to 1984-85.

Mr. Macfarlane: The information requested, in so far as it is available, is as follows:

(a) External Finance Limits (including provision for MAFF grants)

Water authority	1984-85 £ millions	1985-86 £ millions
North West	87·0	79·5
Northumbrian	26·0	23·0
Severn-Trent	40·0	22·0
Yorkshire	34·0	31·0
Anglian	60·0	46·0
Thames	(34·0)	(60·0)
Southern	23·0	11·0
Wessex	16·0	21·0
South West	11·0	9·5
	263·0	183·0

Note: Later years' figures for individual authorities are provisional and subject to uncertainties arising from possible fluctuations in trading conditions and from the fact that external finance is the residual between large off-setting flows of revenues and costs. Publication of such figures could therefore be misleading.

(b) Planned Investment (excluding land drainage)

Water authority	1984-85 £ millions	1985-86 £ millions
North West	140·0	156·0
Northumbrian	35·0	38·0
Severn-Trent	111·0	119·0
Yorkshire	82·0	95·0
Anglian	94·0	97·0
Thames	100·0	109·0
Southern	56·0	61·0
Wessex	35·0	49·0
South West	33·0	38·0
	686·0	762·0

Note: The above figures show the investment which was planned at the time the EFLs were set. For later years the total investment provisionally planned for the nine authorities is £824 million for 1986-87 and £868 million for 1987-88.

(c) Income due to change in target return on capital

The hon. Member is referred to the answer given to his previous question.

(d) Cost Savings: Targets for reductions in real operating costs (called "Performance Aims") have been agreed with each authority as follows:

Water authority	Reduction in real operating costs compared with 1982-83 to be achieved by 1986-87 £ million, (1982-83 prices)
North West	−1·1
Northumbrian	−1·6
Severn-Trent	−7·2
Yorkshire	−5·8
Anglian	−2·4
Thames	*−18·9
Southern	−3·9
Wessex	−2·3
South West	−1·2

*To 1985-86.

Homes Insulation Scheme

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Welwyn Hatfield district council regarding the future funding allocation for the homes insulation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Welwyn Hatfield district council have asked for its initial allocation of £21,000 for homes insulation scheme grants in 1985-86 to be increased in the light of the demand for grants in their area, and have been allocated an additional £14,000 from the reserve of £7 million for the scheme in England held back for the coming year.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the allocation for 1985-86 in respect of homes insulation grant for each of the local authorities in Leicestershire.

Sir George Young: The following initial allocations for homes insulation scheme grants in 1985-86 have been made to authorities in Leicestershire:

	£000
Blaby	35
Charnwood	50
Harborough	40
Hinckley and Bosworth	65
Leicester	175
Melton	20
North West Leicestershire	35
Oadby and Wigston	30
Rutland	15

We have also established a £7 million reserve out of which additional allocations can be made to authorities in England as required by demand during the year.

Prefabricated Concrete Houses

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce the details of the arrangements made between the Building Societies Association and the National House Building Council for the assessment of methods of repair and for insurance of repair to prefabricated concrete houses.

Mr. Gow: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him of 30 January, at column 179-80. Good progress is being made. I will make a further announcement as soon as the arrangements are finalised.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice or assistance he intends to give to owners of prefabricated concrete houses built after 1960 and not covered by the Housing Defects Act but which the building societies are reluctant to handle.

Mr. Gow: The Building Research Establishment's findings on prefabricated reinforced concrete dwellings relate only to types designed before 1960. My Department is not aware of any reports that any type of prefabricated concrete house of more recent design is inherently defective and there is therefore no basis on which my right hon. Friend could consider designating such types of dwelling under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

I am aware that some owners of prefabricated concrete houses built after 1960 have encountered difficulties relating to the mortgageability of their homes. Mortgage lending is a matter for the lending institutions concerned. In view of the difficulties which I have mentioned, my Department hopes to have further discussions with the Building Societies Association on the condition of dwellings of non-traditional design generally.

House Building

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing starts have been carried out by local authorities in the years 1975 to 1980 on an annual basis, and between 1980 and the most recently available date; and if he will give similar figures for the private sector.

Sir George Young: Figures of housing starts in England in the years 1975 to 1983 appear in table 6.1 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1973-1983". Provisional public and private sector estimates for 1984 were published in table 2 of the Department's press notice No. 48 on 5 February 1985, and for sub-divisions of the public sector in table 3. Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Bottled Water

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of occasions on which bottled water was issued by water authorities for children because of high nitrate levels in public water supplies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: I am aware of only one case in the last five years. At Kirby Hill and Baldersby, near Boroughbridge, in North Yorkshire, the Yorkshire water authority regularly supply at any one time about 20 nursing mothers with bottled water. However, the two borehole sources in question will soon be phased out.

Urban Programme (Holiday Projects)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total sum allocated for holiday projects under the urban programme in 1984-85; and if he will make it his policy to maintain this allocation in 1985-86.

Sir George Young: Urban programme support for holiday projects in 1984-85 amounted to approximately £2·5 million. In 1985-86 urban programme resources will be concentrated in the most deprived urban areas, with partnership and programme authorities receiving the same initial allocations in cash terms as for the present year. Programmes for these areas are drawn up in accordance with local needs and ministerial priorities, and no national total is set for particular classes of project. Total resources allocated to the traditional urban programme will fall by about 10 per cent. and there is a high level of ongoing commitments, but resources for new projects, including holiday projects, will be concentrated on the most needy areas.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received recently regarding the level of funding for holiday projects under the urban programme.

Sir George Young: Letters have been received from two voluntary organisations about the level of support under the traditional urban programme for holiday projects in 1985-86.

Unsound and Defective Unit Homes

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to indemnify local councils like the borough of Southend-on-Sea from any actions stemming from failure to implement their legal obligations on the purchase of unsound and defective homes where the use of the necessary funds is prevented solely by his refusal to permit the use of more than 20 per cent. of the authority's capital receipts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gow: In setting local authorities' housing investment programme allocations for 1985-86 my right hon. Friend took account of the need for expenditure on defective prefabricated reinforced concrete houses. It is

for individual authorities to decide their own spending priorities in the light of their likely statutory obligations, within the total resources available to them.

GLC (Property Disposal)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when the Greater London council can expect to receive written consent under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for the disposal of 30A Lee High road;

(2) when the Greater London council can expect to receive written consent under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for the disposal of 18-26 Lee High road;

(3) when the Greater London council can expect to receive written consent under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for the disposal of 1A Longley road, Tooting;

(4) when the Greater London council can expect to receive written consent under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for the disposal of 2 Home road, Battersea;

(5) why the Greater London council's application under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 to dispose of 95 Battersea Rise took nearly six months to process.

Sir George Young: No application for consent under section 8 has been received in respect of 30A Lee High road or 1A Longley road, Tooting.

Applications in respect of 230A Lee High road and 14 Longley road, Tooting and also 18 to 26 Lee High road, 2 Home road, Battersea and 95 Battersea Rise were received on 15 August 1984. Section 8 consent was given for these by telephone and in writing on 23 August 1984. Following inquiries by the GLC, written consent was reaffirmed in early September and again in respect of 95 Battersea Rise in January 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications under section 8 of the London Goverment (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 submitted by the Greater London council before 1 September 1984 are still awaiting written consent.

Sir George Young: One. This application was received on 9 August. The GLC was asked on 10 October to provide certain additional information necessary to enable my right hon. Friend to reach a decision. To date no response has been received from the GLC.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from prospective purchasers of properties requiring consent under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Sir George Young: Numerous representations have been received. In the majority of cases consent had already been given. In others, no application for consent had been received from the local authority concerned.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act are still being considered by his Department.

Sir George Young: 117.

Docklands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the London Dockland Development Corporation has budgeted for the royal docks area compulsory purchase under the following heading *(a)* total budget for the London Docklands (East Docklands) Compulsory Purchase Order, *(b)* land acquisition, *(c)* relocation and compensation for businesses and other users of the sites; and *(d)* preparation of the order, legal costs, costs of public inquiry into the compulsory purchase order and other administrative costs of the order.

Sir George Young: The corporation has budgeted for £100,000 to promote the CPO for East Docklands, but an accurate estimate cannot be made until the conclusion of the objection period when a view can be taken on the likely length and complexity of the proceedings. It is not possible at this stage to provide a reliable estimate of land acquisition, relocation and compensation costs.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the London Docklands Development Corporation's operational plan, part 2 of the corporate plan, will be made available to the public.

Sir George Young: The operational plan has been available to the public since 31 January 1985. Copies were sent by LDDC at that time to local Members of Parliament (including the hon. Gentleman), local authorities, area health authorities and other interested bodies.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of acquisition/infrastructure and reclamation works, and the disposal price, of all London Docklands Development Corporation sites already disposed of.

Sir George Young: The disposal price of sites sold up to 31 March 1984 was £6·18 million, and the acquisition, infrastructure and reclamation costs directly related to these sites was £5·24 million.

There is, however, a contingent liability for compensation for land vested by Parliament in the corporation, which has not yet been finalised and which may add to the above acquisition costs.

The figures also exclude housing sites where a developer has been awarded a licence to build by the LDDC and the disposal of the freehold has not yet taken place.

Inter-Action

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money out of the total contract being considered for Inter-Action is for the transfer of its base at the Royal docks.

Sir George Young: A project application for Inter-Action's work in Docklands, which included a contribution towards relocation and refurbishment costs, was submitted to the Department but has now been withdrawn by the corporation.

Block Grant

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing for each local authority in England the amount of

block grant that each would receive in 1985-86 after close ending and holdback if each authority spent at the level of its 1984-85 budget plus 4½ per cent., and the assumption in Cmnd. 9428 of the increase in the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Library.

CIPFA (Exhibition)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for an exhibition by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House to arrange for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 1 April 1985 to Friday 5 April 1985.

Rent Act 1977

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the appeal court decision in the case of Pocock *v* Steel on 16 November 1984, he intends to introduce amending legislation at the earliest opportunity to safeguard the position of an owner who has let his property temporarily under case II of schedule 15 to the Rent Act 1977.

Mr. Gow: I understand the concern about the implications of this decision for some of those landlords who have let their property under the provisions of case II. I am considering what action might be taken.

Rate Precept Limitation Order

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the level of resources of each of the authorities subject to the rate precept limitation order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on Monday 18 February, at column 333-34.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the cost of extending youth training schemes for two years to all 16 and 17-year-old school leavers who are not already committed to further education courses.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Estimates of the cost of providing additional training opportunities for young people involve making a number of assumptions, principally on the size of the client group, the likely length of stay on the scheme, the rules for funding the scheme and the proportions of time young people spend in training and on work experience. Consideration of the range of basic assumptions yields a number of options for the extent and cost of future youth training provision and it is therefore not possible to provide a single estimate of the cost of extending the youth training scheme.

TRANSPORT

Iraq-Iran War

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many British seamen have been killed or wounded in each of the years of the conflict between Iraq and Iran; whether he will estimate the damage to British shipping for each of the years concerned; and what urgent steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to safeguard British lives in international waters.

Mr. David Mitchell: Prior to 1984 no British seafarers were killed or injured as a result of attacks on shipping in the Gulf. In 1984 two British seafarers were killed and six were injured. Three British divers were also killed in 1984.

Shortly after the beginning of the conflict between Iran and Iraq in the Autumn of 1980 a large number of ships were trapped in the Shatt-al-Arab. Among these were three British ships. It is understood that insurance claims for loss by detention in Iraq have been paid in respect of these vessels but my Department has no details of the amounts involved.

In 1984 two British-registered ships were attacked in the Gulf. The Charming was extensively damaged but the British Renown sustained only slight damage. My Department has no figures to indicate the cost of repairs involved.

Her Majesty's Government deplore the continued attacks on neutral shipping in international waters which put at risk the lives of innocent seafarers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has protested to the responsible Governments on each occasion when British seafarers have been killed or injured and following the attacks on the Charming and British Renown. The Government have also supported resolutions in the Security Council upholding the principle of free navigation in international waters.

The Government have been concerned about the safety of navigation in the Gulf since the beginning of the conflict. I have no powers to direct British ships not to enter this area, but I have periodically issued guidance on the situation to shipowners and seafarers through the General Council of British Shipping and the seafarers' unions, most recently on 15 February in these terms:

> "The Iran/Iraq conflict continues to present a threat to shipping in the Gulf. The Government's advice to British shipping companies remains that they should consider the latest information on the situation in the Gulf before deciding to send vessels into the area. It is for the companies to inform their crews about the risks involved. Masters should exercise all necessary vigilance whilst in the Gulf."

It is British shipowners' normal practice to inform their crews when a voyage will involve a passage within the Gulf and to afford seamen an opportunity to leave a ship if they wish before it enters the war zone designated under the National Maritime Board agreement between the General Council of British Shipping and the seafarers' unions. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has made arrangements for seamen to obtain advice from diplomatic posts in the areas of potential danger. British seamen can of course call on the services of consular officials in the usual way.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has that deregulation will increase the market for bus travel.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is widely acknowledged that deregulation will bring down prices and improve services on many routes particularly in urban areas; and that price reductions and improved frequency increase patronage. The scope for this has recently been demonstrated in Exeter, where changes in the quality of commercial services have brought a 100 per cent. increase in patronage. Deregulation of express services in 1980 produced a 45 per cent. increase in passenger carryings on NBC services alone, alongside an increase in the market share of independent operators from almost nothing to 30 per cent. In the only urban trial area, Hereford, no patronage figures are available but the 78 per cent. increase in bus kilometres between 1981 and 1984 indicates higher demand.

Gritting

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance is given by his Department on the gritting of *(a)* roads and *(b)* pavements for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Detailed guidance on the winter maintenance of the Department's roads—motorways and all-purpose trunk roads—is given in the Department's booklet "Winter Maintenance of Motorways and Trunk Roads: Statement of Service and Code of Practice", prepared in consultation with the local authority associations and last published in August 1984. The guidance refers to the treatment of the carriageways. No special guidance on the techniques of treating pavements has been considered necessary for all-purpose trunk roads.

A12 Chelmsford Bypass

Mr. St. John-Stevas asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will install crash barriers to protect against crossover crashes on the new A12 Chelmsford bypass.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave to him on 28 November 1984, at columns 478-79. Our review of the case for crash barriers on the bypass is nearing completion and I hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Mr. St. John-Stevas asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will install lighting on the new A12 Chelmsford bypass.

Mrs. Chalker: Lighting will be provided at the five interchanges on the new A12 Chelmsford bypass and I am investigating whether further lighting is justified.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the repairs and maintenance work on the Severn bridge will be completed; what is the total cost to date; and what is the current total estimated cost when the work is concluded.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the bridge was opened £10·3 million has been spent on maintenance and repair. As my hon. Friend told the House on 7 February 1984, at columns 763-64, the programme for strengthening is expected to take five to six years and to cost about £33 million.

Cycling

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will organise a conference on cycling in 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: I intend to hold a conference on cycling safety in April. Lord Nugent of Guildford has agreed to act as chairman and I will be issuing invitations to a representative audience shortly. I intend the conference to be a forum for discussion of a wide range of measures to help increase the safety of cyclists. I hope that these discussions will aid the Department, local authorities and others when developing their policies for cycling.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Community Budget

98. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the European Economic Community budget for 1985 is to be allocated to the social fund; and what proportion to agriculture.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The draft 1985 Community budget was rejected by the European Parliament on 13 December. The Council of Ministers has not yet considered a revised draft 1985 budget.

100. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the European Economic Community Council will consult the European Assembly about the 1985 European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The draft 1985 budget was rejected by the European Parliament on 13 December. When a new draft budget has been established by the Council it will be forwarded to the Parliament, in accordance with article 203 of the Treaty of Rome.

European Unit of Account

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the European Commission President's call for a strengthening of the role of the European unit of account.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Commission President's statement to the European Parliament on 14 January 1985 covered among other subjects, the European currency unit, which has since 1979 taken the place of the European unit of account. We support the principle of further development of the ECU. Specific proposals were discussed at the Finance Council meeting on 10 December 1984 and it was agreed by all Members that these required further careful study to ensure that the best possible options were adopted.

Wage and Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1954 the percentage increase in real wages before and after tax for *(a)* manual workers and *(b)* the labour force generally, together with the nearest equivalent figures, in each case, showing the increase in employment and unemployment, respectively.

Mr. Peter Rees: Pre-tax nominal wages for manual workers can be found in "British Labour Statistics" (Historical Abstract 1886-1968, and annual issues until 1976) and, for more recent data, in the *Employment Gazette*, table 5.4. Some figures for the whole economy are shown on page 110 of *Economic Trends, Annual Supplement 1985*. Wages and salaries, for all employees but not for manual workers, on a post-tax basis can be calculated using data for taxes and household income shown in the Blue Book, tables 9.6 and 4.4 respectively. Real wages can be derived using the retail prices index. Figures for total employment and unemployment are shown on page 99 of *Economic Trends, Annual Supplement 1985*. Figures for the numbers of employed and unemployed manual workers are not readily available, though up to 1982 unemployment figures were available disaggregated by previous occupation and were published in the *Employment Gazette* and "British Labour Statistics" Historical Abstract.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual increase in real wages and in employment assumed in the base run of his simulation of the effect on employment of a reduction in real wages; and if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each year the figures in the base run for employment, wages, prices, interest rates, the money supply, the public sector borrowing requirement, purchases of gilt-edged, exhange rates and imports and exports of manufactures.

Mr. Peter Rees: The figures in the base run used in the simulations were derived from a recent Treasury forecast. It is not my practice to publish forecasts in the detail requested. The results of the simulations are not in any case very sensitive to the base run values used.

£5 Note

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what official studies and researches are in train to decide a coin alternative to the £5 note.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to replace the £5 note by a coin.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No, Sir.

VAT (Registration)

Mr. Baldry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average length of time that it takes a business that has applied voluntarily to be registered for value added tax to be so registered.

Mr. Hayhoe: About three weeks.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Yeo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the increase in gross domestic product over the past 12 months.

Mr. Peter Rees: The preliminary output based estimate for gross domestic product in the fourth quarter of 1984 was 2 per cent. higher than at the same time a year earlier. GDP in 1984 as a whole however was 2½ per cent. higher than in 1983.

Committee on Enforcement Powers of the Revenue Departments

Mr. Forth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the response to his invitation to interested parties to comment on the proposals made in volume 3 of the report of the Committee on Enforcement Powers of the Revenue Departments, Cmnd. 9120, concerning development land tax, petroleum revenue tax, capital transfer tax and stamp duty.

Mr. Lawson: Responses were received from 12 bodies representing the interests of industry, commerce and the professions. Those responses show a wide measure of agreement with the committee's aim of securing the harmonisation of the rules of compliance and enforcement across all of the direct taxes in line with the proposals made in volumes 1 and 2 of the report.

The representatives expressed some reservations on individual recommendations and I have authorised the Inland Revenue to arrange discussions on them with the interested parties in the near future. I hope that it will be possible, in the light of those discussions, for the Government to reach its final conclusions in time for legislation in 1986.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will estimate the proportion of capital spending by central and local government undertaken in the northern region.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing revenues obtained from each rate of income tax in each year since 1978-79 at current and constant 1978-79 prices; and if he will also show the percentage increase in revenue from the lowest rate of income tax showing 1978-79 as 100.

Mr. Moore I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the fall in the exchange rate since the end of 1981 has had on inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Minimum Lending Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect the increase in minimum lending rate in 1985 will have on inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mentally Ill Persons (Community Provision)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the present level of community provision for the mentally ill.

Mr. John Patten: We are concerned to raise the level of community provision for the mentally ill, so that those mentally ill people now living in the community can receive a full range of support services, and so that people who are now in hospital but would be more suitably cared for in the community can be discharged to the right provision. Current ministerial initiatives, such as the development of co-ordinated systems of aftercare for schizophrenia under the "Helping the Community to Care" programme, and the funding of five mental illness pilot schemes under the "Care in the Community" programme, are designed to help both these groups. We are encouraged by the growth in the community services which is recorded in the Department's annual report 1984.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for the most recent 12-month period and for each year since 1979, what was the total number of bed-nights provided in each of his Department's 23 resettlement units.

Mr. Whitney: The total number of bed-nights provided in each of the Department's resettlement units since 1980 are in the table. No figures are available for 1979.

Unit	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*	*1980*
Alvaston	17,433	16,713	18,031	16,811	18,282
Brighton	10,826	10,854	9,140	6,561	8,479
Crown Quay Lodge	15,426	14,883	16,814	18,243	26,771
Fazakerley	18,093	15,471	18,019	16,748	22,271
Glasgow	22,865	20,961	24,072	25,069	22,964
Leeds	21,749	19,671	15,635	18,378	25,758
Leicester	29,398	24,678	25,113	27,440	28,279
Newbury	22,568	21,773	23,096	25,897	25,977
Plawsworth	19,897	22,000	24,912	27,991	30,312
Southampton	26,792	26,225	26,908	27,386	32,760
South Wales	14,128	14,340	19,457	18,489	21,503
Walkden	29,330	27,827	28,537	28,906	31,917
West Midlands	22,458	20,825	23,353	28,867	36,474
Winterbourne	19,850	20,126	21,212	24,009	27,539
Woodhouse	24,756	23,627	22,676	22,108	24,158
Bridge House	35,019	32,427	31,223	31,120	36,694
Camberwell	87,506	107,978	134,088	138,207	152,402
Camden	12,104	9,363	7,342	8,120	13,847
Cedars Lodge	25,505	22,844	22,073	21,867	23,261
Lancelot Andrewes House	14,193	16,142	14,354	16,642	18,425
Pound Lodge	20,205	23,127	22,653	22,359	31,345
Spur House	46,407	44,042	49,260	47,330	49,959
West End House	22,600	23,759	24,566	19,233	23,933

Note: The figures quoted relate to the following:
(a) 1980 to 1982 to the calendar years.
(b) 1983 to the period 1 January to 20 December 1983.
(c) 1984 to the period 21 December 1983 to 18 December 1984.

Hospitals (Costs)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost of a modern general hospital.

Mr. John Patten: The average total cost of a 300-bed first phase nucleus hospital is £16·5 million. The first 12 nucleus hospitals completed have shown an average saving on the capital costs of a conventional design of £1·27 million or 10·8 per cent. In other words, the lower costs of these 12 nucleus hospitals enabled one more hospital to be built than would have been possible for the same total expenditure using conventional designs.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what provisions he proposes to ensure that patients living in remote areas far removed from chemists' shops will continue to have ready access to preparations not included in the Government's limited list that are prescribed and dispensed at present by the local general practitioner on National Health Service prescriptions;

(2) what proposals he has to meet the situation of dispensing doctors who decide that, for clinical reasons, patients should be prescribed analgesics or laxatives not included on National Health Service prescription after the introduction of his limited drug list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We shall be announcing our proposals shortly.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total National Health Service expenditure per head of population in England.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is estimated that total expenditure on the National Health Service, excluding patients charges, in 1984-85 will be about £286 per head of population in England. The estimate is derived from the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428-II).

NHS (Director of Personnel)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the director of personnel recommended by the Griffiths inquiry is to be appointed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We hope to make an announcement soon about the setting up of the NHS management board.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has plans to issue a directive to regional health authorities requiring them to draw up plans for prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse similar to that issued in relation to the misuse of drugs.

Mr. John Patten: Services for the prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse are already better developed than those for the misuse of drugs. Consideration is being given to the need for further guidance to health authorities.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total sum of money paid, in the form of unemployment benefit, to male, female and young claimants in the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and if he will break down this figure in table form to show the amounts paid in each of the English regions;

(2) what was the total sum of money paid, in the form of unemployment benefit, to male, female and young claimants in the last 12 months to the latest convenient date in Wales;

(3) what was the total sum of money paid, in the form of unemployment benefit, to male, female and young claimants in the last 12 months to the latest convenient date in Scotland.

Mr. Whitney: The total expenditure on unemployment benefit in Great Britain in the financial year 1983-84 was £1,497 million. A breakdown of this figure is available as follows:

England	£1,244 million
Scotland	£172 million
Wales	£81 million

These figures are based on a computer analysis of girocheque encashments. A further analysis to show the amounts paid in each of the English regions could be provided, but only at disproportionate cost, and I regret that the information requested regarding expenditure by sex and age is not available.

AIDS

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what special measures are planned to safeguard haemophiliacs from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are acting to protect haemophiliacs from the risk of AIDs being contracted from their use of blood products. For details of the action being taken, I refer the hon. Member to my replies of 4 February and 5 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) at columns *450-51* and *525-27*.

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the action being taken to prevent and control the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are taking all practical steps to prevent and control the spread of AIDS, in the present state of knowledge about the disease.

We have set up an expert advisory group. The membership of the group includes experts on all aspects of the disease, from throughout the United Kingdom, and is as follows

Member	*Organisation*
Dr M E Abrams	DHSS Chairman
Professor M Adler	Professor Genito-Urinary Medicine (London University) at the Middlesex Hospital
Professor A L Bloom	Professor of Haematology Welsh National School of Medicine
Dr J D Cash	Consultant Adviser in Blood Transfusion (Scotland)
Dr Marcela Contreras	Director, North London Blood Transfusion Centre
Dr N S Galbraith	Epidemiologist—Director of the PHLS Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC)
Professor Alistair Geddes	Consultant Physician, East Birmingham Hospital
Dr Harold Gunson	Director, North Western Blood Transfusion Service, (CA in Blood Transfusion)
Miss Elizabeth Jenner	Nursing representative (St Mary's Hospital)
Dr D B L McClelland	Regional Director, Edinburgh and SE Scotland Blood Transfusion Service
Dr Philip Mortimer	Consultant Virologist in the Virus Reference Laboratory of the Central Public Health Laboratory (nominated by Dr Whitehead)
Dr. D Pereira-Gray	General Medical Practitioner (and CA in General Practice)
Dr A J Pinching	Clinical Immunologist—St Mary's Hospital Medical School
Dr P Rodin	Consultant in Genito-Urinary Medicine (CA in GU Medicine), The London Hospital
Dr R Tedder	Consultant Virologist—the Middlesex Hospital
Dr D A J Tyrrell CBE	Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) Director MRC Common Cold Unit
Professor R Weiss	Institute of Cancer Research (The Chester Beatty Institute)
Mr Richard Wells	Nursing representative (Royal College of Nursing)
Dr J E M Whitehead	Director, Public Health Laboratory Service
Professor A J Zuckerman	Professor of Microbiology (University of London) at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Dr M Sibellas	DHSS Medical Secretary
Mr T W S Murray	DHSS Administrative Secretary

The group has already met, and a series of meetings of the group itself and of its working groups has been arranged to take place in the next few weeks. The first priority is to advise on all measures necessary to control the spread of the disease.

We have been considering the desirability of making AIDS a notifiable disease. Having consulted the expert advisory group and sought the views of doctors specialising in the field, we are satisfied that the present reporting system to the communicable disease surveillance centre is operating effectively and we do not need any new powers at the moment to enable a count to be made of cases and to monitor the spread of the disease. Experience with other sexually transmitted diseases suggests that notification would not assist in control of the disease. We will, however, keep the position under constant review.

There might be very rare and exceptional cases where the nature of a patient's condition would place him in a dangerously infectious state which would make it desirable to admit him or to detain him in hospital. There has not so far been any such case, nor are we aware of any present risk of one. We are satisfied that we need to take powers now to be in a position to protect the public in the event of such a risk arising. It is my intention, therefore, to lay regulations under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 which would give reserve powers to authorities to detain a patient when he is in a dangerously infectious condition.

I must stress that these powers have no relevance to the overwhelming majority of AIDS patients. We have no intention of dealing with AIDS patients generally under greater restraints than other patients. We need these reserve powers for the very rare case that might eventually arise somewhere some time.

We have been following a policy of taking every practicable step to protect all sections of the public against the spread of this infectious disease. The policy has five main features.

First, and at the centre of our strategy, lie a number of public health measures aimed at health professionals and "at risk" groups. At the request of the Health Departments and the Health and Safety Executive, the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) has drawn up interim guidelines to safeguard the health of medical and nursing staff and others who may come in contact with AIDS patients and specimens taken from them. These guidelines, which were distributed on 16 January to all health authorities concerned will be reviewed by the ACDP within the next 12 months in the light of scientific developments in this field. The Chief Medical Officer will shortly be writing to all doctors giving guidance on the clinical factors and public health implication of the disease.

Secondly, leaflets have been produced by the Health Education Council to promote greater awareness of the risks of the disease. These are now being made available in large numbers to individuals in at risk groups such as male homosexuals and intravenous drug abusers, and to the public generally. So far as the voluntary sector is concerned, my officials have met the Terrence Higgins Trust to discuss the need for Government funding to assist them in the provision of information and counselling services to those affected by the disease.

Thirdly, measures are being taken to safeguard recipients of blood and blood products. We have strengthened our efforts to dissuade persons in the AIDS high-risk groups from donating blood. The latest edition of our leaflets "AIDS — Important New Advice for Blood Donors" has been sent to all regional transfusion centres and is being distributed individually to all donors.

Fourthly, tests to screen blood donations for HTLV III antibody are being developed and we are co-ordinating the evaluation work needed to ensure that such a test can be introduced routinely in the national blood transfusion service as soon as possible. We have written today to regional health authorities asking them to set aside funds in 1985-86 for the introduction of this screening test in their blood transfusion centres.

Finally, imported heat-treated Factor VIII for haemophiliacs is already available for prescription by clinicians on a "named patient" basis, and we are considering urgently a number of abridged applications for product licences. It is hoped that by April this year all the Factor VIII made by the blood products laboratory, Elstree, will be heat-treated. Limited supplies are available at present for clinical trials. We are taking steps to ensure that the United Kingdom is self-sufficient in all blood products as soon as possible. In particular, we have been investing £35 million in new developments at Elstree which should begin to come into production during 1986.

AIDS has attracted much publicity and public concern. It is highly regrettable that in some instances confidential details of individuals suffering from the disease have been made public. This release of information does nothing to create a more informed view about the disease and certainly does not help those affected by the disease. We will therefore be reminding health authorities that personal information about patients must not be made public without proper consent.

Shenley Hospital

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total sum to be transferred from Brent district health authority to the Brent borough social services accounts for the year 1985-86 in respect of the care in the community project to transfer 60 patients from Shenley hospital.

Mr. John Patten: Brent district health authority expects to transfer some £335,000 to the London borough of Brent in 1985-86 in connection with the Shenley hospital project. The precise amount will depend on the progress of the project. Until March 1987 the health authority is being reimbursed from centrally reserved funds as part of the "Care in the Community" programme of pilot projects.

Maternity Services Advisory Committee (Report)

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish the third report of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee.

Mr. John Patten: The committee's third report—on care of the mother and baby — is to be published tomorrow and copies will be placed in the Library. As the report completes the review of the whole field of maternity care for which it was set up in 1981, we have accepted the chairman's recommendation that the committee should now be wound up. We are grateful to Mrs. Munro and to her committee's members for their commitment of time and effort over the past three years in producing three valuable reports. The agreement reached between the

different professions represented and the lay members has been very impressive. We hope the same level of co-operation can be achieved at local level when the committee's advice is considered and put into effect. We shall be monitoring action taken by health authorities on the committee's reports through the accountability review process and will keep under consideration the need to convene ad hoc groups to consider any further particular issues that arise in the field of maternity care.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of extending housing benefit, on its present scale rates, to owner-occupiers.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 January 1985, c. *521*]: Owner-occupiers can already receive help with rates through the housing benefits scheme. The supplementary benefit scheme takes account of owner-occupiers' mortgage interest charges and the transfer of that help to the housing benefit scheme would not involve additional benefit costs. The estimated annual cost of extending housing benefit to the mortgage interest payments net of tax relief of other owner-occupiers on the same basis as for rent rebates would be about £100 million.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received a copy of "Families Rent Apart," published by the Child Poverty Action Group and Youthaid on the effect on families with working children living at home of the reductions in the parents' entitlement to housing benefit; if he will meet the authors of the pamphlet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1985, c. *166*]: I regret that my previous answer was incorrect. My right hon. Friend has received a copy of "Families Rent Apart" and the Child Poverty Action Group has recently sent me a further copy. We shall be studying this report with interest.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many discharges from hospital there were following diagnosis of septic abortion in each of the following years: 1967, 1968, 1969, 1975, 1980, 1982 and 1983.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 February 1985, c. *457*]: The available information is given in the table:

Estimated number of discharges (including deaths) from NHS hospitals in England and Wales with main diagnosis of septic abortion

Year	*Estimated number*
1967	2,530
1968	3,110
1969	2,080
1975	610
1980	380
1982	450

Prescriptions

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each of the past five years, the total number of prescriptions and their total cost, at 1984 prices, written by general practitioners; and what assumption he has made for planning purposes of the total number and total cost for each of the next three years, at 1984 prices *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding any limited list effect.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 February 1985, c. *731*]: The information requested is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*Number of Prescriptions (millions)*	*Total Cost £ millions—in 1983-84 Economic cost terms*
1981	319·6	1,191·7
1982	317·4	1,252·4
1983	330·0	1,346·5
1984	334·3	1,430·6
*1985	345·0	1,500·0

* Provisional.

The provision for family practitioner services expenditure for 1985-86 to 1987-88 contained in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd. 9428) takes account of savings from the limited list effect. Details of the breakdown of the provision for 1985-86 will be shown in the estimates which will be laid before the House shortly. The detailed information requested for 1986-87 and 1987-88 is not available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Buses

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will review the regulation which permits 102 children to travel sitting or standing on a 53-seater school bus.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. The regulations which govern the carrying of children on buses are being reviewed as part of a general review of the Public Service Vehicle Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1965.

Housing Executive

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total level of arrears owed to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for rent, rates and heating.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the total level of arrears at 31 December 1984 owed by both current and former tenants for rent, rates and district heating charges was £19·890 million.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants owe over £100 for *(a)* rent arrears and *(b)* heating arrears.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available in the form requested. However, I am informed that the number of current tenants at 31 December 1984 owing more than four weeks' charges for rent and rates was 41,140 and for district heating was 2,349.

Home Help

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland upon what basis those people who are granted a home help are selected.

Mr. Chris Patten: To ensure that those whose needs are greatest receive the home help service the Department of Health and Social Services has set out in departmental circular HSS(SS)1/80, a copy of which is available in the Library, criteria for assessing need together with a list of groups to whom priority should be given. In the light of these criteria and the finance available it is for boards to decide who should be granted home help.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are receiving weekly *(a)* more than 10 hours, *(b)* five to 10 hours, *(c)* two to five hours, *(d)* one to two hours and *(e)* less than one hour of the time of a home help in each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Oxygen Supplies

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans his Department has for the replacement of cylinder oxygen in National Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland with concentrators; and what clinical and financial benefits he expects to attach to such replacements.

Mr. Chris Patten: There are no such plans.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current state of the domiciliary oxygen service in Northern Ireland; what changes his Department is making to prescribing practices and supply; and what representations he has received from patients about such charges.

Mr. Chris Patten: Patients needing regular supplies of oxygen obtain it on prescription from pharmacists who deliver oxygen cylinders to their homes. Although this service is satisfactory, consideration is being given to the provision of oxygen concentrators for patients requiring large quantities of oxygen. No representations have been received from patients about possible changes.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total sum of money paid, in the form of unemployment benefit, to male, female and young claimants in the last 12 months to the latest convenient date in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is not available. However, the total amount paid in unemployment benefit in the 12 months ending 30 September 1984 was £47·417 million.

Mr. Thomas Power

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement detailing the total period of time for which Thomas Power has been held on remand, the number of court appearances he has made, the various charges he has faced or is facing, the charges he faced which have been dismissed, the dates on which these various charges were made or dismissed and the various dates on which Mr. Power was arrested;

(2) if he will make a statement outlining why Thomas Power has been held on remand over such a long period of time.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Remedial Teachers

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the Department of Education for Northern Ireland has decided to remove the one shared remedial teacher post from Killyman, Moy, Moygashel and Tamnamore controlled primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The decision to remove the remedial teacher post from these schools in the school year 1985-86 was taken after the staffing needs of the schools had been considered in the normal way taking account of their total enrolments, the number of pupils requiring remedial education and the total staffing allocated to each school.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the planned reduction in primary teaching staff in the controlled sector in the Southern Education and Library Board area for the year 1985-86; and to what extent this will lead to a reduction in remedial teachers.

Mr. Scott: The present allocation of full-time teaching posts to controlled primary schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area for the school year 1985-86 will result in a total reduction of four posts and no change in the number of remedial posts. These allocations may be altered as a result of appeals from the board.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the planned reduction in the primary teaching staff in the maintained sector in the Southern Education and Library Board area for the year 1985-86; and to what extent this will lead to a reduction in remedial teachers.

Mr. Scott: The present allocation of full-time teaching posts to maintained primary schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area for the school year 1985-86 will result in a total increase of four posts, including an increase of three in the number of remedial posts. These allocations may be altered as a result of appeals from the school authorities.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the planned reduction in primary teaching staff in the controlled sector in the Western Education and Library Board area for the year 1985-86; and to what extent this will lead to a reduction in remedial teachers.

Mr. Scott: The present allocation of full-time teaching posts to controlled primary schools in the Western Education and Library Board area for the school year 1985-86 will result in a total increase of nine posts, including an increase of one on the number of remedial posts. The allocations may be altered as a result of appeals from the board.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the planned reduction in primary teaching staff in the maintained sector in the Western Education and Library Board area for the year 1985-86; and to what extent this will lead to a reduction in remedial teachers.

Mr. Scott: The present allocation of full-time teaching posts to maintained primary schools in the Western Education and Library Board area for the school year 1985-86 will result in a total reduction of seven posts, including a reduction of one in the number of remedial posts. These allocations may be altered as a result of appeals from the school authorities.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total number of remedial teachers employed in primary schools in the controlled sector in the Southern Education and Library Board area during each year since 1981;

(2) what was the total number of remedial teachers employed in primary schools in the controlled sector in the Western Education and Library Board area during each year since 1981;

(3) what was the total number of remedial teachers employed in primary schools in the maintained sector in the Southern Education and Library Board area during each year since 1981;

(4) what was the total number of remedial teachers employed in primary schools in the maintained sector in the Western Education and Library Board area during each year since 1981.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Full-Time Remedial Posts Allocated

School Year	*Southern Board*		*Western Board*	
	Controlled	*Maintained*	*Controlled*	*Maintained*
1981-82	26	49	23	59
1982-83	26	52	19	63
1983-84	27	53	21	64
1984-85	28	53	21	61

Transport Bill

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if it is his intention to introduce all or any of the measures contained in the Transport Bill in Northern Ireland either by separate legislation or by Order in Council.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *376*]: I will monitor the progress of the Transport Bill and will in due course consider the application of similar provisions to Northern Ireland, where relevant.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Defence what impact it is estimated that the purchase of Trident will have on the resources available for United Kingdom conventional defences.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 5 February, at column 520.

Iraqi Military Personnel

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Defence if training facilities are currently provided in the United Kingdom for Iraqi military personnel.

Mr. Lee: A small number of Iraqi military personnel are currently undergoing training at United Kingdom military training establishments. It is not our practice to reveal details of such training, since this information is confidential between Governments.

RAF Trainer Aircraft

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make a final decision on whether the British Aerospace PC-9 proposal will be selected as the replacement Royal Air Force trainer aircraft.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the answer my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement gave my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 29 January 1985, at column 157.

Portsmouth Naval Base (Security)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will finance, or contribute to financing, security measures for Portsmouth naval base, in the area accommodating the Royal Navy museum, HMS Victory and the Mary Rose, and enable it to be accessible to the general public at all times irrespective of the security status of the rest of the naval base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces is already discussing, with other interested parties, arrangements for facilitating public access to the part of the Portsmouth naval base containing the RN Museum, HMS Victory and the Mary Rose. Security is one of the elements being considered.

Security

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many investigations are at present being carried out into alleged breaches of security within the Ministry of Defence; and how many such investigations have happened over the past two years.

Mr. Lee: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983	
	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds	Hospitals	Beds
West Glamorgan	1	29	1	29	1	29	1	29	1	40
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of authorised National Health Service pay beds, deaths and discharges of patients, average daily occupancy, giving numbers and percentages, for each region for each of the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

Health authority	Number of pay beds	Discharges and deaths	Average daily occupied beds	Percentage occupancy
*1979**				
Clwyd	14	477	5·94	42·4
Dyfed	9	266	3·12	34·7
Gwent	1	40	0·16	16·0
Gwynedd	9	228	2·46	27·3
Mid Glamorgan	3	32	0·85	28·3
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	1	5	0·94	94·0
West Glamorgan	2	39	0·55	27·5
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
*1980**				
Clwyd	12	494	7·82	65·2
Dyfed	9	337	3·94	43·8
Gwent	1	35	0·10	10·0
Gwynedd	8	259	3·61	45·1
Mid Glamorgan	3	47	0·54	18·0
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	1	9	0·64	64·0
West Glamorgan	2	53	0·48	24·0
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
*1981**				
Clwyd	12	570	6·97	58·1
Dyfed	9	338	2·85	31·7
Gwent	1	18	0·10	10·0
Gwynedd	8	274	3·64	45·5
Mid Glamorgan	3	41	0·67	22·3
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	13	23	0·37	2·8
West Glamorgan	2	85	0·87	43·5
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
*1982**				
Clwyd	12	319	4·79	39·9
Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Gwent	1	4	—	—
Gwynedd	8	219	3·39	42·4
Mid Glamorgan	3	24	0·16	5·3
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	13	20	0·42	3·2
West Glamorgan	2	73	0·46	23·0
East Dyfed	7	201	3·70	52·9
Pembrokeshire	3	85	1·10	36·7
*1983**				
Clwyd	12	554	6·37	53·1
Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Gwent	1	—	—	—
Gwynedd	8	203	2·61	32·6
Mid Glamorgan	3	46	0·89	29·7
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	13	47	0·07	0·5
West Glamorgan	2	108	0·86	43·0
East Dyfed	7	213	2·77	39·6
Pembrokeshire	3	100	0·30	10·0

* At 31 December.

Families (Aid)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to introduce a scheme of aid for families with children aged under five years similar to that operating in England.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am pleased to say that from 1 April we shall be making available a total of £300,000 for the three financial years 1985 to 1988. Funds provided for the Wales under-fives initiative will be primarily used to support innovatory projects in the voluntary sector which provide practical help for those with special problems, such as low income, parents isolated at home who find it difficult to cope whether in rural or urban areas, ethnic minority parents and children in women's refuges. The scheme will be administered by the Department with the aid of an advisory group of representatives from the voluntary and statutory sector to whom applications may be made as from today.

ENERGY

Gas Demand

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will publish his Department's latest estimate of gas demand in the United Kingdom between the current time and 2000.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My Department's latest projections of gas demand are those in its proof of evidence for the Sizewell B public inquiry, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Gas Reserves

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the statement on the Sleipner gas contract, *Official Report*, 11 February, column 23, what percentage of the increased gas reserves of 6·2 trillion cubic feet is *(a)* probable, *(b)* proven, *(c)* in the southern basin, *(d)* in the northern basin, *(e)* condensate gas and *(f)* in fields larger than 0·5 and 0·75 trillion cubic feet, respectively.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Details of the full breakdown of my Department's latest estimates of United Kingdom gas reserves will be given in the 1985 report to Parliament on the development of oil and gas resources (the Brown Book).

Power Stations (Emissions)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department has made any estimate of the capital and running costs and the energy penalty of installing *(a)* electrostatic precipitators to meet current standards for particular emissions and *(b)* the Wellman-Lord flue gas desulphurisation process, on a new 2000MW coal-fired power station.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB advises that, at 1983 prices, the capital cost of installing electrostatic precipitators to meet current standards for particulate emissions on a 2000MW coal-fired station is £16 million to £20 million. The running cost and energy penalty are negligible. The estimated capital cost of installing the Wellman-Lord flue gas desulphurisation process on a new station of this size would be £123 million. The estimated running cost would be about £30 million per annum accompanied by losses of about 4 per cent. or 76MW, in the station's output and of about 1·4 percentage points in its thermal efficiency.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department has undertaken, or is undertaking, an investigation into the relative cost-effectiveness of reducing sulphur dioxide emissions by *(a)* flue gas desulphurisation and *(b)* positive electricity conservation measures.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB has examined the costs of various flue gas desulphurisation (fgd) processes. It advises that the average cost of reducing sulphur emissions by this means at existing power stations would be about £550 per tonne of sulphur abated. The amount and therefore cost of energy conservation measures necessary to achieve a similar reduction would depend upon how particular measures affected demand for electricity, the speed of take-up of these measures and the rate of economic growth during the period concerned.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Administration of Justice Bill

Mrs. Peacock asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on clause 43 of the Administration of Justice Bill *[Lords]*.

The Attorney-General: I assume the question refers to the clause which was negatived at the Committee stage of the Bill in another place. I refer my hon. Friend to the amendment now tabled there in the name of the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Clive Ponting (Trial)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Attorney-General whether he authorised the Director of Public Prosecutions to speak to the British Broadcasting Corporation radio and television on Sunday 17 February about the Ponting prosecution.

The Attorney-General: I was not consulted specifically about this interview before it was given, but the director has my general authority to give interviews of this kind whenever appropriate. I am completely content with what he said.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Drug Offenders

Dr. Godman asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of those convicted for drug-related offences in each of the past five years who were registered drug addicts.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: This information is not available to my Department and I understand that the Scottish Home and Health Department is also unable to provide the information requested.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Mr. Wilson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many fixed penalty notices have been issued by procurators-fiscal under section 42 and schedule 2 to the Transport Act 1982; and on how many of these payment has been made.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Procurators fiscal may issue conditional offers of fixed penalty for the offences set out in both schedule 1 and schedule 2 to the Transport Act 1982. No separate figures are kept for schedule 2 offences. 58,233 offers were made in 1983 and 1984. Statistics on offers made and fixed penalties subsequently paid are as follows:

	Offers made	*Fixed penalty paid*
1983 (from inception on 30 June)	19,896	17,165
1984 (first three quarters)	29,705	25,844
1984 (total)	38,337	—

No figures are yet available for 1985.

The figures show that payment resulted in approximately 87 per cent. of cases.

PRIME MINISTER

West Balgrochan

Q48. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to West Balgrochan.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

General Belgrano

Q52. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister at what time on 30 April 1982 HMS Conqueror spotted the Argentine oiler which was accompanying the General Belgrano.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave him on 15 May 1984, at column 910.

The oiler was not sighted until 1 May 1982.

Parkhead

Q55. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Parkhead.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Welwyn Garden City

Q83. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Welwyn Garden City.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Dartmouth

Q90. **Mr. Steen** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Dartmouth.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 21 February.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 21 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 February.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is paying an official visit to the United States.

Civil Servants (Duties)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what guidance is given to civil servants on their respective duties to *(a)* the Government of the day and *(b)* the Crown in Parliament.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The main principles are set out in the introduction and paragraphs 9870-9871 and 9923 of the "Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code". The duties of civil servants are further explained in the chapter "What is a civil servant?" In the "Handbook for the new civil servant" (Civil Service Department, 1980). The "Memorandum of Guidance for Officials Appearing Before Select Committees" (Civil Service Department, 1980) makes it clear that civil servants who give evidence to Select Committees do so on behalf of Ministers. Copies of all three are in the Library of the House.

Falklands War (Rules of Engagement)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether the changes in the rules of engagement in May 1982 allowed for the sinking of the Argentine naval vessels anywhere outside the Argentine territorial waters regardless of their position vis-a-vis the task force.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend will reply to the hon. Member shortly.

DEFENCE

Falkland Islands

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimated cost of the Falkland Islands commitment in each of the next three years.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected expenditure on the defence of the Falkland Islands for each of the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: As announced in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd. 9428), the provision for Falklands costs included in the defence budget is £552 million in 1985-86, £450 million in 1986-87 and £300 million in 1987-88. Funding thereafter will be determined during future public expenditure surveys.

Nerve Gases

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department holds stocks of any precursor chemicals which can be combined to make nerve gases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No. However, the chemical defence establishment holds very small quantities of precursor chemicals for laboratory research into chemical defence measures.

Defence Expenditure (Statistics)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information is available to him about the rate of growth of Soviet defence expenditure in the past decade; and what was the rate of growth in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation expenditure over the same period.

Mr. Stanley: It is estimated that Soviet defence expenditure has grown at an annual rate of about 2 per cent. in real terms since the mid-1970s. Details are in the essay at annex A to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984" (Cmnd. 9227-1). The equivalent figure for NATO is about 3 per cent. As the essay makes clear, comparisons in this area are difficult and relative financial growth rate statistics alone do not represent an accurate indicator of relative output or relative capability.

Recruitment

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the present levels of recruitment to the armed forces.

Mr. Lee: Overall recruitment to the armed services remains satisfactory. In 1983-84 some 37,000 men and women entered the armed services on regular engagements and this year we expect to recruit a similar number. Recruiting targets are generally being met except for some specific officer categories, technicians and skilled tradesmen.

Procurement Spending

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current projected percentage of procurement spending in the United Kingdom for 1984-85 on *(a)* conventional and *(b)* nuclear weapons.

Mr. Lee: It is not the practice to make available details of year-by-year expenditure on nuclear weapons. Estimated expenditure on the nuclear strategic force in 1984-85 is, however, shown in table 2.3 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1984 (Vol. 2)" (Cmnd. 9227-11).

South Atlantic Campaign

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the South Atlantic campaign memorial will be unveiled.

Mr. Heseltine: I have already announced on 21 December 1984, at column 375, that the memorial will be unveiled in the crypt of St. Paul's cathedral. This will take place on 14 June 1985.

Departmental Services

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column 594, he will indicate (i) how the availability of spare capacity is identified and (ii) how marginal cost is calculated and whether account is taken of the ability of the purchaser of the service to pay; and if he will publish the guidelines for deciding whether significant publicity, recruiting, training or other defence benefits accrue to his Department from the services provided.

Mr. Lee: Spare capacity arises where resources can be made available without detriment to their primary defence role; for example, where standby capacity is maintained, or where the defence demand is variable. Availability is frequently identified as part of normal management responsibilities, with account being taken of the scope in the longer term for matching capacity more precisely to the requirement.

Marginal cost is calculated by assessing the elements attributable to the service in question, taking account in particular of the time scale involved. Market considerations, such as ability to pay, can play a part in fixing a charge, provided that there is a defence interest in providing the service at all, and that there is no loss to defence funds. A judgment on whether significant benefits accrue to MOD is made on a case by case basis. No central document lays down general guidance.

Teachers (Overseas Schools)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the review of allowances to teachers working in schools overseas which are run by his Department.

Mr. Lee: Allowances for all Home civil servants working overseas, including teachers employed by MOD, are reviewed every three or four years. Reviews are carried out by Treasury inspectors or by FCO inspectors on behalf of the Treasury, in accordance with arrangements agreed directly between the Treasury and the Council of Civil Service Unions.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the terms of employment for teachers working in schools overseas which are run by his Department.

Mr. Lee: United Kingdom based teachers working in service children's schools overseas are employed on three-year engagements as temporary civil servants. Their conditions of service are governed by regulations applicable to MOD United Kingdom based civilians serving abroad. They are paid in accordance with the current scales of salary for teachers in primary and secondary education, England and Wales — Burnham rates—and also receive London area allowance.

In common with other MOD civilians serving overseas, teachers are provided with free accommodation, and, depending on the country in which they serve, a tax-free foreign service allowance.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations were carried out by his Department during the review of allowances paid to teachers working overseas in schools run by his Department.

Mr. Lee: Detailed consultations are held during overseas inspections between inspectors and local representatives of the Council of Civil Service Unions. Individual Departments are not directly consulted.

HMS Fearless and Intrepid

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he has come to a decision with regard to the extension, refit, or replacement of HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to announce a decision regarding the extension, refit or replacement of HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what factors he is taking into account in coming to a decision on the extension, refit or replacement of HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: HMS Intrepid is undergoing a refit at present; HMS Fearless is planned to have a similar refit in 1987.

As I said in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 24 July 1984, at column *601*, we are currently examining the provision of future amphibious capability, including the question of replacing HMS Intrepid and HMS Fearless once they come to the end of their planned lives in the mid-1990s.

Cadet Force Officers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by Army district *(a)* the total number of instances of and, *(b)* the total amount involved in, claims submitted in respect of combined cadet force officers for training reported as having been carried out after the date of retirement or relinquishment of commissions of the officers concerned, over the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: No such claims have been submitted. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces is writing to the hon. Member.

Gateway House Hotel, Brize Norton

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the cockroaches in the kitchens of the Gateway House hotel, Royal Air Force, Brize Norton, have been eradicated.

Mr. Lee: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will investigate the matter and write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

Seat Belts

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to introduce regulations requiring the mandatory fitting of rear seat belts in new cars.

Mrs. Chalker: A decision will be announced as part of the Government's response to the recent report on road safety by the Select Committee on Transport, which I am now considering.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the observance by front seat car passengers of the legislation on the wearing of seat belts; and what figures he has for the numbers who have been prosecuted within the last 12 months for breach of the legislation.

Mrs. Chalker: The wearing rate for front seat passengers has overall been around 95 per cent. since the law's introduction. I am satisfied with this, but it is essential that it should be maintained. Information on prosecutions is not yet available for 1984, nor is it broken down between passengers and drivers. However, in 1983, 6,826 people were prosecuted for failing to wear a seat belt and a further 83 for permitting a child under 14 to ride in a front seat unbelted.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce his decision on the inspector's report on stage 2a of the north Devon link road or give a date when this result will be announced.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The inspector's report is still being considered. I am sorry that I cannot yet give my hon. Friend a date by which the joint decision will be announced.

Rail Accident, Severn Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what inquiries he has made concerning the death of four British Rail staff at the Severn tunnel junction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: In the early hours of Monday 11 February a gang of six permanent way men were clearing snow from the points at Severn tunnel junction when they were run down by a train. Regrettably, four of the men, including the man in charge, were killed. The Railway Inspectorate is currently investigating the accident under the powers of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act.

Departmental Responsibilities

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *569*, why no charge is made for publication of results of research at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory nor for the control and routeing of abnormal indivisible loads; and what is the extent of the shortfall in cost recovery for each of the services listed in part *(b)* of his answer.

Mr. Ridley: My answer given on 6 February, at columns 560-62, to my hon. Friend related to 1983-84. Since 1 January 1985, charges have been made for the publication of the results of research at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, set so as to recover the marginal cost of making the information available. The control and routeing of vehicles carrying abnormal indivisible loads forms part of the Department's regulatory control of the construction and use of vehicles of all classes. Departmental costs, along with those of the police and local authorities, are counted as part of the road track costs covered by general vehicle taxation.

My Department's total income from all fees and charges in 1983-84 was just over £80 million which represented a surplus of £2·5 million over costs of the services covered. For some of the services for which costs were not fully recovered in 1983-84 fee increases already

introduced will lead to full cost recovery in 1985-86. These, with figures for the shortfall of the income compared to total costs in 1983-84, are as follows:

	£000	As percentage of total costs
Public Service Vehicle type and initial fitness testing	290	75
Public Service Vehicle driver testing	40	12
Supervision of Approved Training Bodies for motorcycle Part 1 test	117	22
Register of Approved Driving Instructors	287	22

For other services, fee increases which will provide full recovery of costs are under consideration:

	£000	As percentage of total costs
Public Service Vehicle driver licensing	516	74
Heavy Goods Vehicle driver licensing	408	20

In the majority of the remaining services charges are set to recover full costs and the shortfalls arose because of variances from forecasts or adjustments between years:

	£000	As percentage of total costs
International Civil Aviation organisation		
Air Navigation Services (North Atlantic)	109	15
Commonwealth Air Transport Council	4	3
Marine surveys	71	3
Examination and certification of seamen	14	1
Vehicle and component approvals	61	3

For two services charges have been deliberately set below full cost recovery to mitigate the impact on the industry or the public:

	£000	As percentage of total costs
Fishing vessel surveys	550	83
Motorcycle Part 1 rider testing by the Department	286	58

One service will be significantly affected by provisions in the Transport Bill currently being considered by Parliament, and I have therefore postponed further considerations of the fee:

	£000	As percentage of total costs
Road service licences	785	75

In one case a public inquiry has been held and I shall be announcing a decision on charges shortly:

	£000	As percentage of total costs
Severn Bridge tolled crossing (1982-83 figures)	4,486	61

The standby costs of marine pollution services are borne by public funds, but the aim is to recover the total costs of responding to incidents from insurance claims. In 1983-84 total costs of the service were £2,105,000 and recoveries from claims £886,000. Delays in settling claims mean that there is no direct link between costs and income in an individual financial year.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Expenditure

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the United Kingdom's gross national product is spent on education compared with other European Economic Community countries.

Sir Keith Joseph: The latest information available in the Department relates to 1980-81 and is as follows:

	Education as percentage of GNP
United Kingdom	5·5
Belgium	6·0
Denmark	6·9
France	5·1
West Germany	4·7
Greece*	2·2
Ireland	7·0
Italy*	5·0
Luxembourg	5·7
Netherlands	7·9

* Information for Greece and Italy relates to 1979

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local authorities about the level of expenditure on education services in 1984-85.

Mr. Dunn: Each year representatives of the local authority associations hold detailed discussions with officials of the Department, within the machinery of the consultative council on local government finance, about the level of local authority expenditure on education services in the following year. In addition, the Department receives a good many letters from individual local authorities on expenditure issues in each financial year.

Engineering Undergraduates

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many engineering undergraduates there are expected to be in British universities and polytechnics by 1985; and how this compares with the number there was in 1979.

Mr. Brooke: There were 53,000 full-time and sandwich undergraduates on engineering and technology courses in British universities and English polytechnics in 1983. Figures are not yet available but a further increase is expected for 1984. The corresponding figure for 1979 was 50,300. The numbers of part-time undergraduates were 3,000 and 2,200 in 1983 and 1979, respectively.

Higher Education

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the present arrangements for funding higher education.

Limavady, Central
Drumahoe, Londonderry
Maydown, Londonderry
Eglinton, Londonderry
Newbuildings, Londonderry
Ballykelly
Bready, Strabane
Edwards, Castlederg
Killen, Castlederg
Gillygooley, Omagh
Castletown Coronation, Omagh
Omagh
Strabane
Sixmilecross, Omagh
Donemana
Strathfoyle, Londonderry
Jones Memorial, Enniskillen
Drumachose, Limavady
Artigarvan, Strabane
Greenhaw, Londonderry
Gibson, Omagh
Tempo
Fort James, Londonderry
Irvinestown
Enniskillen
Lack, Enniskillen
Lisnagelvin, Londonderry
Lisbellaw
Sion Mills (New)

Controlled Secondary Schools
Castlederg
Clondermont, Londonderry
Duke of Westminster High Kesh
Dungiven
Enniskillen High
Faughan Valley High Cross
Limavady High
Lisnaskea High
Strabane High
Templemore, Londonderry

Maintained Primary Schools
St. Eugene's Convent Senior, Londonderry
Rosemount, Londonderry
St. Columba's Boys, Londonderry
St. Columba's Girls, Londonderry
Nazareth House Convent, Londonderry
Holy Child, Londonderry
St. Tierney's Roslea, Enniskillen
St. Mary's, Newtownbutler
St. Patrick's Derrygonnelly
St. Michael's Boys, Cornagague, Enniskillen
St. Paul's, Irvinestown
St. Ronan's, Lisnaskea
Drumrammer, Limavady
Hollybush, Londonderry
Glendermott, Ballyshaskey, Londonderry
St. Patrick's Boys, Londonderry
St. Patrick's Girls, Londonderry
St. Patrick's Infants, Londonderry
Broadbridge, Londonderry
Termoncanice, Limavady
St. Mary's, Claudy
Strabane Convent
Barrack Street Boys, Strabane
Omagh Convent
Glebe, Sion Mills
Killyclogher, Omagh
Drumduff, Sixmilecross
St. Laurence's Fintona
St. Mary's Boys, Strabane
Cashel, Castlederg
St. Columba's Clady, Strabane
St. Teresa's Loughmacrory, Sixmilecross
Faughanvale, Greysteel, Eglinton
Mullabouy Cross
St. Patrick's, Newtownstewart
St. John's, Londonderry
St. Canice's, Dungiven
St. Colmcille's, Omagh
St. Anne's, Londonderry
St. Joseph's, Ederney, Enniskillen
Claudy
Steelstown, Londonderry
St. Patrick's Castlederg
St. Mary's Girs, Strabane
St. Martin's Garrison, Enniskillen
St. Joseph's Lisnaskea
St. Conor's Culmore, Omagh
Carnhill, Londonderry
St. Oliver Plunkett, Strathfoyle, Londonderry
St. Columban's Belcoo, Enniskillen
Slievemore, Londonderry
St. Columba's Londonderry
Trench Road, Londonderry
Dungiven Road
St. Mary's, Tempo
St. Theresa's, Enniskillen
Greencastle (Our Lady of Lourdes), Omagh
Christ the King, Omagh
Lenamore, Londonderry
Chapel Road, Londonderry.

Maintained Secondary Schools
Carnhill High, Londonderry
Our Lady of Mercy, Strabane
St. Brecan's High, Londonderry
St. Cecilia's, Londonderry
St. Colman's High, Strabane
St. Eugene's, Roslea
St. John's, Dromore
St. Mary's High, Limavady
St. Mary's, Belleek
St. Patrick's Boys, Omagh
St. Patrick's and St. Brigid's, Claudy
St. Peter's, Londonderry

Controlled Grammar Schools
Enniskillen, Collegiate
Limavady
Strabane

Voluntary Grammar School
Foyle and Londonderry College

NORTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD
Controlled Primary Schools
Larne and Inver, Larne
Carrickfergus, Model
Ballyclare
Buick Memorial, Cullybackey
Harryville, Ballymena
Eden, Carrickfergus
Glengormley, Newtownabbey
Gracehill, Ballymena
Ballynure, Ballyclare
Randalstown, Antrim
Greenisland, Carrickfergus
Whitehouse, Newtownabbey
Antrim
Kells and Connor, Ballymena
Carrickfergus Central
Mosside, Ballymoney
Whiteabbey
Portrush
Crumlin
Sunnylands, Carrickfergus
Abbot's Cross, Newtownabbey
Ballymoney
Moyle Larne
Bushmills
Whitehead
Ballymena
King's Park, Newtownabbey
Linn, Larne
Fourtowns, Ahoghill
Rathcoole, Newtownabbey
Carhill, Garvagh
Hezlett, Castlerock

Killowen, Coleraine
Portstewart
Millburn, Coleraine
Magherafelt
D. H. Christie Memorial, Coleraine
Maghera
Carnmoney

Ballykeel, Ballymena
Mossgrove, Glengormley
Leaney, Ballymoney
Victoria, Carrickfergus
Ballycraigy, Muckamore
Ballycastle
Macosquin, Coleraine
Castledawson
Silverstream, Greenisland
Antiville, Antrim
Templepatrick
Mossley
Greystone
Hollybank, Newtownabbey
Harpur's Hill, Coleraine
Parkhall, Antrim
Dunclug, Ballymena
Garvagh
Carniny, Ballymena
Ballyhenry, Glengormley
Ballee, Ballymena
Woodlawn, Carrickfergus
Ballyduff, Newtownabbey
Rathenraw, Antrim
Ashgrove, Carnmoney
Springfarm, Antrim
Earlview, Newtownabbey
Ballysally, Coleraine
Oakfield, Carrickfergus
Irish Society, Coleraine
Fairview, Ballyclare
Portglenone (New)
Hazelbank (New), Ballymena
Balnamore, Ballymoney

Controlled Secondary Schools
Antrim High
Ardnaveigh High
Ballee High
Ballycastle High
Ballyclare
Crumlin High
Downshire
Glengormley High
Hopefield
Maghera High
Magherafelt High
Monkstown
Parkhall High
Randalstown High

Maintained Primary School
St. Mary's, Portglenone
St. Mary's, Glenravel
Mount St. Michael's, Randalstown
St. Mary's Convent Girls, Larne
St. Nichola's Girls, Carrickfergus
St. Brigid's Convent, Ballycastle
St. Comgall's, Antrim
Stella Maris, Newtownabbey
St. Patrick's, Ballycastle
St. Louis' Convent, Ballymena
St. Mary's, Cushendall
St. Anthony's, Larne
New Row, Castledawson
St. Mary's Convent, Magherafelt
St. Trea's, Magherafelt
Crossroads, Kilrea

Anahorish, Antrim
St. Mary's, Magherafelt
Swatragh, Maghera
St. Mary's (Greenlough), Portglenone
St. Malachy's, Coleraine

All Saints, Ballymena
Toome, Toomebridge
St. Bernard's, Carnmoney
St. John's, Ballymena
St. Joseph's Boys', Larne
St. Patrick's, Ballymena
St. Brigid's, Ballymoney
St. John's Convent, Coleraine
St. Joseph's, Antrim
Glenview, Maghera
St. Mary's on the Hill, Newtownabbey
St. Joseph's, Antrim
St. Joseph's Boys', Magerafelt
St. James', Newtownabbey
St. Brigid's, Magherafelt
St. Mary's (Harryville), Ballymena
St. MacNissi's, Newtownabbey
St. Columba's, Kilrea
St. Patrick's, Ballymena
St. Joseph's, Dunloy, Ballymena
St. Joseph's, Ballymena
Glen, Maghera

Maintained Secondary Schools
Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballymoney
St. Aloysuis, Cushendall
St. Colm's, Draperstown
St. Comgall's High, Larne
St. Joseph's, Coleraine
St. Malachy's High, Antrim
St. Nicholas', Carrickfergus
St. Olcan's, Randalstown
St. Patrick's High, Maghera
Stella Maris, Newtownabbey

Controlled Grammar School
Cambridge House Boys'

Voluntary Grammar School
St. MacNissi's College

SOUTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

Controlled Primary Schools
Largymore, Lisburn
Brownlee, Lisburn
Dunmurry, Belfast
Lisburn Central
Seymour Hill, Dunmurry
Tonagh, Lisburn
Ballyvester, Donaghadee
Newtowards, Model
Castle Gardens, Newtownards
ballynahinch
Dundonald
Comber
Gilnahirk, Belfast
Anahilt, Hillsborough
Newtownbreda, Belfast
Holywood
Cregagh, Belfast
Hillsborough
Killyleagh
Victoria, Newtownards
Ballyholme, Bangor
Donaghadee
Lisnaharragh, Belfast
Clandeboye Road, Bangor
Knockbreda, Belfast

Bangor Central
Braniel, Belfast
Redburn, Holywood
Moneyrea, Newtownards
Belvoir Park, Belfast
Tyrella, Ballykinlar
Bloomfield Road, Bangor
Cairnshill, Newtownbreda
Clough, Downpatrick
Tullycarnett, Belfast
Ardglass

Leadhill, Belfast
Carryduff, Belfast
Grange Park, Bangor
Alex Dickson, Newtownards
Harmony Hill, Lisburn
Forthill, Lisburn
Derriaghy, Lisburn
Knockmore, Lisburn
Kilcooley, Bangor
Londonderry, Newtownards
Rathmore, Bangor
West Winds, Newtownards
Moira, Lurgan
Towerview, Bangor
Spa, Ballynahinch
Andrew's Memorial, Comber
Old Warren, Lisburn
Killowen, Lisburn
Kilmaine, Bangor
Academy, Saintfield
Downpatrick
Killinchy
Pond Park, Lisburn
Ballymacash, Lisburn
New School (Amalgamation of Ballyoran/Carrowreagh)

Controlled Secondary Schools
Castlewellan High
Comber High
Donaghadee High
Dunmurry High
Glastry High
Holywood High
Killyleagh High
Laurelhill High
Quoile High

Maintained Primary Schools
Hilden, Lisburn
Ballymacrickett, Crumlin
St. Joseph's, Lisburn
Ballyphilip Boys, Portaferry
Drumaness, Ballynahinch
Convent of Mercy, Downpatrick
St. Patrick's, Holywood
St. Patrick's Boys, Downpatrick
St. Joseph's, Carryduff
St. Patrick's, Ballynahinch
St. Mary's Boys, Newcastle
St. Bernard's, Wynchurch Walk, Belfast
Annsborough, Castlewellan
St. Finian's, Newtownards
St. Malachy's, Castlewellan
St. Mary's Girls, Newcastle
St. Mary's, Killyleagh
St. Brigid's, Rathkeltair, Downpatrick
St. Aloysius', Lisburn
St. Colman's, Lambeg
St. Luke's, Twinbrook
St. Nicholas', Ardglass
St. Mark's, Twinbrook
St. Malachy's, Bangor
St. Colmcilles's Downpatrick
The Good Shepherd, Poleglass
St. Mary's, Kircubbin
St. Kieran's, Poleglass

Maintained secondary schools
Lagan College, Belfast
St. Aidan's High, Glenavy
St. Colm's High, Dunmurry
St. Columba's High, Portaferry

Controlled grammar schools
Nil

Voluntary grammar schools
Nil

Southern Education and Library Board

Controlled primary schools
Lurgan, Model
Mullaglass, Newry
Annaghmore, Portadown
Markethill, Armagh
Hardy Memorial, Armagh
Armstrong, Craigavon
Tandragee, Craigavon
King's Park, Lurgan
Carrick, Lurgan
Hart Memorial, Portadown
Mountnorris, Armagh
Richmount, Portadown
Birches, Portadown
Cortamlet, Newry
Bessbrook, Newry
Edenderry, Portadown
Tullygally, Craigavon
Dromore Central, Dromara
Edendale, Newry
Abercorn, Banbridge
Craigavon
Waringstown
Iveagh, Newry
Kilkeel
Milltown, Banbridge
Closkelt, Banbridge
Annalong
Maralin Village, Craigavon
Moneymore
Howard, Dungannon
Walker Memorial, Dungannon
Clogher Regional
Carntall, Clogher
Dungannon
Cookstown
Edenderry, Banbridge
Millington, Portadown
Dickson County, Lurgan
Drumgor, Craigavon
Fivemiletown (New)
Brackenagh West, Newry
Ballyoran, Portadown
Bocombra, Portadown
Windsor Hill (New), Newry

Controlled secondary schools
Aughnacloy
Brownlow High
Cookstown High
Dromore High
Fivemiletown High
Lurgan Boys Junior High
Newry High

Maintained Primary Schools
Clintyclay, Dungannon
Tannaghmore, Lurgan
Armagh Christian Brothers'
Mount St. Catherine's Convent, Armagh
Cloughoge, Newry
St. Mochua's (Derrynoose), Armagh
St. Joseph's (Madden), Armagh
St. Mary's, Keady
St. Patrick's, Crossmaglen
Killeen, Newry
St. Patrick's Boys, Newry
St. Mary's, Dungannon
St. James', Markethill
St. Patrick's, Lurgan
St. Joseph's, Poyntzpass
St. Peter's, Bessbrook
St. Clare's Convent, Keady
St. James', Tandragee
St. Patrick's, Armagh
St. Anthony's, Craigavon
St. Clare's Convent, Newry
St. Joseph's, Ballymartin
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry

Star of the Sea Convent, Warrenpoint
Moneydarragh, Newry
Bellyholland, Newry
St. Colman's Abbey, Newry
St. John's, Gilford
St. Colman's Boys, Kilkeel
St. Patrick's, Mayobridge, Newry
St. Patrick's Convent, Dungannon
St. Patrick's Monastery, Dungannon
Primate Dixon Memoral Boys, Coalisland
Primate Dixon Memoral Girls, Coalisland
St. Mary's Boys, Cookstown
St. Brigid's, Coalisland
St. Peter's (Moortown), Cookstown
Derrychrin, Cookstown
St. John's, Dungannon
St. Patrick's, Dungannon
St. Mary's (Cabra), Dungannon
St. Mary's, Rathfriland
St. Colman's Girls, Kilkeel
St. Patrick's, Hilltown
St. Mary's, Annalong
St. Mary's, Derrymore
St. Peter's Boys, Warrenpoint
Loup, Magherafelt
St. Joseph's, Galbally
St. Mary's, Banbridge
Annaghmore, Coalisland
St. Colman's, Annaclone
St. Malachy's, Carnlough
St. Patrick's, Cullyhanna
St. Brendan's, Craigavon
St. Joseph's, Bessbrook
St. Peter's Boys, Lurgan
Scared Heart Girls, Lurgan
Jonesborough, Newry
St. Joseph's Junior, Lurgan
Seagoe, Portadown
St. John the Baptist, Portadown
St. Brigid's, Cookstown
St. Malachy's, Newry

Maintained Secondary Schools
Lismore Comprehensive, Craigavon
St. Catherine's College, Armagh
St. Ciaran's, Ballygawley
St. Columban's High, Kilkeel
St. Malachy's/St. Brigid's, Portadown
St. Patrick's High, Banbridge
St. Patrick's Boys, Dungannon

Controlled Grammar Schools
Armagh Girls' High
Lurgan College

Voluntary Grammar School
Royal School, Armagh

Human Rights

Mr. Budgen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received the tenth annual report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The report has been published today, and copies have been laid before Parliament. It covers the period 1 November 1983 to 31 October 1984.

The report focuses mainly on emergency legislation and electoral law but also covers a wide range of other matters which the Commission has considered over the year under review. These include divorce law, race relations legislation, community relations, young offenders and young persons in care and the Government's position in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights. The report concludes by proposing a review of the case for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

Copies of my response to the Commission's report have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the proposed general study by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, designed to increase the protection of human rights in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: The chairman of the Commission has informed me that the Commission intends as a priority to undertake a major study to examine the adequacy and effectiveness of existing laws and institutions in securing freedom from discrimination and furthering equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland. The study will include the detailed examination of the provisions of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, the legislation which established the offices of the Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Commissioner for Complaints and the Fair Employment Agency as well as the relevant responsibilities of such bodies as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and of the Commission itself. The Government share the Commission's commitment to further human rights in the interesrts of all the people of Northern Ireland. I therefore welcome and support the Commission's decision to undertake the proposed study and I look forward to receiving its report on this subject.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the number of terrorist incidents in each year since 1 January 1980.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1985, c. *450*]: The number of terrorist incidents* which occurred in Northern Ireland between 1980 and 1984 were as follows:

Year	*Total*
1980	1,044
1981	1,720
1982	915
1983	834
1984	592

* These incidents comprise shooting and bombing attacks against the security forces and civilians; the recovery of unexploded devices; and bombing and incendiary attacks against private and commercial property.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Customs and Excise (Staff)

4. **Mr. Steen** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proposed establishment, in the next financial year, for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise uniformed officers in Dartmouth and Salcombe, respectively; and how this level compares with the establishment in each of the last three years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Three uniformed officers at Dartmouth, and two at Salcombe, which is the same level as for each of the last three years.

Budget (Representations)

14. **Mr. Adley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the current year, he has received more, less, or about the average number of pre-budget representations; and what he deduces from this position.

Mr. Hayhoe: We have received many more representations about the Budget this year, perhaps because speculation and lobbying has been well above average.

Public Expenditure and Taxation

15. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the relative merits of *(a)* tax reductions for low income earners and *(b)* increased public expenditure in helping to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Lawson: The answer depends on whether employment is likely to grow faster in a high tax or a low tax economy. The Government take the view that, other things being equal, a low tax economy is likely to show greater dynamism, and thus be better for jobs than a high tax economy.

Value Added Tax

16. **Mr. Barron** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on representations he has received on the addition of value added tax on newsprint.

Mr. Hayhoe: Newsprint already bears VAT at the standard rate.

30. **Sir John Farr** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received in relation to the possible imposition of value added tax on children's footwear.

Mr. Hayhoe: Treasury Ministers have received some 370 letters.

39. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised in each of the last five financial years from value added tax on riding hats; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information is not available from which to provide an estimate. The reasons are given in my reply to my hon. Friend on 19 November 1984 at column 43.

22. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the number of representations that he has received about extending value added tax to include books, newspapers and periodicals; and how many of these have been in favour of the proposition and how many against.

61. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning value added tax on books.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn).

Economic Growth

17. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is currently the major impediment to economic growth.

Mr. Peter Rees: There has been healthy sustained growth since 1981, but currently the coal strike is the major impediment to yet better performance.

Married Man's Tax Allowance

18. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received calling for the phasing out of the married man's tax allowance.

Mr. Moore: I received a number of representations making this suggestion during the past 12 months.

Coal Industry Dispute

19. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to date in lost income tax revenue of the coal strike.

Mr. Moore: There are revenue gains as well as losses arising from the coal strike, but up to the end of 1984, the direct loss of income tax revenue from miners on strike is estimate to be between £150 million and £200 million.

Income Tax and National Insurance

20. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what current level of annual salary a single man is paying less in income tax and national insurance in real terms than in 1979.

Mr. Moore: In 1984-85, a single man whose earnings have increased in line with the average will pay a smaller proportion of his earnings in income tax and national insurance contributions than in 1978-79, if he is earning over £22,000 a year. At all income levels, those whose earnings have risen in line with the national average have seen a real increase in their take-home pay since 1978-79.

Interest Rates

21. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he intends to take to reduce the level of interest rates.

Mr. Lawson: Interest rates will be at whatever level is required to secure sound money and continued downward pressure on inflation.

EC (Budgetary Discipline)

23. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied that the effective budgetary discipline laid down by the Government as a condition for increasing the Common Market's own resources is being fulfilled by the Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Commission last year specifically endorsed those parts of the budgetary discipline agreement that apply to it. They have stated that the 1985 agricultural price proposals have been put forward in accordance with budgetary discipline.

Unemployment (Labour Costs)

24. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicated how far he estimates labour costs would need to fall for unemployment to halve.

Mr. Hayhoe: Treasury estimates indicate that if real wages had remained constant since 1981 instead of rising by about 3 per cent. a year employment might in time have been 1 million to 2 million higher.

Mortgages (Income Tax Relief)

25. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average amount of income tax relief on interest paid to owner-occupiers who have mortgages; and what has been the increase since 1979.

Mr. Moore: The average cost of mortgage interest relief per mortgagor is about £500 in 1984-85 compared with £200 in 1978-79.

Shipping Industry

26. **Mr. Hill** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received since 1 January about the fiscal treatment of the United Kingdom shipping industry.

Mr. Moore: A number of such representations has been received. These are being carefully considered.

Exchange Rates

27. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the present level of sterling exchange rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statements to the House on 14 and 29 January and his evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on 28 January.

31. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Her Majesty's Treasury uses any index of the effective sterling exchange rate separate from that published daily by the Bank of England.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. The sterling exchange rate index, formerly known as sterling's effective exchange rate, is published by the Bank of England at 8.30 am and thereafter hourly from 9 am to 4 pm inclusive. Monthly averages for sterling's trade-weighted index against currencies in the EMS exchange rate mechanism are published in the CSO's "Financial Statistics."

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the change in the nominal and real exchange rates for the pound sterling compared with the deutschmark since March 1983; and what is the corresponding increase or decrease in base rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage changes since March 1983

	per cent.
Nominal DM/£ exchange rate*	− ½
Real DM/£ exchange rate†	+7½
United Kingdom base rates‡ ,	+3

* Up to January 1985.
† ie. the nominal rate adjusted for movements in producer prices in the two countries up to November 1984 (latest available data).
‡ Percentage point change since 1 March 1983.

Such comparisons can be misleading, as they are highly sensitive to the particular time period chosen.

Minimum Lending Rate

28. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to industry of each 1 per cent. increase in minimum lending rate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Bank of England ceased to post a continuous minimum lending rate on 20 August 1981. It announced a minimum lending rate of 12 per cent. on 14 January for that day only. As far as bank base rates are concerned, the annual cost of each 1 per cent. rise in terms of higher net interest payments of industrial and commercial companies is about £250 million.

38. **Mr. Latham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for reducing minimum lending rate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Bank of England on 20 August 1981 ceased to post a continuous minimum lending rate. It announced a minimum lending rate of 12 per cent. on 14 January for that day only. As to the Government's approach to interest rates generally, it is that they should be at whatever level is necessary to secure sound monetary conditions and continuing downward financial pressure on inflation. That is the only way to achieve a sustained reduction in interest rates.

Economic Activity

29. **Mr. Knox** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there have been any further signs of an increase in economic activity.

Mr. Peter Rees: Yes. Non-oil export volumes rose 9½ per cent. in real terms in 1984. GDP on the output measure rose by 2½ per cent. in 1984 compared with 1983.

Government Spending

32. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures will be taken by his Department following the conclusions of the report on Government spending.

Mr. Peter Rees: The Treasury is preparing action documents by 1 April. It is too early to say what detailed changes may be made to the management of departmental procurement as a result of the report.

Pensions

33. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received from the Trades Union Congress and individual trade unions about the possible proposals to tax pensions benefits.

59. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received about the taxation of capital pension payments.

Mr. Moore: A considerable number of letters about pension provisions has been received, in addition to representations from various trade associations, trades unions and other representative bodies.

Mr. Brooke: Improvements are needed to secure greater selectivity in funding and greater attention to cost-effectiveness and value for money. These issues will be discussed in the Green Paper on the future development of higher education to be published later this year.

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage of 18-year-olds currently participating in higher education in England and Wales; and how this figure compares with other member countries of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Brooke: The available information is as follows:

	Age range	*Participation rate (1981-82)**
France	18-20	34·0
Germany	19-21	†19·5
Italy	19-21	25·1
Netherlands	18-20	25·7
United Kingdom	18-19	31·4

* New entrants (all ages) to full-time and part-time higher education as a percentage of the average population in the most relevant age range.
† 1980

Information for other member states in the Community is not readily available.

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the retention of sixth forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities wishing to terminate sixth form provision in 11 to 18 schools must publish proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980. The Department's circular 4/82 makes it clear that my right hon. Friend would not normally approve proposals which have as their consequence the closure or significant change of character of schools which, by a sustained record of success in the provision made for sixth form education, had already proved their worth under existing arrangements, and in his judgment could continue to do so, except where he was satisfied that the prima facie case for their retention was displaced by other compelling educational considerations.

Secondary Education (Rochdale)

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to complete his consultations on the Rochdale education authority's proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education; and if he will announce his decision in time for the planned implementation.

Mr. Dunn: No proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education have been published by the Rochdale local education authority.

Primary Schools

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in England in real terms in the most recent year for which figures are available; and how much was spent per pupil in the primary schools in the Rochdale metropolitan district.

Mr. Dunn: The net institutional recurrent expenditure per primary school pupil in 1982-83, the latest date for which full information is available, was, in 1984-85 real terms, £745 for England and £735 for Rochdale.

School Closures, Staffordshire

Mr. Forrester asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to publish his decision in respect of the proposals for school closures by the Staffordshire education committee in the following areas: *(a)* Stoke on Trent, *(b)* Burton on Trent and *(c)* Rugeley.

Mr. Dunn: Staffordshire county council was informed today that my right hon. Friend has approved its proposals for the reorganisation of secondary schools in Rugeley. He is aware that the authority is concerned to receive his decisions on the other proposals to which the hon. Member refers; the council will be informed of these as soon as he has completed his consideration of each case.

Manchester (Education Capital Allowance)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had from the town clerk of Manchester regarding the education capital allocation to the City of Manchester for 1985-86; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I received a letter from the town clerk of Manchester on 18 February expressing the serious concern of the education committee of the City of Manchester about the size of the authority's education capital allocation for 1985-86 and seeking an increase in that allocation. Officials of the Department are arranging to meet officers of the authority at an early date to discuss the issues raised in the letter.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the production of fresh milk has been discontinued on the island of St. Helena.

Mr. Renton: The St. Helena Government closed the island's only dairy for economic reasons in 1983. It was operating on a continuous deficit because of high production and distribution costs, low demand, and a local preference for the cheaper and more convenient condensed and powdered milks which are in plentiful supply from the United Kingdom.

ENVIRONMENT

National Heritage

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further help he intends to give the National Heritage Memorial Fund to continue the work of preserving the national heritage.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Government recognise as an important part of the national heritage the Adam masterpiece of Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, the contents and grounds of Weston Park, Shropshire, and the furniture made by Thomas Chippendale for Nostell Priory in Yorkshire. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for the Arts and I accept that the complex negotiations needed to secure the future of these properties will make heavy calls on the National Heritage Memorial Fund on top of

the other varied demands facing the fund. The Government are therefore to provide the fund with additional resources. This will mean that, if no other source of funds is available, the fund will be in a position to negotiate solutions which preserve these three estates at reasonable cost to the taxpayer.

The purpose of these negotiations will be to bring about arrangements to transfer the properties by private treaty to institutions concerned with their preservation and public enjoyment. The transfer values will take into account the owners' liability to capital taxes. If these negotiations succeed, the general public will benefit by securing access to three important collections at considerable less cost than would have been possible on the open market.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the provision for grant-in-aid to the National Heritage Memorial Fund will be increased to £29 million for 1984-85. £3 million of this will be funded from savings elsewhere. Within Class VIII, Vote 4 there will be an increase in the cash limit of £22 million. £7 million of this will be secured through economies in the Department's running costs on Class VIII, Vote 5, and £15 million from a reduction on the New Town Non-voted cash limit DOE/NT 1. There will therefore be no overall increase in public expenditure. The effect of these changes on the relevant cash limit are as set out in the following table:

£'000

	Existing Cash Limit	*Increase Decrease*	*Revised Cash Limit*
Class VIII Vote 4	92,963	+22,000	114,963
Class VIII Vote 5	171,995	− 7,000	164,995
Non-voted cash limit DOE NT 1	46,700	−15,000	31,700

West Midlands (Industrial Land)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the amount of derelict industrial land in the West Midlands county council area.

Mr. Macfarlane: This information is not available in the form requested. The land in the 1982 derelict land survey is not broken down sufficiently to identify that which is industrial. There are, however, 2,000 acres in the West Midlands county council area listed in the survey under the "other" category, which includes industrial dereliction. A copy of the 1982 survey is available in the Library.

Lead Pollution

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) *Official Report*, 12 February, column 86, if he will quantify the substantial reduction in concentrations of lead in the air to which he referred.

Mr. Waldegrave: Most of the lead in urban air is derived from lead in petrol. It is self-evident that a substantial reduction in the lead content of petrol will have a substantial effect on the concentrations of lead in urban air. However, there are many uncertainties in quantifying this relationship, and I prefer to await the results of the monitoring programme now under way than to speculate on the actual size of the reductions. Improvements in air quality as a result of the proposed stricter emission controls on lead works will be local and will vary with the local circumstances.

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has about the effect of reductions in the lead content of petrol in other countries on the concentrations of lead in the air.

Mr. Waldegrave: The evidence on the reductions found in other countries is limited and its relevance to the United Kingdom is uncertain because of differing local conditions. Probably the most relevant information is that from Germany. In Frankfurt, after the lead content of petrol was reduced from 0·4 to 0·15 grammes per litre, lead in air concentrations at a typical city centre site fell by about 75 per cent. at street level. The reported reduction in an outer suburb was 35 per cent.

Council House Sales

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities exercise the discretion given to them to make grants to assist tenants in their legal costs in exercising the right to buy their homes.

Sir George Young: Section 21 of the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 gives local authorities a discretionary power to contribute towards the costs incurred by a council tenant or former tenant in obtaining a private sector mortgage. Information on the number of authorities currently using this power is not available.

Property Disposal

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that all consent applications under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 are processed within one month of submission.

Sir George Young: In the period up to 31 January 1985, 78 per cent. of section 8 applications were processed within four weeks and 92 per cent. within five weeks.

Applications are dealt with expeditiously, but a small minority of applications can remain outstanding for substantial periods pending the receipt of adequate supporting information from the authorities concerned.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites of special scientific interest damaged or destroyed by pesticides since renotification under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write shortly to my hon. Friend with details for England and Scotland. For Wales I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Wales, to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 18 December 1984, at columns 77-78.

Metropolitan County Councils (Revenue Costs)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the total revenue cost for

1983-84 in each of the metropolitan county councils for *(a)* planning, *(b)* highways and *(c)* central administration and express those revenue costs as a percentage of the overall revenue budget for each metropolitan county council.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following is the available information derived from the latest outturn data supplied by the metropolitan county councils:

Gross revenue rate fund expenditure in cash and as a percentage of aggregate gross revenue rate fund expenditure for 1983-84

	Town and Country Planning		*Highways*		*General Administration**		*Aggregate gross rate fund revenue expenditure*	
	£000	*per cent.*	*£000*	*per cent.*	*£000*	*per cent.*	*£000*	*per cent.*
Greater Manchester	6,271	1·7	36,874	9·8	2,864	0·8	375,313	100·0
Merseyside	4,765	1·7	26,909	9·4	1,566	0·5	287,056	100·0
South Yorkshire	4,608	1·9	38,129	15·6	2,763	1·1	243,921	100·0
Tyne and Wear	5,428	2·8	24,358	12·6	2,360	1·2	193,230	100·0
West Midlands	13,671	3·8	52,518	14·6	2,019	0·6	359,829	100·0
West Yorkshire	4,317	1·5	43,261	14·6	2,776	0·9	295,704	100·0

* Residual expenditure after recharges to other services.

Local Authority Expenditure (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the outturn of gross revenue expenditure and income was for each London borough and the City of London by service and for all services in 1982-83.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, Friday 30 January 1985, c. *172*]: I have today placed the requested information in the Library. The information has been based on the 1982-83 outturn data supplied by local authorities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Anti-terrorist Measures (Co-operation)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will identify those countries in the list provided in response to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson) *Official Report*, 31 January, columns *274-75*, which he has approached in the last six months seeking co-operation over anti-terrorist measures; and which countries have *(a)* responded constructively, *(b)* responded in a disappointing manner and *(c)* not responded at all.

Mr. Renton: Discussions have taken place with partners in the Ten, Council of Europe, NATO, the Economic Summit Seven and with a number of other countries on a bilateral basis. These diplomatic exchanges have been encouraging, and no country has responded unconstructively about co-operation. Their content must naturally remain confidential.

Ascension Island

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many wild cats he estimates there are on Ascension Island; and whether or not this number is declining.

Mr. Renton: No estimate of numbers is available, but the population is thought to be increasing at present.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who is responsible for the police at Ascension Island; and who is the magistrate.

Mr. Renton: The governor of St. Helena is responsible for the police. His authority is exercised by the administrator. The administrator acts as the magistrate.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Foreign Affairs Council of 18 and 19 February.

Mr. Rifkind: With my right hon. and learned Friend, I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 18-19 February. Ministerial meetings were held with Spain and Portugal.

The Council had further discussions of its position for the negotiations with Spain and Portugal. The main subject discussed was fisheries; the Council considered possible ways of achieving transitional arrangements which took account of the legitimate expectations of the applicant countries without jeopardising the balance of fishing opportunities for existing member states under the common fisheries policy. It was agreed to continue discussion at an additional meeting of the Council, to be held on 28 February.

There was a further round of discussions about the financing of the 1985 budget. A Presidency proposal is now being considered and the Council will return to the question at its next meeting.

The 1985 food aid implementing regulation was adopted by the Council. My right hon. and learned Friend took the opportunity to express concern to the Commission and to his colleagues at the rate at which food aid is being delivered to Sudan, and stressed the need to speed up procedures.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail and charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in 1984;

(2) for 1984, what was the average length of time that prisoners spent on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively.

Mr. Scott: Complete figures for 1984 are not yet available. However, for the period January to October

1984, the average lengths of time from first remand to termination of trial, including periods spent on bail, were as follows:

	Number of weeks
All persons	37
Persons charged with scheduled offences	44
Persons charged with non-scheduled offences	27

Excluding periods spent on bail, the comparable figures were 39·7 weeks for those charged with scheduled offences, and 11·3 weeks for those charged with non-scheduled offences.

For those persons charged with scheduled offences who were in custody at the time of trial and who had never been released on bail, the average period between first remand and termination of trial in 1984 was 36·6 weeks.

Roancabin Ltd.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide details of all portable accommodation units supplied to Government Departments and agencies by Roancabin Ltd. in the past three years and the current financial year to date.

Mr. Scott: The information is respect of such units supplied to the Northern Ireland Office, the Northern Ireland Departments and their agencies is as follows:

Financial year	*Number of units*
1981-82	14
1982-83	10
1983-84	20
1984-85*	7

* To date.

Oxygen Supplies

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patients in each of the Northern Ireland health and social services boards are supplied with oxygen by community pharmacists; what is the estimated cost of this service; and if he ensures that patients in rural areas are given adequate cover.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows for the 12-month period December 1983 to November 1984:

	Number of patients supplied	*Cost* £
Eastern board	608	185,996
Northern board	245	60,009
Southern board	193	53,504
Western board	166	108,261

I am satisfied that all patients receive adequate service.

Strip Searches

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many remand prisoners have been subjected to strip searches in each of the past three years; and what is the total number of strip searches of remand prisoners.

Mr. Scott: Records are available only in respect of female remand prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Armagh since 1 June 1984. These are as follows:

Month	*Number of searches of women remand prisoners*
June 1984	2
July 1984	5
August 1984	2
September 1984	2
October 1984	2
November 1984	2
December 1984	1
January 1985	2

No prisoner was searched more than once in any calendar month.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what situations it is the policy for strip searching of prisoners to be carried out on a random basis.

Mr. Scott: Randon strip searches are conducted when required to maintain security and deter the carrying of illicit articles.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many individual strip searches in each of the past three years were ordered by prison governors;

(2) how many individual inmates were selected for strip searching in each of the past three years by *(a)* members of the governing grades other than prison governors and *(b)* uniformed officers; and how many of these inmates were remand prisoners.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement detailing the instructions given to staff who carry out strip searches explaining how the searches are to be carried out.

Mr. Scott: The general principles are set out in rule 9 of the Prison Rules (Northern Ireland) 1982 and rule 10 of the Young Offenders Centre Rules (Northern Ireland) 1982 which provide that a prisoner shall be searched in as seemly a manner as is consistent with discovering anything concealed, that a prisoner shall not be given a strip search in the sight of another prisoner, and that a search shall not be conducted by or in the presence of an officer of the opposite sex. The more detailed procedural instructions given to prison officers require two officers to be in attendance to permit the checking of clothing and a brief visual search.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement detailing the policy he has laid down regarding strip searches within which prison governors are responsible for such searches.

Mr. Scott: Under the policy approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, prisoners are routinely strip-searched on admission to and discharge from prison and before going on inter-prison visits. On other occasions the searches are carried out on a random basis.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement detailing prison rules in accordance with which strip searching may be carried out on a random basis and responsibility for selecting inmates delegated to uniformed officers.

Mr. Scott: Rule 9 of the Prison Rules (Northern Ireland) 1982 provides for prisoners to be searched by an

officer on reception into prison, and at such subsequent times as the governor may authorise subject to any direction of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints have been made against members of staff arising out of strip searches in each of the past three years.

Mr. Scott: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, but so far as I am aware there have been few complaints directed against members of staff as a result of strip searches.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining the complaints procedure within Northern Ireland prisons detailing how complaints arising out of strip searches are processed; with whom the complaint must be lodged; who investigates the complaint; what evidence is taken into consideration;what right of representation the complainant has; and who or what authority decides whether the complaint is upheld and whether action should be taken against a member of staff.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions a prison governor has drawn the attention of the medical officer to a prisoner whose physical or mental condition appeared to require attention during or following a strip search.

Mr. Scott: I am not aware of any such occasions.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches took place in January; how many prisoners were involved; and how many of these were remand prisoners.

Mr. Scott: Records are available only in respect of female prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Armagh. During January 1985, 36 searches were carried out on 26 women. Individual prisoners were searched the following number of times:

Number of prisoners	*Number of searches in each case*
1	3
8	2
17*	1

* This figure includes two remand prisoners each of whom was searched once.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints have been received in each of the past three years regarding the alleged presence or conduct of male prison officers during strip searches of women prisoners.

Mr. Scott: As I said in my answer to the hon. Gentleman on 29 January, at column 142 male officers have never been present during such searches. I am unaware of any complaints concerning their alleged presence or conduct from persons with direct knowledge of the search arrangements.

Prison Staff (Code of Discipline)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement detailing the code of discipline for prison staff in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: Rule 94 of the Prison Rules (Northern Ireland) 1982 and rule 95 of the Young Offenders Centre Rules (Northern Ireland) 1982 provide for a code of discipline which sets out offences against discipline with which prison officers may be charged. Such offences include neglect of duty and offences of dishonesty; discreditable or insubordinate conduct; disobedience to orders; improper relations with prisoners or ex-prisoners; and unlawful or unnecessary exercise of authority. The code also details the procedures for dealing with such charges, the disciplinary awards which may be made and the rights of appeal.

Primary, Secondary and Grammar Schools

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* grammar schools which will have their teaching staff cut for the coming school year, indicating the job loss in each school, and whether the schools are voluntary, controlled or maintained and the drop in pupil numbers in each case.

Mr. Scott: The schools in which the present allocations of full-time teaching posts for the school year 1985-86 will result in a reduction are listed. These allocations may be altered as a result of the consideration of appeals received from school authorities. About 50 posts have been held for this purpose.

	Reduction in authorised full-time posts	*Change in enrolments between November 1983 and November 1984*
BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD		
Controlled Primary Schools		
Strand	1	−21
Mersey Street	1	−4
Elmgrove	1	−19
Nettlefield	1	−21
Avoniel	1	−23
Wheatfield Junior	1	−21
Lowwood Infants'	1	−6
Ulidia	1	−22
Skegoniel	1	−8
Blackmountain	1	−12
Donegall Road	1	−13
Ballysillan	1	−16
Fane Street	1	−34
Glencairn	1	−22
Blythefield	1	−20
Glenwood	1	+19
Controlled Secondary Schools		
Ashfield Boys' Belfast	1	−11
Ashfield Girls' Belfast	1	−17
Cairnmartin Belfast	9	−102
Castle High Belfast	11	−128
Deramore Belfast	*3	*+50
Forth Bridge High Belfast	4	−59
Model Girls Belfast	1	+12
Orangefield Boys' Belfast	*3	*+26
Orangefield Girls Belfast	2	−35
Maintained Primary Schools		

	Reduction in authorised full-time posts	Change in enrolments between November 1983 and November 1984
(St Joseph' Boys' Slate Street)		−2
(St Joseph's Girls' Slate Street)		−8
St Kevin's Boys' Falls Road	1	−27
St Patrick's Girls' North Queen Street	1	−8
St Mary's Boys' and Girls' Divis Street	1	−22
St Aidan's Christian Brothers' Whiterock Road	1	−15
St Anthony's Boys' and Girls'	1	−11
Holy Cross Girls' Ardoyne Road	1	−9
St Paul's Boys' Mica Drive	1	−32
St Theresa's Boys' Glen Road	1	−12
St Oliver Plunkett Boys' Glen Road	1	−49
St Oliver Plunkett Girls' Glen Road	1	−35
St Anthony's Willowfield Drive	1	−4
Maintained Secondary Schools		
Christian Brothers' Gort Na Mona Belfast	5	−52
Cross and Passion High Belfast	8	−95
St Augustine's High Belfast	2	−34
St Gabriel's Belfast	2	−33
St Gemma's Belfast	4	−47
St Genevieve's High Belfast	3	−52
St Monica's Belfast	1	−35
St Patrick's Belfast	4	−53
St Paul's Belfast	4	−42
St Peter's Belfast	7	−60
St Rose's Belfast	4	−52
Controlled Grammar Schools		
Carolan Belfast	1	−21
Voluntary Grammar Schools		
Ashleigh House	1	−14
Belfast Royal Academy	2	−33
Campbell College	2	−26
Dominican College Belfast	1	−24
Methodist College	2	−60
Princess Gardens	1	−17
Richmond Lodge	1	−13
Royal Belfast Academical Inst	2	−20
St. Dominic's High	1	−45
Strathearn	1	+14
Victoria College	1	−8
WESTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD		
Controlled Primary Schools		
Drumahoe, Londonderry	1	−25
Edwards, Castlederg	1	−13
Omagh	1	−18
Drumachose, Limavady	1	−12
(Tempo)	1	−2
(St. Mary's Tempo)	1	−11
Enniskillen Model	1	−33
Controlled Secondary Schools		
Enniskillen High	1	−8
Faughan Valley High Cross	1	−4
Strabane High	1	−15
Templemore Londonderry	1	−10
Maintained Primary Schools		
(Tempo)	1	−2
(St. Mary's Tempo)	1	−11
Barrack Street Boys, Strabane	1	−30
Mullabuoy Cross	1	−22
St. Colmcille's, Omagh	1	−7
Trench Road, Londonderry	1	−12
Maintained Secondary Schools		
Carnhill High, Londonderry	1	−13
St. Brecan's High, Londonderry	2	−27
St. Brigid's Girls, Omagh	1	−32
St. Fanchea's Girls, Enniskillen	1	−20
St. Joseph's Boys, Enniskillen	1	−12
St. Joseph's, Londonderry	1	−9
St. Mary's, Irvinestown	1	−21
St. Patrick's, High Dungiven	1	−10
St. Peter's, Londonderry	3	−49
Controlled Grammar Schools		
Enniskillen Collegiate	2	−36
Voluntary Grammar Schools		
Loreto Convent, Omagh	1	−17
Portoral Royal, Enniskillen	1	−19
Thornhill College, Londonderry	1	−31
NORTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD		
Controlled Primary Schools		
Dunseverick, Bushmills	1	−9
Harryville, Ballymena	1	−21
Eden, Ballymoney	1	−5
Glynn, Larne	1	−12
John Stewart Memorial, Ballymena	1	−1
Sunnylands, Carrickfergus	1	−48
Whitehead	1	−14
D. H. Christie Memorial, Coleraine	1	−29
Ballykeel, Ballymena	1	−56
Victoria, Carrickfergus	1	−44
Ballycraigy, Muckamore	1	−13
Macosquin, Coleraine	1	−13
Hollybank, Newtownabbey	1	−36
Harpurs Hill, Coleraine	1	−35
Parkhall, Antrim	1	−51
Dunclug, Ballymena	1	−34
Ballyduff, Newtownabbey	1	−41
Controlled Secondary Schools		
Antrim High	1	−13
Ardnaveigh High	1	+8
Ballycastle High	2	−22
Ballyclare	2	−30
Ballymena Boys High	1	−7
Ballymena Girls High	2	−36
Ballymoney High	1	−19
Dunluce	1	−8
Garvagh	1	−23
Larne High	4	−74
Monkstown	2	−33
Rathcoole High	5	−56
Maintained Primary Schools		
St. Malachy's, Coleraine	1	−13
St. Mary's (Harryville), Ballymena	1	−31
St. Joseph's, Dunloy, Ballymena	1	−14
Maintained Secondary Schools		
Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle	2	−26
Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballymoney	1	−17
St. Colm's, Draperstown	1	−8
St. Comgall's, Larne	2	−31
St. Joseph's, Coleraine	1	−29

	Reduction in authorised full-time posts	Change in enrolments between November 1983 and November 1984
St. Mary's, Portglenone	1	−18
St. Nicholas, Carrickfergus	1	−22
Stella Maris, Newtownabbey	3	−29
Controlled Grammar Schools		
Antrim	1	−7
Cambridge House Boys	1	−6
Coleraine High	1	−15
Voluntary Grammar Schools		
Belfast High	2	−27
Coleraine Academical Institution	4	−44
Dominican College, Portstewart	2	−16
Rainey Endowed	2	−33
St. Louis, Ballymena	2	−29
SOUTH-EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD		
Controlled Primary Schools		
Brownlee, Lisburn	1	−22
Lisburn Central	1	−16
Seymour Hill, Dunmurry	1	−20
O'Neill Memorial	1	−1
Ballynahinch	1	−4
Combar	1	−7
Lambag	1	−3
Cregagh, Belfast	1	−6
Downshire, Dundrum	1	−11
Bloomfield Road, Bangor	1	−4
Cairnshill, Newtownbreda	1	−25
Harmony Hill, Lisburn	1	+16
Knockmore, Lisburn	1	−2
Kilcooley, Bangor	1	−50
Londonderry, Newtownards	1	−21
West Winds, Newtownards	1	−23
Old Warren, Lisburn	1	−11
Killowen, Lisburn	1	−39
Controlled Secondary Schools		
Ballynahinch High	1	−18
Dundonald Boys' High	4	−61
Dundonald Girls' High	6	−75
Dunmurry High	8	−135
Gransha Boys' High	4	−49
Holywood High	2	−24
Killyleagh High	1	−11
Laurelhill High	1	−18
Lisnagarvey Boys' High	3	−55
Newtownbreda High	1	−23
Quoile High	1	−15
Maintained Primary Schools		
St. Luke's, Twinbrook	3	+85
Maintained Secondary Schools		
De La Salle, Kircubbin	1	−7
La Salle, Downpatrick	2	−22
St. Aidan's High, Glenavy	2	−35
St. Colm's High, Dunmurry	2	−18
St. Columba's High, Portaferry	3	−58
St. Columbanus High, Bangor	1	−6
St. Malachy's High, Castlewellan	3	−44
St. Patrick's High, Lisburn	2	−26
Controlled Grammar Schools		
Down High	1	−11
Voluntary Grammar Schools		
Nil		
SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD		
Controlled Primary Schools		
Armstrong, Craigavon	1	−14
Edenderry, Portadown	1	−20
Tullygally, Craigavon	1	−45
Newry Model	1	−15
Ballyward, Castlewellan	1	−2
Ballyroney, Banbridge	1	−8
Tamnamore, Dungannon	—	−5
Moy Regional, Dungannon	—	—
Howard, Dungannon	—	−25
Killyman, Dungannon	—	−4
Dungannon	1	−18
Cookstown	1	−46
Millington, Portadown	1	−26
Controlled Secondary Schools		
Clounagh Junior High, Craigavon	1	−19
Fivemiletown High	1	−8
Lurgan Boys, Junior High	1	−28
Lurgan Girls, Junior High	1	−15
Maintained Primary Schools		
Cloughoge, Newry	1	−11
St. James', Tandragee	1	−7
St. Clare's Convent, Newry	2	−42
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry	1	−31
Ballyholland, Newry	1	−4
St. Colman's Abbey, Newry	2	−41
Holy Cross, Kilkeel	1	−14
Moortown, Cookstown	1	−10
St. Peter's Boys, Lurgan	1	−8
Sacred Heart Girls, Lurgan	1	−12
Maintained Secondary Schools		
Lismore Comprehensive, Craigavon	1	−25
Our Lady's High, Cookstown	1	−11
St. Catherine's College, Armagh	2	−29
St. Joseph's Boys, Newry	1	−11
St. Mary's Junior High, Lurgan	1	−16
St. Patrick's Boys, Dungannon	1	−15
St. Malachy's St. Brigid's, Portadown	2	−40
Controlled Grammar Schools		
Portadown College	1	−5
Voluntary Grammar Schools		
Christian Brothers, Armagh	2	−19
Dungannon Royal	1	−20
Sacred Heart Girls, Newry	1	−10
St. Michael's Senior High, Lurgan	2	−21
St. Patrick's College, Armagh	2	−19

*Affected by redeployment following the closure of Park Parade Secondary School on 31 August 1984.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, by education board area, the *(a)* primary, *(b)* secondary and *(c)* grammar schools in Northern Ireland which have been granted discretionary posts for the coming school year; which of those schools are voluntary, controlled and maintained; and how many such posts were available, how many have been distributed and how many are in reserve.

Mr. Scott: The schools which have been allocated full-time discretionary posts for the school year 1985-86 are listed. In each sector the number of discretionary posts available depends on the total number of posts allocated

to that sector and the number of posts for which schools qualify as basic entitlements under the various agreed formulae. The relevant information is as follows:

	Total Posts	*Basic Entitlements*	*Discretionary Posts*	*Already Allocated*	*Held For Appeals*
Primary Schools	7,544	6,484	1,060	1,040	20
Secondary Schools (Including Grammar)	10,119	9,928	191	161	30

In the primary sector, 399 posts for remedial education are included in the number of discretionary posts already allocated. In the secondary sector posts for remedial education are included in the basic entitlement.

BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

Controlled Primary Schools

Currie
Euston Street
Rosetta
Forth River
Springfield
Strand
Harding Memorial
Mersey Street
Strandtown
Elmgrove
Seaview
Nettlefield
Argyle
Avoniel
Beechfield
Orangefield
Carr's Glen
Grove
Sydenham
Wheatfield Junior
Ballygolan
Lowwood Junior
Lowwood Infants'
Taughmonagh
Greenwood
Ulidia
Wheatfield Infants'
Springhill
Skegoniel
Vere Foster
Edenbrooke
Stranmillis
Ligoniel
Finaghy
Cavehill
Suffolk
Knocknagoney
Blackmountain
Donegall Road
Ballysillan
Fernhill
Fane Street
Glencairn
Blythefield
Dundela Infants'
Cliftonville
Glenwood
Malvern
Botanic

Controlled secondary schools

Cairnmartin, Belfast
Castle High, Belfast
Deramore, Belfast
Forth Bridge High, Belfast
Kelvin, Belfast
Larkfield, Belfast
Model Girls, Belfast
Orangefield Boys, Belfast
Orangefield Girls, Belfast

Maintained primary schools

St. Catherine's Convent, Falls Road
St. Joseph's Boys, Slate Street
St. Joseph's Girls, Slate Street
St. Columban's Boys, Glenview Street
Star of the Sea Convent, Halliday's Road
St. Gall's Monastery, Waterville Street
St. Malachy's Convent, Sussex Place
St. Vincent's Convent, Dunlewey Street
Holy Cross Boys, Brookfield Street
St. Finian's Monastery, Falls Road
St. Colman's, Eliza Street
St. Mathew's Boys, Seaforde Street
St. Mathew's Convent, Lowry Street
St. John's Girls, Colinward Street
Holy Family Boys, Newington Avenue
St. Comgall's Boys, Divis Street
St. Comgall's Girls, Divis Street
St. Kevin's Boys, Falls Road
St. Kevin's Girls, Falls Road
St. Patrick's Boys, North Queen's Street
St. Patrick's Girls, North Queen's Street
Our Lady of Lourdes Christian Brothers', Antrim Road
St. Mary's Boys and Girls, Divis Street
St. Aidan's Christian Brothers', Whiterock Road
St. Bernadette's Girls, Glenalina Road
Our Lady's Girls, Deanby Gardens
Holy Rosary, Sunnyside Crescent
Edmund Rice Christian Brothers', Pim Street
Holy Family Girls, Primary School, Newington Avenue
Holy Cross Girls, Ardoyne Road
St. Paul's Boys, Mica Drive
St. Teresa's Boys, Glen Road
St. Anne's, Finaghy
Holy Child Boys, South Green
Holy Child Girls, South Green
St. Teresa's Girls, Glen Road
Holy Trinity Boys, Monagh Road
St. Oliver Plunkett Boys, Glen Road
St. Oliver Plunkett Girls, Glen Road
Holy Trinity Girls, Monagh Grove
Mercy, Crumlin Road
St. Vincent de Paul, Ligoniel Road
St. Mary's Star of the Sea, Shore Road
St. Bride's, Derryvolgie Avenue
St. John the Baptist Girls, Finaghy Road North
St. John the Baptist Boys, Finaghy Road North
St. Teresa of Lisleux, Somerton Road
St. Michael's, Ravenhill Road
St. Joseph's, Holland Drive
St. Mary's Girls, Amcomri Street
St. Paul's, Cavendish Square
St. Anthony's, Willowfield Drive
Bunscoil Ghaelach, Shaw's Road

Maintained Secondary Schools

Christian Brothers', Glen Road, Belfast
Christian Brothers', Gort na Mona, Belfast
Cross and Passion High, Belfast
Our Lady of Mercy, Belfast
St. Augustine's High, Belfast
St. Gabriel's, Belfast
St. Gemma's, Belfast
St. Louise's Comprehensive College, Belfast
St. Monica's, Belfast
St. Patrick's, Belfast
St. Paul's, Belfast
St. Rose's, Belfast
St. Thomas', Belfast

Controlled Grammar Schools

Annadale, Belfast
Grosvenor High, Belfast

Voluntary Grammar Schools

Nil

WESTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

Controlled Primary Schools

Londonderry, Model
Ebrington, Londonderry
Kesh
Moat, Lisnaskea
Newtownbutler (2)
Florencecourt, Enniskillen
Ballinamallard
Brookeborough
Stragowna
Groarty, Londonderry
Balloughry, Londonderry

Manufacturing Production

34. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement concerning the most recent figures for United Kingdom manufacturing production.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

35. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the outturn for the public sector borrowing requirement for 1984-85.

Mr. Peter Rees: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave an estimate in his autumn statement. He will give another in his Budget statement.

Industrial Premises

36. **Mr. Waller** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received advocating changes in taxation intended to encourage the modernisation of old industrial premises.

Mr. Moore: No recent suggestions specifically advocating such changes have been received.

Black Economy

37. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further steps he is taking to bring the earnings of those engaged in the black economy into taxation.

Mr. Moore: The methods used to counter tax evasion are always under careful review. On staffing I have nothing to add to the details given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 15 November 1984.

European Monetary System

40. **Mr. Alton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has conducted studies into the benefits of joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system in the light of the present value of the pound sterling.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As has been made clear on a number of occasions, the question of participation, which gives rise to a wide spectrum of considerations, is kept under review.

Inflation

41. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current rate of inflation.

44. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees: The increase in the retail prices index was 4·6 per cent. over the 12 months to December 1984.

65. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to revise his forecasts for inflation following recent exchange rate falls and interest rate rises.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's next forecast of inflation will be published in this year's financial statement and Budget report.

Drink and Tobacco

42. **Mr. Parry** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has recently received concerning duty on drink and tobacco.

Mr. Hayhoe: Many and from a variety of sources.

Keith Committee (VAT)

43. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received with regard to the recommendations of the Keith committee on value added tax as far as the licensed trade is concerned.

Mr. Hayhoe: Customs and Excise has not been able to trace any such representations from any organisation exclusively representing the liquor licence trade. A submission has, however, been received from a hotel group. No individuals making representations have been identified as having a connection with the licensed trade.

Social Security Expenditure

45. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise his forecast of the level of social security expenditure in the light of the current trend in the level of unemployment.

Mr. Peter Rees: The assumption used in preparing the projections of social security expenditure in Cmnd. 9428 is that unemployment in Great Britain, excluding school leavers, adult students and those temporarily stopped, averages 3 million in 1984-85 and subsequent years. The assumption for 1984-85 is entirely consistent with recent trends, and I see no reason to change it. The flat path assumed thereafter follows the usual convention and is neither a forecast nor a prediction. Table 3.12.8 in Cmnd. 9428 indicates the effect on social security expenditure of a change in the level of unemployment.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North on 1 February, *Official Report*, column 335, what proportion of gross domestic product at market prices was allocated to expenditure on social security in 1960, 1970, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983.

Mr. Peter Rees: Expenditure on social security since 1979-80 was published in table 2.5 of the public expenditure White Paper Cmnd. 9428. Gross domestic product at market prices is published quarterly in *Economic Trends*. Social security payments are transfer payments and therefore do not form part of gross domestic product. However, if social security is expressed as a percentage of GDP the following estimates are obtained:

	per cent.
1960	5·8
1970	7·6
1979-80	9·7
1980-81	10·2
1981-82	11·3
1982-83	11·8
1983-84	11·9

Local Authority Capital Investment

46. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the implications for Government economic planning of the level of local authority capital investment.

Mr. Peter Rees: Local authority capital spending is one component of total public expenditure. Control of total public expenditure is an important component of the Government's economic policies which are bringing about sustained economic recovery.

Debt Rescheduling

47. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet other Finance Ministers regarding those countries rescheduling debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Rees: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer regularly meets Finance Ministers from other countries to discuss a wide range of topics, including international debt. The IMF interim committee and IMF/IBRD development committee meetings take place on 17 to 19 April and the debt situation will be discussed there.

Unemployment

48. **Mr. Gordon Brown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why unemployment is continuing to rise.

Mr. Peter Rees: Unemployment is still rising because the majority of pay settlements are still too high.

51. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumption he has made of the trend in the level of unemployment in the next year in drawing up his public expenditure plans.

Mr. Peter Rees: In preparing the projections of social security expenditure, it is assumed that unemployment in Great Britain, excluding school leavers, adult students and those temporarily stopped will average 3 million. This is neither a forecast nor a prediction. The actual level of unemployment will depend on developments in the world economy and at home.

56. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has that tax cuts in isolation will make a significant inroad into unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Tax cuts can be expected to boost employment by reducing pressure on wages and through generally improving incentives and increasing the rewards for enterprise and effort. The effect on wages is generally incorporated in macroeconomic models, including the Treasury's. The other effects are by their nature difficult to quantify.

58. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will explain on what basis the Government Actuary's assumption for unemployment contained in the 1984 Autumn Statement was made.

Mr. Moore: The working assumption used by the Government Actuary in the report referred to in part 3 of the Autumn Statement is that the number of unemployed in Great Britain claiming benefit, excluding school leavers, adult students and persons whose unemployment has temporarily stopped, averages 3 million in both 1984-85 and 1985-86. The assumption for 1984-85 was based on recent trends in the level of unemployment. A flat path was assumed through 1985-86, following the usual convention.

Privatisation

49. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net contribution to the Exchequer from privatisation in 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84, respectively.

Mr. Moore: Net receipts to central Government from special sales of assets are shown in table 2.14 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428). The figures were £494 million in 1981-82; £488 million in 1982-83; and £1,142 million in 1983-84. The figures exclude the effect of advance oil payments from BNOC in 1979-80, 1980-81 and 1981-82 which net out to zero.

Manufacturing Trade Figures

50. **Mr. Evans** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effect on the economy of the latest manufacturing trade figures.

Mr. Peter Rees: The latest trade figures for manufacturing, excluding the erratic items which tend to distort the figures, show an encouraging increase in export volumes, which rose by about 11 per cent. between 1983 and 1984, the best performance since 1973. The deficit on trade in manufactures last year was more than offset by surpluses on oil and invisibles. However, these figures are not the only indicators of the performance of the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing output rose 3¼ per cent. in 1984, and is now 9 per cent. higher than it was in the first half of 1981.

Share Option Scheme

52. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response there has been to the approved share option scheme in the Finance Act 1984.

Mr. Moore: I am pleased to say that there has been an excellent response. By the end of January more than 960 share option schemes had been submitted to the Inland Revenue for approval under the provisions of the Finance Act 1984. Over 80 of these have already been approved and several hundred more are in the final stages of approval.

Direct and Indirect Taxation

53. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how he sees the future relationship between direct and indirect taxation.

Mr. Moore: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Gas and Electricity Industries

54. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied that the gas and electricity industries can meet the targets laid down for them in the recent public expenditure White Paper without increasing their prices above the rate of inflation.

Mr. Peter Rees: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) on 30 January 1985 at column 221.

Pools Betting Duty

55. **Mr. Stern** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield in a full year from the extension of pools betting duty to newspaper prize competitions.

Mr. Hayhoe: Negligible—the application of any of the existing betting and gaming duties to newspaper prize competitions would be expected to result in changes in the nature of the games to avoid liability.

Economic Trends

57. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the latest trends in the real economy of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Rees: GDP on the output measure grew by 2½ per cent. in 1984. Business investment and non-oil export volumes both set new records.

Manufacturing Investment

60. **Mr. Strang** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the level of manufacturing investment in the last year for which figures are available; and what is the comparable figure for five years ago.

Mr. Peter Rees: Investment in manufacturing, including leased assets, in 1984 rose 13 per cent. to an estimated £6·1 billion at 1980 prices. In the peak year of 1979 the figure was £8·2 billion.

Employment and Wages

62. **Mr. Foster** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the Treasury document, "The Relationship between Employment and Wages".

Mr. Peter Rees: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of letters about this document.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will explain how real wages can fall if the demand for labour exceeds the supply, as discussed in paragraph 2.24 of his Department's paper on the relationship between wages and employment.

Mr. Peter Rees: Clearly real wages do not depend simply on the relationship between labour demand and supply or they would have been falling in recent years. Even if labour demand exceeds supply, real wages might still fall temporarily if, for example, there were an external shock to the price level.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent the model used in his Department's study of the relationship between employment and real wages assumes imperfect competition and increasing returns to scale.

Mr. Peter Rees: The labour demand functions which were contained in the model used in the Treasury's study of the relationship between wages and employment are consistent with constant returns to scale. The model as a whole assumes price setting behaviour which is consistent with the assumptions of imperfect competition.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take in the light of the recent paper by Her Majesty's Treasury, "The Relationship between Employment and Wages."

Mr. Lawson: This paper demonstrated clearly that slower increases in real pay will lead to more jobs; a point which needs to be more widely understood. The Government are doing all in their power to make labour markets work better and help bring this about.

Investment

63. **Mr. Forman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is satisfied with the level of investment in the United Kingdom

Mr. Peter Rees: In real terms total fixed investment is expected to have reached an all-time record in 1984, up 7½ per cent. on 1983. A further increase is expected in 1985.

Infrastructure

64. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he intends to take to encourage investment in the economy's infrastructure; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Peter Rees: Total fixed investment in the economy in 1984 is expected to have been an all time record and is forecast to grow even further in 1985. These trends reflect the success of the Government's policy of shifting economic activity and ownership back into the private sector.

Capital Investment

66. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is satisfied with the level of capital investment in the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Peter Rees: There was a very substantial rise in the level of capital investment in the United Kingdom in 1984, including a 12¼ per cent. rise in manufacturing and services investment, and the prospects are for substantial further growth in 1985.

Banking (Advertising)

Mr. Rowe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make regulations under section 34 of the Banking Act 1979 to control advertisements for deposits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Yes. Following the consultations which the Bank of England carried out with the Treasury's agreement last year, the Treasury is today laying regulations (SI 1985/220) which will contol advertisements issued in the United Kingdom for deposits to be made outside the United Kingdom or any other member state of the European Community.

The regulations will come into effect on 1 July 1985. The main provision of the regulations will require such advertisements to include a "health warning" stating where the deposit is to be made and drawing attention to the fact

that the deposit is not protected by the deposit protection scheme under the Banking Act 1979. The Treasury will on the same day repeal by order the Protection of Depositers Act 1963 and the Protection of Depositors (Northern Ireland) Act 1964 and will bring section 39 of the Banking Act 1979—which deals with fraudulent inducement to make deposits—into effect.

Minimum Income Level

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate *(a)* the number of P11D forms concerning benefits in kind which would be submitted, *(b)* loss of revenue and *(c)* administrative cost arising in a full financial year, if the minimum income level was raised to £15,000 per annum.

Mr. Moore: The earnings threshold of £8,500 defining those in "higher-paid employment" for the purpose of assessing benefits in kind does not apply to most directors. If the threshold was raised to £15,000 for 1985-86, about 700,000 forms P11D would be submitted. The direct revenue cost in a full year would be about £125 million and the savings of administrative costs about £3 million.

Wage and Profit Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will abstract from his computer simulation on real wages and employment a table showing for each year the effect of the reduction in real wages on profits generally and by subdivision; if he will provide whatever information is available from the simulation concerning the use made of any increase in profitability generally and by subdivision, including, in particular, manufacturing investment and overseas investment; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the assumptions used in obtaining these results, in non-algebraic terms.

Mr. Peter Rees: Information on profits and investment is shown in the following table. The assumptions, detailed in the footnotes, are the same as for the results shown in table A, Annex B of the recent paper by Treasury officials entitled "The Relationship between Employment and Wages.".

Simulated effects of lower nominal wages.†
Unchanged nominal framework‡

£ million, changes from base	Total Company profits	*of which North Sea	Non-North Sea	Manufacturing investment
Year 1	1,290	190	1,100	60
2	1,600	20	1,570	160
3	1,050	−80	1,130	120
4	1,400	−40	1,430	120

* Any discrepancies due to rounding.
† Nominal wages are reduced to the extent necessary to reduce real wages by 2 per cent.
‡ Unchanged money supply (average of Mo & £M3); unchanged PSBR/GDP ratio achieved by varying income tax; unchanged cash-limited expenditure in real terms.

Polling Stations (Portable Ramps)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those local authorities in Wales which have installed at polling stations portable ramps for the disabled, half the cost of which was met by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Peter Rees: No instance has been found in the records held by the Treasury of election claims from acting returning officers for the 1979 general and European elections and, in terms of the claims so far received, the 1983 general and the 1984 European elections, of any local authority in Wales installing at polling stations portable ramps for the disabled, for which half the cost has been met by Her Majesty's Government.

Similar information for elections prior to 1979 is not available.

Statistical Information

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish indices for each year since 1978-79, taking 1978-79 as 100, comparing *(a)* public expenditure, *(b)* retail prices index, *(c)* index of industrial production, *(d)* wages, salaries and income from self-employment, *(e)* expenditure on social security benefits, *(f)* revenue from income tax and *(g)* revenue from national insurance contributions.

Mr. Peter Rees: The indices are as follows:

		1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
(a)	Public expenditure	117	141	159	173	183
(b)	Retail Price Index	116	135	150	161	168
(c)	Index of Industrial Production	103	94	93	95	98
(d)	Wages, salaries and income from employment	118	135	145	155	167
(e)	Expenditure on social security benefits	118	142	175	198	208
(f)	Revenue from income tax	110	130	153	163	167
(g)	Revenue from national insurance contributions	116	139	156	181	203

Exchange Rate (Deutschmark)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* particulars of the increase in the real exchange rate against the deutschmark since March 1983, the balance of trade in manufactures with West Germany in 1984 compared with 1970, and his estimate of the effect of the increase in the real exchange rate on the balance in 1985.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Between March 1983 and January 1985, the real sterling exchange rate against the deutschmark is estimated to have appreciated by 7½ per cent. This estimate is based on the movement in producer prices up to November 1984. The increase is wholly accounted for by the faster rise in producer prices in the United Kingdom than in Germany, since the nominal deutschmark/sterling exchange rate in January 1985 (£1=3·58 DM) was almost unchanged from its level in March 1983 (3·59).

The balance of trade in manufactures with West Germany in 1984 was −£5·1 billion of an *Overseas Trade Statistics* basis which includes the carriage, insurance and freight element of imports but not of exports. The comparable figure in 1970 was −£0·1 billion.

Wages (Employment Effects)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent his simulation of the effect of real wages on employment is based on extrapolations from the past; and who has decided the direction of causation in interpreting correlations.

Mr. Peter Rees: The model on which the simulation was performed contains relationships for the demand for labour which were estimated using data from the past. A summary of the econometric evidence, including that used in the Treasury model, is provided in the Treasury paper, "The relationship between employment and wages", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. The interpretation of the findings of the empirical research was the responsibility of Treasury officials.

Taxation Changes (Job Creation)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what research he has carried out or studied into the job creation effects of cuts in the income tax rates and raising of income tax thresholds.

Mr. Moore: Income tax cuts improve incentives and encourage lower wage settlements. Low tax countries like the United States and Japan have experienced relatively large increases in employment. Evidence on the relation between wages and employment is set out in the recent paper by Treasury officials.

Indirect Taxation

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made as to whether an increase in indirect taxation would have any disincentive effect.

Mr. Hayhoe: The effect of a change in indirect taxation on incentives is difficult to assess, but is one of the factors considered in any review of such taxation.

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total revenue obtained from income tax plus national insurance contributions together in each year since 1978-79 at current and at constant 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Moore: The figures are as follows:

£ million

	Current prices	*At 1978-79 prices**
1978-79	27,957	27,957
1979-80	31,285	26,760
1980-81	37,052	26,730
1981-82	43,112	28,290
1982-83	47,138	29,000
1983-84	49,849	29,440

* Using the GDP deflator.

Pound Sterling

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the value of the pound sterling against the European currency unit each month since May 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information required is as follows:

Value of European currency unit exchange rate (monthly averages) expressed in pound sterling

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
January	—	0·6371	0·5347	0·5653	0·6109	0·5706	0·6219
February	—	0·6247	0·5260	0·5592	0·6163	0·5769	—
March	—	0·6153	0·5401	0·5604	0·6294	0·5904	—
April	—	0·6076	0·5390	0·5639	0·6006	0·5940	—
May	0·6424	0·6086	0·5301	0·5700	0·5844	0·5870	—
June	0·6330	0·6092	0·5396	0·5565	0·5758	0·5925	—
July	0·6139	0·6072	0·5509	0·5523	0·5751	0·5949	—
August	0·6179	0·5963	0·5522	0·5517	0·5675	0·5909	—
September	0·6355	0·5895	0·5813	0·5491	0·5683	0·5890	—
October	0·6490	0·5729	0·5893	0·5481	0·5783	0·5970	—
November	0·6553	0·5581	0·5773	0·5608	0·5708	0·6006	—
December	0·6495	0·5541	0·5685	0·5887	0·5732	0·6064	—

Private Health Insurance (Tax Allowance)

Mr. Gregory asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much income tax yield was forgone as a result of private health insurance tax offset allowance in the 1982-83 and 1983-84 tax years; and if he will give an estimate for 1984-85;

(2) if he will estimate income tax yields in 1985-86 if the private health insurance tax allowance *(a)* remains at its present level, *(b)* is index-linked, *(c)* is increased by 50 per cent. and *(d)* is increased by 100 per cent.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Fringe Benefits

Mr. Ashley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female employees are known to the Inland Revenue to be benefiting from their employer providing (i) a company car, (ii) an occupational health scheme, (iii) subsidised meals at work, (iv) financial help with school fees, telephone bills, wages of chauffeurs, gardeners and other domestic staff and (v) nursery facilities for their children; and what revenue is obtained by the Exchequer from taxing each of these benefits either wholly or partly.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits (Taxation)

Mr. Ashley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount of revenue raised from taxation of benefits paid to the unemployed in 1984.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Cash Flows)

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the monthly cash flows for each European Economic Community country, with the European Economic Community, for each of the last 48 months with annual sub-totals, cash flow being defined as a net result of all contributions and rebates in the month in which the transaction is affected.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I regret the information my hon. Friend requires is not available. However, certain details of the transactions between member states and the European Community are contained in the annual reports of the Court of Auditors. Copies of these are held in the Commons Library.

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out for each of the last 48 months with annual sub-totals the cash flow between the United Kingdom and the European Economic Community with regard to European Economic Community contributions broken down as follows: *(a)* value added tax contributions, *(b)* customs levies, *(c)* agricultural levies, *(d)* other costs, *(e)* rebate and *(f)* other returns, setting out in each case the period to which the rebate refers.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information my hon. Friend asks for is not readily available in the form he requires and could not be provided without disproportionate cost. However, figures concerning the United Kingdom's gross contributions, receipts and refunds, by financial year, for the period in question are contained in the latest public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428), which was published last January.

EC (Rebate)

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) at what stage under the Fontainebleau agreement it was anticipated that the United Kingdom would obtain its rebate by abatement of contribution;

(2) by what date he anticipates that the United Kingdom rebate will be obtained though abatement of contribution.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Taxation Changes

Mr. Canavan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received to date advocating taxation changes in the forthcoming Budget.

Mr. Moore: Several.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received about the effect value added tax on building alterations has had on house adaptations carried out for disabled people.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam).

Mortgage Interest Relief

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of revenue forgone in respect of mortgage interest tax relief on second or subsequent loans over and above those used for the first purchase of a house.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1985, c. *61*]: It is not possible to provide a precise figure, but it is estimated that between 5 and 10 per cent. of the £3,500 million total cost of relief for qualifying loans in 1984-85 is in respect of a second or subsequent loan over and above that used for the first purchase of the dwelling.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will estimate the proportion of capital spending by central and local government undertaken in the northern region.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1985, c. *494*]: The latest available estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation by central and local government in the English regions were included in table 7 (page 93) of the appendix to the article "Regional Accounts, 1983" in the November 1984 issue of *Economic Trends* (No. 373). That table showed that total gross domestic fixed capital formation in the United Kingdom in 1982 was £4,682 million and in the northern region £268 million, representing 5·7 per cent. of the United Kingdom total.

These figures are net of sales of fixed assets, which include, in particular, sales of council houses by local authorities.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Strangers Gallery (Demonstrators)

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Lord Privy Seal how many people were involved in the demonstration in the Strangers Gallery on Friday 15 February; how they obtained tickets; how long they were detained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: On the morning of Friday 15 February four visitors caused a disturbance in the Strangers' Gallery; Admission Orders for these persons were obtained by a Member of Parliament. The persons concerned were detained until 3.55 pm, this being half an hour after the rising of the House.

SCOTLAND

Ministers (Overnight Stays)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many overnight stays he and each of his Ministers made in Scotland during the month of January.

Mr. Younger: The information is as follows:

	Number	*(In addition) Sleeper journeys*
Secretary of State	17	4
Lord Gray of Contin	11	—
Michael Ancram	17	—
Mr. John MacKay	16	—
Mr. Allan Stewart	15	2

Glenrothes (Regional Development Grant)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of the considerable job losses in the Kirkcaldy-Glenrothes travel-to-work area following the closure of the Frances colliery and the threat to employment prospects in the Seafield colliery, he will reconsider urgently the recent decision to exclude Glenrothes from regional development grant benefits.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government's decisions on the assisted area map, which were announced on 28 November 1984, took account of a number of factors, including occupational and industrial structure, and the new map is expected to remain in force for some years. The loss of jobs at the Frances and Seafield pits, and the continuing threat to the remaining jobs, are a direct consequence of the miners' strike, and are further examples of the damage caused by this pointless and unnecessary dispute.

Housing Grants

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many grant applications were made in the last financial year in Cunninghame for *(a)* improvement grants, *(b)* repair grants and *(c)* insulation grants; and how many of these applications were approved.

Mr. Younger: Information on the number of grant applications made is not held centrally. Details of grant applications approved by Cunninghame district council during the financial year 1983-84 are as follows:

Grants for	*Number*
(a)	
(i) Improvement of dwellings	343
(ii) Conversion of dwellings	4
(iii) Provision of standard amenities	12
(b) Repair of dwellings	1,229
(c) Home insulation	240

Legal Aid

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has concluded his review of the variations in refusals for granting legal aid in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No.

Asbestos

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* district councils in Scotland which have received central Government funds for the purpose of asbestos removal programmes, *(b)* how much each council received and *(c)* which councils have (i) embarked upon and (ii) completed such programmes.

Mr. Ancram: Capital allocations to individual local authorities are not earmaked for specific purposes. No district councils have therefore received funds allocated for asbestos works per se. In a block allocation system each authority is free to programme the resources available to it, as it sees fit.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Scottish local authorities which maintain a register showing the location and condition of asbestos-containing materials in buildings for which they are responsible.

Mr. Ancram: All district councils were asked in 1983 to bring their records of the use of asbestos in any part of their housing stocks up to date. I do not, however, hold information centrally.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the allowances made in the capital allocations to Scottish local authorities in the current year and next year for asbestos treatment work which he judges to be necessary.

Mr. Ancram: In determining the level of capital allocations to individual local authorities we have paid close attention to planned expenditure on asbestos treatment, as set out in their forward capital programmes, but have not earmarked fixed sums within the allocations for this purpose. Programming of the resources made available is left to authorities' own judgment.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his assessment of the necessary asbestos treatment work local authorities in Scotland should carry out in the current year and in each of the next three years.

Mr. Ancram: Local authorities are themselves best placed to examine their own building stocks and, with the

help of guidance which has been issued by the Scottish Development Department, to assess the nature and phasing of any necessary asbestos treatment.

Acid Rain

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Forestry Commission will publish the results of its surveys into possible acid rain damage to trees; and what plans it has for further research.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission will publish the results of its survey on 12 March 1985. The survey will be repeated towards the end of this year.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies the Forestry Commission has made, is planning or is aware of, of mobilisation of aluminium by acid deposition, and its uptake into timber and deposition there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Both the Forestry Commission and the Department of the Environment commission research on aluminium mobilisation with the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, Aberdeen. This work is linked closely with studies at the Norwegian Forest Research Institute and at Toronto university. The Forestry Commission is analysing the aluminium content of certain stands of Sitka spruce growing in the South Wales coalfield. It is also undertaking joint investigations with the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology into soil-water and aluminium mobilisation at Beddgelert, Gwynedd and at Hafren, Powys.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Forestry Commission has, or is aware of, to conduct new research into the problem of ash dieback in the next three financial years.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission has no plans to undertake research into ash dieback. It will, however, take account of the results of a survey of the incidence of this phenomenon next summer which will follow up that conducted in 1983 by Dr. Pawsey of the Department of Forestry, Oxford.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *357-60*, he will give a more precise indication of the area and time of year involved in the aerial spraying of Fenitrothion on 142 hectares of land in Speymouth in 1984 by the Forestry Commission.

Mr. John MacKay: The 142 hectares sprayed with Fenitrothion in 1984 form part of the Elchies block of Craigellachie forest in the Speyside forest district and were treated on 30 May. The reference to "Speymouth" in my answer of 18 February should have read "Speyside".

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the initial findings following the aerial spraying of Fenitrothion on 142 hectares of land in Speymouth by the Forestry Commission in 1984 as part of a control experiment.

Mr. John MacKay: No effects were found on the bird populations studied which could be ascribed to the spraying.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations were held with conservation bodies prior to the aerial spraying of Fenitrothion over 142 hectares of land in Speymouth by the Forestry Commission in 1984 as part of a control experiment directed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. John MacKay: The bodies consulted included the Nature Conservancy Council and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if research was conducted into the existence of wildlife habitats, other than those of woodland birds, in the area aerially sprayed with Fenitrothion by the Forestry Commission in 1984 as part of a control experiment directed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, prior to the experiment taking place.

Mr. John MacKay: This experiment concentrated solely on certain species of bird.

Tourist-related Projects

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what tourist-related projects are currently planned in Scotland by the Forestry Commission, the British Waterways Board, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Scottish Sports Council and the Scottish Arts Council.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 January 1985, c. *206*]: Tourist-related projects currently planned in Scotland by the Forestry Commission, the British Waterways Board, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and the Scottish Sports Council are as follows:

The Forestry Commission

Car park at Rowardennan, Central region; car park at Cairnbaan, Strathclyde region; forest trail at Silverbridge, Highland region; camp site toilets at Balmacara, Highland region.

The British Waterways Board

(i) Caledonian Canal: improvements to facitilies for boaters at Banavie; improvements to mooring facilities at various points including provision of pontoon jetties; provision of information signs for motorists; improvements to departure quay and provision of signposting for visitors for the Scot II boat trip.

(ii) Crinan Canal: improvements to mooring facilities at Ardrishaig Basin; landscaping at Bellanoch Bay.

(iii) Forth and Clyde Canal: improvements at Bowling Basin including provision of a sanitary station; provision of information signs for motorists.

(iv) Union Canal: dredging of canal between Ratho and Hermiston to increase length of canal available to the "Pride of the Union" restaurant boat.

The board also proposes to promote an economic development study which will identify tourist-related development opportunities within the Forth and Clyde and Union Canal corridors.

The National Heritage Memorial Fund

Assistance is planned towards: restoration of cottages on islands of Canna, Highland Region and Sanday, Orkney; purchase by Hamilton district council of Chatelherault Deer Park, Strathclyde region; purchase and endowment by National Trust for Scotland of Fyvie castle, Grampian region; purchase, endowment and restoration by National Trust for Scotland of Hillhouse, Helensburgh, Strathclyde region; restoration of the North Pavilion of Hopetoun House, Lothian region; restoration of New Lanark Mills, Strathclyde region; purchase by National galleries of Scotland of four paintings from the Sutherland collection.

The Scottish Sports Council

Grandtully Canoeing Centre, Tayside region; Manor Pawis Shooting Centre, Central region; Kippen Clay Pigeon Shooting Centre, Central region.

The Scottish Arts Council undertakes few projects itself but gives assistance by way of grants and guarantees to arts organisations and individuals working within the arts field, many of whom have a strong influence on the attraction of tourists to Scotland.

Local Authority Finance (Tourism)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those district authorities in Scotland which have to date refused or delayed to commit their share of local authority finance to each of the area tourist boards for the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 January 1985, c. *206*]: I am not aware that any district authorities have done so.

Small Firms

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many small firms were given assistance by the Scottish Economic Planning Department and others of his Department in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved;

(2) how many small firms in Scotland, falling within the Bolton committee definition, received regional development grants and other forms of financial assistance from this Department; and how much money was involved.

Mr. Younger [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1985, c. *211*]: During 1984 133 offers of selective financial assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 were accepted by small firms in Scotland. The total value of these offers was £11·9 million. I regret that information in the form requested is not readily available for other forms of assistance administered by my Department.

EC (Aid)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total amount of European Community aid received by *(a)* Strathclyde regional council, *(b)* Glasgow district council and *(c)* private organisations in Glasgow, up to the most recently available date.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *243*]: The available information is as follows:

European Regional Development Fund

From the inception of the ERDF in 1975 Strathclyde regional council has received grants totalling £64·2 million for a range of infrastructure projects. The corresponding figure for Glasgow district council is £3·3 million. Over the same period, small firms in Strathclyde have received £1·8 million from the ERDF for measures to assist their development. Separate figures for small firms in Glasgow are not available.

European Coal and Steel Community

ECSC industrial loans in Strathclyde currently total some £21·5 million. A separate figure for Glasgow is not available.

European Investment Bank

Since 1975 the EIB has granted loans totalling £104·2 million to Strathclyde regional council to finance infrastructure projects. Over the same period, loans totalling £31·6 million have been granted to private sector organisations in Strathclyde. No separate figure is available for private organisations in Glasgow.

European Social Fund

In 1983 and 1984 Strathclyde regional council received grants totalling £6·5 million from the ESF in respect of training and employment schemes in its area. No awards were made in the same period to Glasgow district council.

In 1983 private sector organisations in Strathclyde received ESF grants totalling £2·0 million. No equivalent figure is yet available for 1984. Separate figures are not available for private organisations in Glasgow.

Local authorities and private organisations in Strathclyde also benefit from ESF support for schemes of the Manpower Services Commission. It is not possible, however, to provide a breakdown of the figures for individual areas.

European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund (FEOGA)

Under the guidance section of the fund (EC regulation 355/77) grants totalling £0·26 million have been made since 1977 to private sector organisations in Glasgow. No similar grants have been made in the same period to either of the local authorities.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to make arrangements with the European Economic Community to allow full interchangeability between direct sellers of milk and holders of wholesale quotas.

Mr. Jopling: As a result of our repeated pressure the Commission has now made proposals designed to provide greater flexibility between wholesale and direct sale quotas. I shall be pressing for the urgent adoption of the necessary measures.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the cost in 1983 and 1984 of the reduced rate of co-responsibility levy on milk production in the less favoured areas of the United Kingdom, excluding hill farms; and how this compares with earlier years;

(2) what was the cost to the European Economic Community budget in 1983 and 1984 of exempting hill farms in the United Kingdom from the co-responsibility levy on milk production; and how this compares with earlier years.

Mr. MacGregor: Co-responsibility levy is collected on milk delivered to dairies, but at a rate reduced by 0·5 per cent. in respect of producers in less favoured areas as defined in article 3(4) of directive 75/268/EEC, up to an annual limit of 60,000 kilograms per producer. Hill farms in the United Kingdom are not exempted from the co-responsibility levy on milk production. They fall within the less favoured areas and benefit from the lower rate of levy. The levy collected from them is not separately identified. If the levy had been collected at the full rate in the less favoured areas in the calendar years of 1983 and 1984 it is estimated that the following additional amounts would have been payable to the European Community budget.

	£
1983	374,997
1984	668,905

In years prior to 1983 the amounts would have been similar to those in 1983. In 1984 the scope of the designation of less favoured areas was extended and so the benefit from the reduced rate increased.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is carrying out or is aware of, apart from the Boxworth experiment, into the effects of pesticides on *(a)* moths and butterflies, *(b)* flowering plants, *(c)* birds and *(d)* beneficial insects that may be exposed to pesticides in hedgerows or other habitats contaminated by spray or vapour drift.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the next 10 pesticides which are to be subject to a full review of safety and or efficacy by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not possible to anticipate decisions of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. However, the committee carried out reviews in 1984 on the uses of aminotriazole, chlorbromuron, ethylene dibromide, and ethylene dichloride.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to which insecticide products or active ingredients in use *(a)* in food or crops storage, *(b)* on main crops and *(c)* in horticulture, increased pest resistance has developed since their clearance under the PSPS.

Mr. MacGregor: Pest resistance has developed to the following pesticide active ingredients, still in use:

(a) food storage practice — bendiocarb, biorespethrin, bromophos, chlordane, chloropyriphos-methyl, deltamethrin, diazinon, dichlorvos, dieldrin, dimethoate, etrimfos, fenchlorphos, fenitrothion, HCH, lodofenphos, malathion, methacrifos, methyl bromide, permethrin, pimimiphos methyl, propoxur, pyrethrins, resmethrin, tetramethrin, trichlorphon;

(b) in agriculture and horticulture — aldicarb, aldrin, binapacryl, chlorbenside, chlorfenson, cypermethrin, dicofol, fenson, HCH, permethrin, pirimicarb, tetradifon; and a range of organophosphorous active ingredients.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what pest or disease would normally be controlled through the spraying of the pesticide fenitrothion.

Mr. MacGregor: Under the agricultural chemicals approval scheme fenitrothion is approved for the control of the following pests in agriculture, horticulture, and food storage:

aphids, apple blossom weevil, apple sawfly, capsids, codling, tortrix and winter moths and suckers (apple and pear), aphids and caterpillars (plum), capsids and sawflies (blackcurrant and gooseberry), raspberry beetle, raspberry cane midge, strawberry tortrix aphids, midge, moths, thrips and weevils (pea), frit fly (maize and sweet corn), saddle gall midge, wheat blossom midge and thrips in cereals and (by making a bran bait), leatherjackets in cereals. Also treatment of the farm grain stores to control saw-toothed grain beetle, grain weevil, rust-red grain beetle and rust-red flour beetle.

Forestry pests that may be controlled by fenitrothion are pine beauty moth and winter moth under the pesticides safety precautions scheme.

It is also cleared for use in animal husbandry and in and around the home and garden.

Farming Techniques

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers, by county, are using *(a)* organic methods and *(b)* low-input, low-output methods.

Mr. Jopling: I regret that such information is not available.

Cereals (Fungal Diseases)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fungal diseases of cereals were known to include economically significant resistant strains in relation to use of one or more fungicides in *(a)* 1965, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1975, *(d)* 1980 and *(e)* 1984; and if he will name them.

Mr. MacGregor: Currently, only eyespot is known to include economically significant resistant strains to the fungicides benomyl, carbendazim and thiophanatemethyl, but alternative chemicals are available. Detailed information on the position in past years is not readily available. However, where resistance has occurred in the past it has been overcome by the use of alternative fungicides and the development of new ones.

Herbicides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to which herbicide products or active ingredients, cleared under the PSPS at any time, there are now more common resistant strains of weed than at the time of their introduction.

Mr. MacGregor: There are two herbicides which fall into this category—Atrazine and simazine. Alternatives exist for both.

Animal Feedingstuffs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each dairy product the estimated amount sold in 1984 from intervention stocks, or otherwise financed by European Economic Community funds, for use as an animal feedingstuff; and if he will provide similar figures for 1983, 1979 and 1970 together with the cost to European Economic Community funds.

Mr. MacGregor: Skimmed milk powder and liquid skimmed milk are made available under Community schemes for use in animal feedingstuffs. The quantities for which applications for aid were made in 1973 (the first year for which data are readily available), 1979 and 1983 were as follows:

'000 tonnes

	Liquid skimmed milk	*Skimmed milk powder*
1973	4,855	1,200
1979	4,419	1,812
1983	4,924	1,809

Total expenditure on these measures during the respective calendar years was £145 million, £715 million and £1,100 million.

Data are not yet available for 1984.

EC (Agricultural Exports)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing estimated European Economic Community exports of common agricultural policy products by volume in 1984 compared with 1983, 1979 and 1972 together with the corresponding imports.

Mr. MacGregor: The latest information on the annual volume of European Community trade in agricultural products is summarised in "The Agricultural Situation in the European Community—1984 Report", published by the Commission. A copy of this report is available in the Library of the House.

Corresponding information for the earlier years is contained in the reports for 1981 and 1975.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each of the agricultural products regulated under the common agricultural policy the amount of levy payable in the United Kingdom on importation from third countries, the amount of customs duty, the intervention or threshold price, the target price and the United Kingdom market price and the world price.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Sheepmeat

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total amount collected, and the average per pound of meat, in respect of the export charge on sheepmeat in each year since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Agricultural Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing changes since 1972 in the relationship between the unit of account used for agricultural purposes and the market rate of the European currency unit and the changes in the relationship of (i) sterling and (ii) the deutschmark to the agricultural unit of account, together with an explanation as to what the effect would be on agricultural prices in the United Kingdom in terms of sterling of (iii) a fall in the value of the pound against the market rate for the European currency unit and (iv) of an increase in the value of the deutschmark against the market value of the European currency unit.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested on the past relationship between the European currency unit—which would need to be valued in terms of the market rates for its constituent currencies — and the relevant agricultural accounting unit at the time—which varies during the period quoted—is not readily available, and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. A Commission document is available giving the value of certain currencies, including sterling and the deutschmark, against the unit of account—or since 9 April 1979 the European currency unit — between March 1973 and December 1981. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House. Information for 1972 is not readily available. As I explained to the hon. Member on 17 December 1984 and 31 January 1985, changes in the value of the deutschmark or of sterling have no effect on CAP support prices in the United Kingdom.

Agricultural Production (Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each European Economic Community country the amount spent under the national budget on agricultural production in addition to the amounts received from the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: The national budgets of the Community member states are drawn up on very differing bases, so that comparable figures for expenditure on national support for agriculture are not readily available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the total spent in the United Kingdom under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund guidance section of the European Economic Community budget in 1983 and in 1984; and if he will give particulars of the amounts spent on *(a)* limiting production and *(b)* increasing production;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each member state the amount spent under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund guarantee section in 1983 compared with 1972 and 1979 together with the estimate for 1984; and if he will break the total down *(a)* by product and *(b)* by export refunds, storage aids, and so on;

(3) what is the estimated expenditure for each of the principal products under the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund guarantee scheme in 1984 compared with the amount appropriated; and if he will provide corresponding figures for expenditure in 1972, 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration has been given to increasing the attendance allowance for patients on home dialysis to ensure that it covers the real cost of employing a nurse attendant.

Mr. Newton: A related proposal, that home dialysis patients should receive automatically the higher rate of attendance allowance, was put to us last year by Mrs. Elizabeth Ward of the Bristol Kidney Patients Association, and I met her to discuss it in November. I made the point that, uniquely, home dialysis at least twice weekly is already deemed to entail entitlement to the lower rate of attendance allowance, and that we did not believe that the case for going further had been made out, especially since

improved dialysis techniques have tended to reduce rather than increase the amount of time during which attendance is required.

The two rates of attendance allowance are intended to reflect a broad measure of appropriate help for those needing constant attention by day or by night, or both. They do not represent a specific item or items of expenditure; and, with over 450,000 allowances in payment, it would be impracticable to attempt to set individual rates according to individual circumstances.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the age range and what were the lengths of stay of all the men and women in each of his Department's 23 resettlement units on the night of 31 December 1984 and on each 31 December since 1979 inclusive.

Mr. Whitney: As the tables giving these details are lengthy, I am writing to my hon. Friend and placing a copy in the Library.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there is any evidence from limited list schemes elsewhere that delays in diagnosis may occur as a result, with the consequent prescribing of more expensive remedies.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The only report we have seen on this issue concerns the West German diagnosis-related limited list. Our limited list proposals will ensure that a fully effective range of drugs is available for all conditions at National Health Service expense, and so there will be no reason for delays in diagnosis.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has on the efficiency of the monitoring system which exists in Germany to oversee the medical impact of the limited list scheme;

(2) what assessment he has made of the cost savings achieved by the German scheme for a limited list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We studied the limited list schemes in a number of countries, including Germany, before drawing up our own rather different limited list proposals. We have made no assessment of savings from overseas schemes. That is a matter for the Governments concerned.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which royal colleges have indicated support for the Government's limited list drug proposals; and how that support has been indicated.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In a letter to *The Times* of 15 January 1985 the president of the Royal College of Physicians, Professor Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, indicated that three royal colleges support the principle underlying the Government's proposals. These were his own college and two others.

General Practitioners (Over-prescribing)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's policy regarding arraignment of general practitioners before medical service committees for over-prescribing of National Health Service drugs; and how many such cases there were in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No provision exists for general practitioners to appear before medical service committees for over-prescribing. Regulation 16 of the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations 1974 provide for such cases to be considered by the local medical committee. No cases have been dealt with under this procedure during the last three years in England.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors have been referred to their local medical committees for excessive prescribing under paragraph 16 of the Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations 1974 in each of the last three years; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Prescribers whose costs are above average are visited by our regional medical officers who also discuss prescribing topics in the course of their regular contacts with general practitioners. The use of powers contained in paragraph 16 of the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunals) Regulations 1974 has been regarded as a last resort and there have been no such cases in the last three years in England.

National Staff Committee for Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce his decision on the future of the National Staff Committee for Nurses and Midwives; if he is satisfied that the consultation period has been long enough to enable the profession to submit its views; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The National Staff Committee for Nurses and Midwives is now funded by the National Health Service Training Authority, which is consulting about review of committee structure. We have had no representations about the authority's consultation period. We expect to receive the authority's recommendations in the spring, after which we shall make our decision.

Sex Education

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his consultations with the Department of Education and Science about more counselling and health education for young people will cover the need for appropriate sex education programmes in all maintained schools.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. We see sex education for young people as important in tackling such problems as those identified in the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists research on late abortions. The provision of sex education in schools is a matter for local education authorities and individual schools.

Hospital Services (East Anglia)

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the present and future funding of hospital services in East Anglia;

(2) what account he takes in allocating funding for hospital services in East Anglia, of the current level of spending per capita relative to that in other regions; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what account he takes, in allocating funds for hospital services in East Anglia, of the current and projected rates of population growth in the region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This Government remain committed to achieving a fair distribution of resources across the country, using the approach recommended by the resource allocation working party (RAWP). On this basis, the East Anglian region can expect, under this Government to continue to receive increases in its revenue allocation which will be above the average increase for the country as a whole. In 1985-86 the region will receive a cash increase of 6·3 per cent. compared with 5·5 per cent. nationally, and the resource assumptions issued in January provide for growth of 1·9 per cent. and 2 per cent. for 1986-87 and 1987-88 compared with national growth in each of these years of 1 per cent. above forecast inflation.

These allocations take account of the fact that the region is currently funded at below national average levels and of the projected increase in the population in the East Anglian region.

NHS (Administrators)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make provision for the appointment of senior professionally-qualified directors of personnel and industrial relations at district and regional level in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We expect health authorities in reviewing their management arrangements to have regard to the views of the management inquiry on the need to strengthen the personnel function at all levels in the service and for improved training of line managers in personnel matters. Responsibility for developing and improving the effectiveness of the personnel function will be one of the primary tasks of the personnel director whose appointment as a member of the National Health Service management board will shortly be confirmed.

Pharmaceutical Companies (Return on Investment)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the proposed reduction by the Department of Health and Social Security of the return on investment guideline from Smith Kline French and other pharmaceutical companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received from Smith Kline and French and from some other companies representations that the revised profit targets under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme from 1 April are too low. However, we decided upon these targets after careful consideration of the 1984 report of the review board for Government contracts and of our need to achieve economies in the National Health Service drugs bill, and they must stand for the financial year 1985-86.

AIDS

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) on 12 February, *Official Report*, column *155*, and in the light of the expert medical views that lesbians carry the least risk of infection from the acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus, if he will immediately develop a programme to encourage lesbians to give blood with a view to it being used for the production of heat-treated factor VIII.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We actively encourage everyone who is not in a group at high risk from AIDS to donate blood.

Inequalities in Health

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present cost of implementing recommendations 10, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29 of the working group report on inequalities in health.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. The cost of implementing those recommendations, though undoubtedly very large, would depend to a considerable extent on the way they were implemented. In that light, and taking into account also the current review of social security benefits, estimates of cost would not be meaningful.

NHS (Administrative Costs)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the amount of money he expects to receive from National Health Service trust funds to pay for administrative costs during 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for each of the last five years, how much the Department has spent on maintaining electric-powered wheelchairs for *(a)* indoor use and *(b)* outdoor use; and what is the average cost for each type of electric-powered wheelchair;

(2) for each of the last five years, how many people have been issued with electric-powered indoor wheelchairs; how many of these have also been issued with an outdoor attendant-controlled electric wheelchair; and what is the cost of supplying indoor electric-powered wheelchairs;

(3) for each of the last five years *(a)* how much has been spent on the wheelchair services, *(b)* how many attendant-controlled electric powered wheelchairs have been (i) issued and (ii) bought as new by his Department and *(c)* what is the cost of providing attendant-controlled electric wheelchairs;

(4) for each of the last five years, how many people have applied for *(a)* an indoor electric-powered wheelchair and *(b)* an outdoor electric-powered wheelchair and had their application refused in each case;

(5) how many representations he has received on the need to provide occupant-controlled electric-powered wheelchairs that have either indoor and outdoor use or outdoor use only.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Child Benefit

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if it remains his policy that child benefit will be uprated in November 1985 based on price rises in the 12 months up to 6 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: A decision about the rate of child benefit will be taken at the usual time later this year.

Hexafluorosilic Acid

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if hexafluorosilic acid has ever been submitted to the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1985, c. *446*]: No.

Aluminium

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what monitoring his Department carries out, or is aware of, of aluminium levels in water supplies and the diet; and if these relate to acid deposition.

Mr. Macfarlane: I have been asked to reply.

Statutory water undertakers carry out periodic monitoring of aluminium concentrations which are naturally present in their water supplies. More frequent monitoring is carried out when aluminium is used as part of the treatment process. The concentration in nearly all supplies in England is well within the limit laid down in the EC directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption. Aluminium concentrations in the raw water are related to the nature of the catchment area, including the acidity of the soil water, which mainly depends on the geology — though other factors, including acid deposition, also affect it. Responsibility for questions relating to diet lies with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Organophosphorous Warblecides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies his Department has made, is planning or is aware of, concerning the health effects among livestock farmers, of using organophosphorous warblecides.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

Organophosphorous warblecides, like all veterinary medicines, are subject to the licensing requirements of the Medicines Act 1968. Each individual product must be the subject of a separate application and a licence is issued only after MAFF as licensing authority is satisfied as to the safety, quality and efficacy of the product concerned, including the safety of persons handling and administering the medicine. The licensing authority is advised by the Veterinary Products Committee, a statutory body of independent experts in human and animal health. Labels and literature for organophosphorous warblecides are required to carry instructions to operators concerning the use of the products.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he gives to county councils as to the scale of their monitoring of pesticide residues in food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

County councils, as food and drugs authorities, have responsibility for the enforcement of those provisions of the Food Act 1984 relating to the composition of food, including pesticide residues. They determine their own programmes of work. My Department's working party on pesticide residues publishes results of its national surveys, which are available to food and drugs authorities.

NHS (Ancillary Services)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each district in 1983-84 the total expenditure on cleaning, the expenditure on services provided by private cleaning companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year;

(2) if he will give for each district in 1983-84 the total expenditure on catering, the expenditure on services provided by private catering companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in 1982-83;

(3) if he will give for each district in 1983-84 the total expenditure on laundry, the expenditure on services provided by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in 1982-83.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1985, c. *330*]: Following is the information requested, derived from the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities.

Figures for 1983-84 are not strictly comparable with those for 1982-83 as value added tax on contracted-out services became reclaimable by health authorities on 1 September 1983 and should have been excluded in recording expenditure incurred after that date.

	Catering				Domestic/Cleaning				Laundry			
	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83
NORTHERN REGION												
Health Districts												
Hartlepool	552,571	—	—	—	869,248	10,471	1·20	(0·16)	133,877	—	—	—
North Tees	949,580	—	—	—	1,242,681	45,775	3·68	3·60	147,740	509	0·34	(0·02)
South Tees	2,159,407	—	—	—	2,602,936	25,126	0·97	(0·09)	292,793	6,321	2·16	0·10
East Cumbria	1,174,667	—	—	—	1,455,349	12,156	0·84	0·05	239,170	4,690	1·96	(1·19)
South Cumbria	915,066	—	—	—	870,349	7,223	0·83	0·29	194,394	11,556	5·94	2·89
West Cumbria	1,051,467	6,923	0·66	(0·77)	1,060,070	14,864	1·40	1·08	169,358	1,250	0·74	(0·08)
Darlington	1,198,977	—	—	—	1,221,295	7,888	0·65	(0·47)	215,752	—	—	—
Durham	1,003,216	—	—	—	1,223,406	2,184	0·18	0·03	224,339	3,792	1·69	(0·46)
North West Durham	649,851	—	—	—	846,767	6,120	0·72	0·03	134,979	134	0·10	(0·10)
South West Durham	1,381,353	—	—	—	1,818,856	9,479	0·52	(0·19)	229,210	17	0·03	(0·19)
Northumberland	3,071,876	—	—	—	2,985,826	10,753	0·36	0·08	391,046	230	0·06	(0·44)
Gateshead	1,202,113	—	—	—	1,738,834	22,349	1·29	(0·26)	81,109	50	0·05	0·05
Newcastle upon Tyne	3,938,583	3,485	0·09	0·08	5,084,744	59,453	1·17	0·07	697,000	188,823	26·90	(0·34)
North Tyneside	762,064	—	—	(0·01)	1,020,649	4,936	0·48	0·11	105,546	1,450	1·37	(0·79)
South Tyneside	838,954	—	—	—	1,229,280	17,130	1·39	(0·42)	217,932	871	0·40	(0·48)
Sunderland	2,295,311	1,021	0·04	(0·33)	3,067,659	20,493	0·67	0·12	509,965	—	—	—
REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY	24,046	277	1·15	(4·29)	142,964	5,298	3·71	(0·67)	9,787	9,787	100·00	43·15
REGION TOTAL	23,159,102	11,706	0·05	(0·06)	28,480,914	281,698	0·99	0·16	3,993,995	227,532	5·70	(0·41)
YORKSHIRE REGION												
Health Districts												
Hull	1,938,828	—	—	—	2,754,025	48,278	1·75	0·13	389,341	12,934	3·32	(0·88)
East Yorkshire	1,652,219	—	—	—	1,786,672	18,206	1·02	0·25	235,947	19,684	8·34	(0·45)
Grimsby	865,085	—	—	—	1,146,690	11,672	1·02	(0·05)	95,602	1,971	2·06	0·27
Scunthorpe	861,873	—	—	—	1,170,475	14,509	1·24	(0·30)	243,698	3,180	1·30	(0·34)
Northallerton	423,621	19,773	4·67	3·23	483,350	9,288	1·92	0·90	67,724	32,707	48·29	(30·83)
York	2,195,297	—	—	—	2,301,403	11,029	0·48	0·05	336,622	26,383	7·84	(4·55)
Scarborough	719,381	—	—	—	883,322	4,408	0·50	(0·03)	155,275	5,067	3·26	(0·79)
Harrogate	1,117,576	—	—	—	1,212,459	5,832	0·48	0·15	153,309	11,888	7·75	1·69
Bradford	2,592,202	—	—	—	2,928,770	23,004	0·79	(0·11)	431,803	13,015	3·01	(1·59)
Airedale	1,442,255	—	—	—	1,059,358	5,732	0·54	(0·01)	186,003	3,327	1·79	(0·75)
Calderdale	1,499,699	—	—	—	1,237,368	7,062	0·57	(0·14)	265,809	2,179	0·82	(0·13)
Huddersfield	1,871,249	—	—	—	2,056,617	14,848	0·72	(0·09)	365,380	5,289	1·44	0·07
Dewsbury	828,713	—	—	—	1,300,633	5,267	0·40	(0·10)	226,560	85,829	37·88	19·31
Leeds Western	3,384,055	—	—	—	3,423,568	438,899	12·82	1·72	805,457	16,001	1·99	(18·51)
Leeds Eastern	2,563,218	—	—	—	3,983,189	37,192	0·93	(0·58)	502,744	1,778	0·35	0·35
Wakefield	1,812,340	6	—	—	1,477,650	17,993	1·22	0·16	385,266	—	—	(5·86)
Pontefract	883,090	—	—	—	1,282,109	8,050	0·63	0·02	246,330	76	0·03	(0·21)
REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY	44,825	—	—	—	211,390	6,963	3·29	0·26	19,150	13,146	68·65	(10·98)
REGION TOTAL	26,595,466	19,779	0·07	0·05	30,699,048	688,232	2·24	0·11	5,112,020	254,434	4·98	(4·60)
TRENT REGION												
Health Districts												
North Derbyshire	1,546,548	—	—	—	1,858,506	9,405	0·51	(0·01)	286,477	23,965	8·37	(0·65)
South Derbyshire	3,825,874	—	—	(0·04)	3,600,014	82,591	2·29	0·42	539,266	3,839	0·71	(0·38)
Leicestershire	5,213,496	—	—	(0·06)	6,134,947	60,722	0·99	(0·07)	776,008	15,758	2·03	(0·14)
North Lincolnshire	2,049,187	—	—	—	2,343,254	22,728	0·89	(0·35)	266,445	17,372	6·52	(3·01)
South Lincolnshire	1,788,488	—	—	—	2,046,280	11,304	0·55	(0·02)	353,230	2,971	0·84	(3·20)
Bassetlaw	456,540	4	—	—	443,565	6,407	1·44	(0·52)	98,824	1,326	1·34	1·03
Central Nottinghamshire	2,150,826	973	0·05	(0·06)	2,162,067	8,734	0·40	(0·20)	270,822	279	0·10	(1·97)
Nottingham	4,013,636	—	—	(0·06)	6,862,439	47,642	0·69	0·02	1,224,021	12,995	1·06	(0·35)
Barnsley	1,364,613	6,262	0·46	(0·02)	1,455,963	18,952	1·30	(0·08)	268,798	2,722	1·01	(7·01)
Doncaster	1,982,183	—	—	—	1,574,911	6,292	0·40	(0·11)	277,471	—	—	(1·17)
Rotherham	1,334,449	—	—	—	1,436,522	18,275	1·25	0·01	206,812	6,867	3·30	(2·76)
Sheffield	5,162,631	4,556	0·09	0·01	8,034,591	36,028	0·45	(0·09)	795,735	42,637	5·36	(1·48)
REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY	99,108	33,755	34·24	(7·87)	271,542	45,534	16·77	1·04	7,549	2,681	35·51	11·46
REGION TOTAL	30,987,580	65,550	0·21	(0·10)	38,444,601	374,614	0·97	(0·05)	5,371,458	133,362	2·48	(1·41)
EAST ANGLIAN REGION												
Health Districts												
Cambridge	1,979,153	—	—	—	2,254,071	76,912	34·47	1·46	487,568	13,430	2·75	1·55
Peterborough	1,617,855	—	—	—	1,535,816	9,028	0·58	0·02	268,332	49	0·02	(0·19)
West Suffolk	1,449,437	—	—	—	1,516,761	36,013	2·31	0·02	394,801	—	—	—
East Suffolk	2,365,686	—	—	—	2,845,832	13,656	0·48	0·08	480,349	149	0·03	(0·14)
Norwich	3,673,358	—	—	—	4,390,512	43,804	1·00	0·02	323,335	7,805	2·41	(1·59)
Great Yarmouth	1,200,166	—	—	—	1,238,041	7,051	0·57	(0·26)	340,416	1,705	0·50	(0·17)
West Norfolk and Wisbech	954,350	—	—	—	1,275,817	6,376	0·50	(0·26)	201,726	—	—	(0·32)
Huntingdon	412,792	—	—	—	528,646	93,226	17·63	17·63	76,746	651	0·85	0·85
REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY	7,318	—	—	—	33,478	30,282	90·45	(4·19)	2,362	223	9·44	(76·03)
REGION TOTAL	13,660,116	—	—	—	15,639,031	1,016,348	6·50	0·78	2,585,635	24,012	0·93	(0·25)
NORTH WEST THAMES REGION												
Health District												
North Bedfordshire	1,176,532	—	—	—	1,585,178	9,575	0·60	(0·17)	192,431	1,176	1·27	0·20
South Bedfordshire	1,412,169	—	—	—	1,945,757	25,074	1·29	0·15	390,879	251,689	64·44	(2·59)
North Hertfordshire	973,851	—	—	—	1,216,676	25,494	2·10	0·25	117,572	1,266	1·08	(0·10)
East Hertfordshire	701,669	—	—	—	850,598	27,592	3·24	(5·61)	240,325	39,931	16·62	1·70
North West Hertfordshire	2,415,999	—	—	—	2,423,103	21,166	0·87	0·03	441,010	6,651	1·51	0·154
South West Hertfordshire	1,789,204	—	—	—	2,270,295	21,406	0·94	0·07	290,007	34,940	12·05	(0·20)
Barnet	2,945,072	—	—	(0·14)	3,868,616	41,676	1·08	(0·16)	304,338	1,891	0·62	0·26
Harrow	1,442,472	14,006	0·97	0·97	2,231,784	28,212	1·26	0·91	158,112	37,709	23·85	(42·51)
Hillingdon	1,277,300	—	—	—	2,446,254	18,265	0·75	0·02	188,368	733	0·39	(0·39)

	Catering				Domestic/Cleaning				Laundry			
	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83
Hounslow and Spelthorne	1,686,349	—	—	—	2,611,064	18,464	0·71	0·14	382,006	162,628	42·57	(0·62)
Ealing	1,932,634	—	—	—	2,287,091	29,746	1·30	(0·60)	284,543	20,756	7·29	0·86
Brent	2,227,690	—	—	—	2,479,842	801	0·03	(0·10)	408,163	11	—	(0·57)
Paddington	2,115,782	—	—	—	3,432,741	34,011	0·99	(0·30)	302,230	33,021	10·93	(8·75)
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,588,474	—	—	—	2,589,213	47,194	1·82	(0·74)	383,860	61,720	16·08	(1·45)
Victoria	3,156,834	—	—	—	4,292,223	228,869	5·33	0·06	478,495	268,589	56·13	(9·35)
Regional Health Authority	68,431	31,847	46·54	12·09	176,260	67,041	38·04	5·20	7,049	2,622	37·20	14·97
Region Total	26,910,464	45,853	0·17	0·05	36,706,694	644,586	1·76	(0·26)	4,569,388	925,533	20·26	(3·67)
North East Thames Region												
Health Districts												
Basildon and Thurrock	1,677,731	—	—	—	2,723,552	19,358	0·71	(0·28)	381,312	—	—	—
Mid Essex	1,118,741	42	—	—	1,788,522	20,746	1·16	(0·19)	481,704	13,963	2·90	(0·41)
North East Essex	2,506,943	—	—	—	2,613,790	43,399	1·66	0·03	383,553	—	—	—
West Essex	1,213,169	—	—	—	1,561,913	42,927	2·75	(0·02)	240,654	2,946	1·22	(0·44)
Southend	1,904,606	—	—	—	2,193,942	20,035	0·91	(0·30)	343,318	246,552	71·81	(10·05)
Barking/Havering/ Brentwood	2,641,790	—	—	—	3,741,972	29,649	0·79	0·03	496,788	8,815	1·77	(4·26)
Hampstead	2,548,266	—	—	—	3,309,192	51,202	1·55	0·78	411,633	—	—	—
Bloomsbury	4,514,916	—	—	—	6,375,175	97,544	1·53	(0·15)	625,949	436,360	69·71	9·36
Islington	1,861,185	7,236	0·39	0·20	2,497,727	15,192	0·61	(0·26)	259,821	4,112	1·58	(0·80)
City and Hackney	2,610,048	—	—	—	4,570,898	127,996	2·80	0·13	339,176	24,180	7·13	1·34
Newham	1,169,356	2,319	0·20	(0·08)	1,913,907	7,435	0·39	(0·41)	301,573	4,362	1·45	(0·74)
Tower Hamlets	1,814,164	12,293	0·68	0·03	3,586,673	88,782	2·48	(0·74)	399,173	16,463	4·12	0·61
Enfield	890,008	—	—	—	1,839,946	14,554	0·79	0·79	246,967	4,652	1·88	1·88
Haringey	1,121,326	—	—	—	2,099,089	16,663	0·79	(0·23)	377,316	16,418	4·35	(15·08)
Redbridge	1,471,559	—	—	—	1,946,261	392,259	20·15	(0·98)	287,574	721	0·25	(0·04)
Waltham Forest	2,674,363	—	—	—	3,887,708	22,654	0·58	(0·17)	300,021	6,437	2·15	(1·97)
Regional Health Authority	84,010	49,303	58·69	4·01	231,510	38,602	16·67	2·98	6,210	3,135	50·48	24·97
Region Total	31,822,180	71,193	0·22	0·02	46,881,777	1,048,997	2·24	(0·07)	5,882,743	789,118	13·41	(2·02)
South East Thames Region												
Health Districts												
Brighton	1,908,611	—	—	—	2,315,304	26,993	1·17	(0·17)	242,891	22,352	9·20	0·56
Eastbourne	1,403,310	—	—	—	1,861,797	5,917	0·32	(0·04)	363,296	11,019	3·03	(9·79)
Hastings	1,108,327	278	0·03	—	1,230,944	8,545	0·69	(0·02)	263,349	5,574	2·12	0·05
South East Kent	1,133,793	—	—	—	1,747,671	31,491	1·80	(0·04)	424,972	7,737	1·82	(1·10)
Canterbury and Thanet	2,305,022	—	—	—	2,783,992	20,075	0·72	(0·90)	650,201	8,982	1·38	0·33
Dartford and Gravesham	1,919,997	—	—	—	2,931,253	23,212	0·79	(0·03)	401,913	9,525	2·37	0·16
Maidstone	1,327,896	—	—	—	1,848,606	142,266	7·70	6·31	282,389	93,143	32·98	25·24
Medway	1,048,714	—	—	—	1,474,673	288,941	19·59	0·88	234,606	4,946	2·11	(0·30)
Tunbridge Wells	1,855,619	—	—	—	2,533,896	16,085	0·63	(0·16)	391,139	30,559	7·81	(0·43)
Bexley	1,429,241	—	—	—	1,976,245	12,334	0·62	(0·07)	259,756	10,712	4·12	(5·14)
Greenwich	2,435,208	—	—	—	3,268,779	12,100	0·37	0·05	317,696	9,482	2·98	(2·19)
Bromley	2,290,206	—	—	—	3,011,805	31,720	1·05	0·69	478,896	19,538	4·08	(0·36)
West Lambeth	3,135,969	—	—	—	4,598,205	104,605	2·27	0·99	521,891	331,292	63·48	(7·47)
Camberwell	2,524,436	—	—	—	3,468,095	23,851	0·69	(0·42)	391,064	47,239	12·08	4·86
Lewisham & N Southwark	3,277,374	35,151	1·07	(0·02)	5,382,798	65,570	1·22	(0·46)	652,180	8,884	1·36	(3·09)
Regional Health Authority	38,437	—	—	—	129,786	26,809	20·66	2·62	5,856	4,219	72·05	12·04
Region Total	29,142,160	35,429	0·12	—	40,563,649	840,494	2·07	0·38	5,882,094	625,203	10·63	0·63
South West Thames Region												
Health Districts												
North West Surrey	1,662,919	—	—	—	1,861,786	21,108	1·13	0·05	223,922	16,722	16·40	7·08
West Surrey/N E Hants	1,686,951	—	—	—	1,988,724	24,658	1·24	0·42	347,948	1,535	0·44	0·28
South West Surrey	1,232,856	—	—	—	1,621,089	17,096	1·05	(0·03)	250,037	61	0·24	0·15
Mid Surrey	2,262,126	—	—	—	2,198,866	32,318	1·47	(0·41)	408,411	5,737	1·40	(8·19)
East Surrey	2,090,810	654	0·03	0·01	1,928,579	113,442	5·88	(2·53)	456,054	54,890	12·04	9·57
Chichester	1,153,181	—	—	—	1,067,918	18,333	1·72	0·19	126,693	4,763	3·76	(1·57)
Mid Downs	1,640,705	3,998	0·24	0·21	1,600,293	30,308	1·89	0·44	226,010	20,142	8·91	(10·85)
Worthing	927,107	180	0·02	(0·04)	1,310,268	14,454	1·10	0·13	168,923	8,739	5·17	0·32
Croydon	2,502,360	—	—	—	3,283,075	14,443	0·44	(0·12)	741,047	24,070	3·25	2·43
Kingston and Esher	1,825,795	26,987	1·48	—	2,364,481	54,152	2·29	(0·04)	403,756	28,805	7·13	3·30
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	1,270,522	—	—	—	1,948,046	42,039	2·16	0·41	515,202	330,797	64·21	3·01
Wandsworth	3,257,561	14,229	0·44	0·11	4,554,222	21,711	0·48	—	448,829	96,557	21·51	(4·80)
Sutton and Merton	2,593,330	17,712	0·68	0·02	3,631,508	68,765	1·89	(0·11)	796,011	63,726	8·01	5·34
Regional Health Authority	46,793	37,171	79·44	11·62	184,950	184,950	100·00	—	17,517	17,517	100·00	—
Region Total	24,153,018	100,931	0·42	0·07	29,543,805	657,777	2·23	(0·04)	5,130,361	694,061	13·53	1·33
Wessex Region												
Health Districts												
East Dorset	2,356,528	—	—	—	2,685,460	40,072	1·49	0·90	326,733	19,926	6·10	0·42
West Dorset	1,655,036	—	—	—	1,744,993	7,751	0·44	0·13	299,132	6,378	2·13	(2·48)
Portsmouth & S E Hants	2,966,279	—	—	—	3,232,191	14,074	0·44	(0·10)	423,370	8,372	1·98	(2·22)
Southampton & S W Hants	3,319,145	—	—	—	4,364,665	18,230	0·42	(0·31)	521,168	3,014	0·58	(0·67)
Winchester	910,183	—	—	—	1,153,708	30,930	2·68	(0·54)	202,088	182,479	90·30	20·52
Basingstoke & N Hants	1,663,171	241	0·01	0·01	2,170,694	6,375	0·29	(0·47)	223,067	11,438	5·13	(3·80)
Salisbury	1,178,966	—	—	—	1,050,924	3,557	0·34	(0·08)	160,650	814	0·51	(1·85)
Swindon	1,301,120	—	—	—	1,283,292	7,703	0·60	0·44	220,474	1,225	0·56	0·06
Bath	2,541,876	—	—	—	2,462,070	15,177	0·62	0·03	414,550	201	0·05	(0·01)
Isle of Wight	837,277	—	—	—	846,962	6,347	0·75	0·10	148,304	29,045	19·58	(3·10)
Regional Health Authority	16,248	—	—	—	46,426	44,998	96·92	2·61	3,192	3,192	100·00	—
Region Total	18,745,849	241	—	—	21,041,385	195,214	0·93	(0·01)	2,942,618	266,084	9·04	0·44

	Catering				Domestic/Cleaning				Laundry			
	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Private contracts Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Private contracts Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Private contracts Difference in percentage from 1982-83
Oxford Region												
Health Districts												
East Berkshire	1,941,184	—	—	—	2,242,425	18,193	0·81	(0·34)	394,037	59,419	15·08	0·26
West Berkshire	2,514,923	1,027	0·04	0·04	3,153,433	30,184	0·96	—	346,094	11,979	3·46	0·51
Aylesbury	1,231,763	—	—	—	1,591,198	172,683	10·85	0·58	314,778	251,528	79·91	(1·14)
Wycombe	802,418	—	—	—	871,179	8,575	0·98	0·55	238,940	227,158	95·07	(2·19)
Milton Keynes	201,878	37	0·02	0·02	256,738	17,045	6·64	5·91	73,180	19	0·03	(0·02)
Kettering	998,580	—	—	—	1,201,919	7,137	0·59	0·14	320,799	718	0·22	(0·03)
Northampton	1,870,418	—	—	—	2,134,645	13,707	0·64	0·05	400,792	5,090	1·27	0·31
Oxford	3,210,193	7,922	0·25	(0·01)	3,721,344	264,643	7·11	(1·62)	774,140	89,982	11·66	10·78
Regional Health Authority	12,598	—	—	—	62,676	21,139	33·73	(4·17)	4,724	4,724	100·00	1·59
Region Total	12,789,955	8,986	0·07	0·01	15,235,357	553,306	3·63	(0·32)	2,867,485	650,617	22·69	4·20
South Western Region												
Health Districts												
Bristol and Weston	2,611,992	7,416	0·28	0·02	2,948,537	5,493	0·19	(0·01)	308,294	7,869	2·55	(1·31)
Frenchay	2,306,701	4,381	0·19	0·02	2,329,248	12,972	0·56	(0·10)	373,221	3,863	1·04	0·48
Southmead	1,766,485	294	0·02	(0·19)	2,264,916	16,876	0·75	0·20	479,047	97,619	20·68	(48·96)
Cornwall	2,969,399	—	—	—	2,797,323	23,326	0·83	(0·19)	606,304	76,684	12·65	(1·70)
Exeter	3,501,629	54	—	(0·01)	3,092,850	28,640	0·93	0·07	388,396	2,820	0·73	(0·68)
North Devon	675,402	—	—	—	761,897	3,394	0·45	—	174,995	3,272	1·87	(0·03)
Plymouth	2,014,281	—	—	—	2,570,828	20,881	0·81	(0·47)	585,533	4,041	0·69	(0·52)
Torbay	1,091,489	—	—	—	1,276,871	2,439	0·19	(0·30)	210,433	707	0·34	(0·05)
Cheltenham	880,649	—	—	—	1,035,061	1,930	0·19	(0·02)	223,458	163,047	72·97	(7·50)
Gloucester	1,935,249	—	—	—	2,149,823	473	0·02	(0·56)	268,200	10,063	3·75	(0·40)
Somerset	2,997,349	5,244	0·17	(0·36)	3,050,199	24,751	0·81	—	410,829	3,161	0·77	0·05
Regional Health Authority	50,886	16,185	31·81	(4·31)	104,507	7,826	7·49	(0·80)	3,737	—	—	—
Region Total	22,801,511	33,574	0·15	(0·07)	24,382,060	149,001	0·61	(0·12)	4,032,447	373,146	9·25	(9·71)
West Midlands Region												
Health Districts												
Bromsgrove and Redditch	861,801	—	—	—	726,958	1,309	0·18	(0·01)	6,586	5,328	80·90	50·10
Hereford	1,014,762	—	—	—	693,956	2,941	0·42	(0·21)	167,976	1,382	0·82	0·66
Kidderminster	1,142,574	—	—	—	946,945	5,979	0·63	(0·06)	367,336	4,047	1·10	(0·28)
Worcester	1,552,099	—	—	(0·07)	1,592,978	14,525	0·91	(0·69)	276,461	16,642	6·02	0·67
Sainp	2,287,675	—	—	—	2,292,272	10,587	0·46	(0·18)	589,345	508	0·09	(0·11)
Mid Staffordshire	1,275,539	—	—	—	1,253,534	16,715	1·33	(0·03)	217,170	5,594	2·58	(0·91)
North Staffordshire	3,063,288	—	—	—	3,935,259	22,012	0·56	(0·17)	459,202	18,658	4·06	(0·66)
South East Staffordshire	1,637,058	—	—	—	1,141,395	13,576	1·19	0·20	250,844	—	—	—
Rugby	321,292	—	—	—	273,512	2,837	1·04	0·09	95,152	89,850	94·43	(2·43)
North Warwickshire	1,250,918	1,725	0·14	(0·03)	1,087,053	8,142	0·75	(0·02)	275,639	75,597	27·43	25·24
South Warwickshire	1,698,160	—	—	—	1,713,923	13,417	0·78	(0·36)	257,483	7,252	2·82	(2·81)
Central Birmingham	2,734,824	474	0·02	0·01	3,044,552	71,709	2·36	(0·32)	352,702	22,033	6·25	2·70
East Birmingham	1,101,795	—	—	—	1,251,235	6,477	0·52	0·13	31,448	2,334	7·42	(2·68)
North Birmingham	1,491,453	656	0·04	(0·03)	1,192,703	11,639	0·98	(0·17)	329,986	272	0·08	0·08
South Birmingham	2,262,074	286	0·01	(0·23)	2,537,250	24,524	0·97	0·21	278,091	71	0·03	(1·23)
West Birmingham	2,629,097	6,890	0·26	0·08	2,815,102	39,026	1·39	0·24	417,348	4,744	1·14	(0·88)
Coventry	2,394,167	—	—	—	1,712,331	17,141	1·00	(0·02)	222,150	116,681	52·52	14·42
Dudley	1,633,210	—	—	—	1,881,132	22,155	1·18	(0·23)	308,868	3,105	1·01	0·03
Sandwell	1,065,728	—	—	—	1,267,358	12,702	1·00	0·20	339,595	8,729	2·57	0·66
Solihull	970,551	—	—	—	981,047	17,859	1·82	(0·39)	248,559	3,126	1·26	(0·45)
Walsall	1,706,149	7,714	0·45	0·03	1,731,382	37,680	2·18	(0·23)	283,486	1,772	0·63	(17·20)
Wolverhampton	2,166,137	—	—	—	2,017,742	19,217	0·95	(0·02)	282,904	3,978	1·41	(0·53)
Regional Health Authority	166,421	—	—	—	185,006	82,358	44·52	1·90	47,877	41,680	87·06	(3·97)
Region Total	36,426,772	17,745	0·05	(0·01)	36,274,600	474,527	1·31	(0·07)	6,106,203	433,383	7·10	(0·17)
Mersey Region												
Health Districts												
Chester	1,637,561	—	—	—	1,841,628	11,857	0·64	(0·31)	198,934	5,156	2·59	(3·87)
Crewe	1,554,660	—	—	—	1,828,708	19,233	1·05	(0·04)	299,834	15,472	5·16	1·13
Halton	430,306	—	—	—	463,383	6,182	1·33	(0·16)	103,489	17,601	17·01	120·43)
Macclesfield	1,410,831	—	—	(1·39)	1,527,859	12,548	0·82	(0·12)	333,555	5,590	1·68	(0·25)
Warrington	2,175,023	—	—	—	2,084,473	2,706	0·13	0·04	489,536	4,488	0·92	(0·21)
Liverpool	4,115,208	—	—	—	6,627,556	66,808	1·01	(0·07)	1,142,463	7,772	0·68	(0·78)
St. Helens and Knowsley	2,135,178	—	—	—	2,317,305	41,908	1·81	0·50	483,534	2,076	0·43	(1·25)
Southport and Formby	883,737	—	—	—	1,272,869	5,053	0·40	0·04	246,613	—	—	(0·38)
South Sefton	1,953,798	18	—	(0·02)	2,343,545	9,097	0·41	0·09	300,528	1,899	0·63	(11·45)
Wirral	2,284,865	—	—	—	2,600,293	23,745	0·91	0·59	1,164,725	614	0·05	0·04
Regional Health Authority	56,892	—	—	—	80,164	41,851	52·21	4·31	12,034	2,395	19·90	(4·08)
Region Total	18,638,059	18	—	(0·10)	22,987,783	241,648	1·05	0·09	4,775,245	63,063	1·32	(1·47)
North Western Region												
Health Districts												
Lancaster	1,964,952	—	—	—	1,957,175	14,632	0·75	(0·08)	318,945	831	0·26	(1·99)
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	1,839,937	—	—	(0·05)	1,826,935	10,057	0·55	(0·24)	305,732	260	0·08	(0·11)
Preston	2,817,454	—	—	—	2,589,646	3,683	0·14	(0·03)	486,206	47,377	9·74	(5·64)
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	2,850,959	—	—	—	2,706,120	23,084	0·85	(0·10)	500,991	3,308	0·66	(0·09)
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	2,355,100	—	—	—	2,471,638	13,868	0·56	(0·04)	349,485	842	0·24	(3·30)
West Lancashire	823,170	—	—	—	859,872	4,258	0·49	0·04	196,025	1,817	0·92	(21·97)
Chorley and South Ribble	435,152	—	—	—	505,520	6,797	1·34	0·40	78,742	1,502	1·96	(1·40)
Bolton	1,453,318	—	—	—	1,482,369	25,698	1·73	0·06	288,130	186	0·06	0·06
Bury	780,246	—	—	—	828,028	7,700	0·93	(0·08)	272,181	248,151	91·54	0·23
North Manchester	2,538,555	—	—	—	2,774,586	31,683	1·14	(0·18)	283,961	15,185	5·35	3·83
Central Manchester	1,765,427	—	—	—	2,259,122	35,791	1·58	0·09	227,425	4,856	2·01	0·22

	Catering				Domestic/Cleaning				Laundry			
	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83	Total expenditure £	Private contracts £	Private contracts Percentage of total	Difference in percentage from 1982-83
South Manchester	2,997,013	—	—	—	3,130,503	53,112	1·70	(0·38)	421,246	2,514	0·60	(2·32)
Oldham	857,546	—	—	—	1,210,367	369	0·03	0·01	276,675	177,192	64·04	(12·70)
Rochdale	982,880	—	—	—	794,352	15,308	1·93	(0·14)	149,751	2,901	1·94	(1·68)
Salford	2,921,307	—	—	—	3,060,384	98,376	3·21	(0·31)	496,862	4,608	0·93	(1·37)
Stockport	1,796,522	—	—	—	2,031,828	45,330	2·23	0·46	412,316	35,253	8·55	(2·19)
Tameside and Glossop	878,385	—	—	—	1,218,674	19,061	1·56	(0·39)	124,569	5,417	4·35	2·04
Trafford	1,015,435	—	—	—	999,381	16,986	1·70	(0·13)	258,071	6,851	2·65	1·04
Wigan	1,583,719	—	—	—	1,485,906	8,085	0·54	(0·05)	361,615	—	—	—
Regional Health Authority	35,647	—	—	—	235,473	58,457	24·83	(2·73)	23,167	17,725	76·51	(1·12)
Region Total	31,872,923	—	—	—	34,427,861	492,275	1·43	(0·10)	5,830,614	577,265	9·90	(3·37)

Notes:
1. All figures are total current expenditure on the relevant service: capital expenditure is excluded.
2. Figures in brackets are reductions in percentage between 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 22 February 1985

WALES

Heart Beat Wales

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* his Department's grant to Heart Beat Wales for the next five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1984-85 the Welsh Office has made £20,000 available for Heart Beat Wales. I am announcing today that, subject to parliamentary approval, £100,000 will be made available to the programme in 1985-86. Our Department's support in future years will be considered annually in the light of the availability of resources and the programme's development.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the seven experts who form the panel on whom he is dependent for advice in relation to the limitation of the range of drugs available on the National Health Service in Wales either live or work in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None, but the Welsh Office chief medical officer was actively engaged in the deliberations of this expert group, which was made aware of the representations received by the Welsh Office.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the anticipated annual savings which he expects will arise in Wales from the intention to introduce a limited list of available drugs on the National Health Service.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the light of the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services yesterday at columns 1223-24, it is now estimated that savings arising in Wales will be of the order of £4 million per annum rising over the next two or three years to about £5 million per annum.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions (General Belgrano)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will ask the Procedure Committee to consider the implications of the information made available by the Government relating to the sinking of the General Belgrano for the rules relating to parliamentary questions about advice given by officials to Ministers.

Mr. Biffen: Any matter relating to the rules for parliamentary questions is already within the terms of reference of the Procedure Committee.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hospital Eye Service

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes he proposes to make relating to the hospital eye service when changes to general ophthalmic services take effect on 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The present arrangements for refraction and dispensing for hospital eye service patients will continue although they will be able to choose whether to have their prescriptions dispensed outside the National Health Service.

NHS (Current Cost Accounting)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to introduce current cost accounting in the Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans to do so at present. The standard accounting practices now followed in the National Health Service were drawn up in 1982 by a working group of the Association of Health Service Treasurers. The standards proposed by the working group were based on the statement of standard accounting practice issued by the professional accountancy bodies, so far as they were judged to be relevant and practicable. In commenting on SSAP 16, which is the standard for current cost accounting, the working group stated in its report that

"The NHS records capital expenditure separately, but does not record depreciation in revenue accounts. Accordingly this standard has no application to the accounts of the NHS."

Before the case for current cost accounting can be considered again it will be necessary to have established a method of accounting for the use of capital in the NHS. The case for this is now being considered by a working part of the AHST on which our Department and the Treasury are also represented. I understand that the Association expects to send the working party's report fairly soon to my right hon. Friend, and we shall then be considering its proposals.

North-East Thames RHA

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many members of the North-East Thames regional health authority *(a)* currently live in Waltham Forest and *(b)* have lived in Waltham Forest since the inception of the authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We do not hold home as opposed to work addresses for every member of North-East Thames regional health authority. Of those for whom we do hold home addresses none lives in Waltham Forest.

Nurse Practitioners

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurse practitioners are currently operating in Britain; under whose authority and on what conditions they operate; which of these nurse practitioners are allowed to dispense drugs under the general supervision of a general practitioner; and what information he has as to the nature and effectiveness of the service they provide.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Nurse practitioner is not recognised as a definition of a professional group in the

National Health Service. As a matter of law, "prescription-only" medicine must be supplied in accordance with the prescription of a doctor. A nurse may not, therefore, dispense such drugs on her own initiative even under the general supervision of a general medical practitioner. This legislation has been enacted by Parliament as a protection for the consumers of medicines and drugs.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of unsettled homeless people who are not registered with general practitioners and the cities in which they are concentrated; what information he has of any difficulties they face in getting health treatment and the nature of these difficulties; and if he has any proposals, including greater use of nurse practitioners, to improve their access to National Health Service provision.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Information about the numbers of unsettled homeless people who are not registered with general practitioners is not available.

The Government sponsored report "Single and Homeless" (HMSO 1981) provides an indication of the nature of problems encountered by homeless people in gaining access to primary health care. I announced in June 1984 that the Government were allocating a further £2 million over the next two years to help primary health care in the inner cities, £1·2 million in 1984 and £0·9 million this year. This is part of the £9 million announced in 1983 following the publication of the Acheson report to improve inner cities health services.

As I explained in my other reply to the right hon. Member today, nurse practitioner is not recognised as a definition of a professional group in the National Health Service. The care of such patients is for general medical practitioners as part of their services to the wider public.

Drug Dependence

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive advice from the medical working group on drug dependence on the extension of licensing restrictions to all opioids.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the Medical Working Group intends to submit its advice on licensing shortly.

AIDS

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what facilities exist in Coventry, the west midlands and nationally for the screening of acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to increase the availability of screening facilities.

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now make it compulsory for blood donors to be tested for acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Tests to detect the presence in blood of antibodies to the HTLV III virus have been developed both here and abroad. At present they are available only for research purposes. We hope that tests will be released for general use later this year. We shall thoroughly evaluate the tests on offer to see which is most suitable for use in the National Health Service. In anticipation of these developments we have advised regional health authorities to set aside funds in 1985-86 to enable blood transfusion centres to test all blood donations as soon as this is possible.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *387*, concerning the number of seasonal workers disallowed unemployment benefit between 1978 and 1983, if he will now provide an analysis of *(a)* the total disallowances and *(b)* the seasonal workers disallowances, broken down by standard regions.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table. The regions are administrative regions of Department of Employment, who operate the unemployment benefit system as agents for this Department.

Disallowances	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Great Britain						
Total	902,100	930,300	1,241,700	1,156,000	1,174,300	*1,180,300
Seasonal workers	2,700	2,900	3,400	3,300	4,000	5,100
South East						
Total	217,600	222,700	289,000	291,000	305,000	303,000
Seasonal workers	200	300	400	300	400	500
East Anglia						
Total	31,200	34,800	30,800	23,000	22,700	33,100
Seasonal workers	300	300	300	300	300	400
South West						
Total	64,700	68,900	103,100	89,300	91,900	89,000
Seasonal workers	600	700	1,000	800	1,100	1,300
West Midlands						
Total	84,800	90,200	142,300	145,600	125,500	108,400
Seasonal workers	—	—	—	100	100	100
East Midlands						
Total	66,400	67,900	108,900	102,000	94,100	87,600
Seasonal workers	200	300	300	300	300	500

Disallowances	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Yorkshire & Humberside						
Total	94,400	101,800	129,000	122,200	130,100	136,600
Seasonal workers	300	300	300	300	400	400
North West						
Total	118,600	110,300	146,100	137,500	149,100	158,800
Seasonal workers	300	400	300	300	400	500
Northern						
Total	68,700	74,200	90,700	76,200	76,900	82,400
Seasonal workers	100	200	200	200	200	300
Wales						
Total	41,500	44,400	56,700	50,000	49,300	49,400
Seasonal workers	300	400	400	400	500	600
Scotland						
Total	114,400	115,100	145,200	119,300	129,700	135,000
Seasonal workers	200	300	300	300	400	500

Due to the effects of rounding to the nearest 100, totals may not equal the sum of component parts.
* This amends the corresponding figure previously quoted which was incorrect.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the recommendations of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on the prescription of vibration white finger, bi-lateral diffuse pleural thickening and lung cancer will be implemented.

Mr. Newton: I am pleased to announce that regulations were laid today which will add these diseases to the schedule of prescribed industrial diseases from 1 April 1985. Benefit will be payable to those in certain specified occupations who suffer from the more severe forms of vibration white finger and to asbestos workers suffering from bilateral diffuse pleural thickening or from lung cancer accompanied by asbestosis or bilateral diffuse pleural thickening.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Antarctica

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the projects covered by the expanded research effort in Antarctica undertaken by the Natural Environment Research Council.

Sir Keith Joseph: The expanded research effort by the British Antacrtic Survey, an institute of the Natural Environment Research Council, covers work mainly in two areas: the geological and marine life sciences. In the former, the additional work includes fundamental research into geological processes and geological and geophysical surveys. In the latter there will be increased effort on studies of the marine ecosystem, including research into birds, seals, krill and fish.

Investigations by the BAS of the Antarctic ice environment as a measure of changes in climate, atmospheric pollution and sea level are also being enhanced.

Increased support by the NERC for university-based Antarctic research includes a three-year programme of research grants and studentships in the geological, life and atmospheric sciences and a five-year research contract with the University of Birmingham supporting marine geophysics.

Ethnic Minority Groups

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps he intends to take to assess academic progress and attainments in secondary schools in respect of pupils from Asian communities in comparison to those from West Indian communities;

(2) what resources he intends to make available for the purpose of promoting teacher exchanges between all-white and multiracial schools;

(3) what resources he intends to offer to ethnic minority community schools to assist them to raise their standards of education in conjunction with requirements set down in General Certificate of Education ordinary and advanced level syllabuses.

Mr. Dunn: These subjects are among those which have been reviewed by the committee of inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups, now chaired by Lord Swann. The Government will consider future action in the light of its findings.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he has taken resulting from the findings of the 1981 report on West Indian education chaired by Mr. Anthony Rampton.

Mr. Dunn: The interim findings of the committee of the inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups on children of West Indian origin were widely disseminated through a public consultation process initiated by the Government. Many LEAs and schools have taken action in response. For their part, the Government's policies on education have taken account of the needs brought about by ethnic diversity. The Government have undertaken a review of section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, which resulted in 1982 in the promulgation of new criteria for the funding of posts. They have also set up a working group to look at the mechanics and acceptability of collecting ethnically based statistics on school pupils. The Government will consider further action in the light of the committee's final report.

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of secondary school teachers have gained promotion to higher pay grades during the last five annual school years.

Mr. Dunn: Information is readily available only for the years ending in March 1980 to 1983 and is given below.

Percentage of teachers in service on 31 March who had been promoted since 31 March of previous year*

Year	*Percentage*
1980	10·0
1981	8·2
1982	7·4
1983	7·5

* In full-time service in maintained secondary schools in England and Wales.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Attorney-General, on what basis he decides who to consult before initiating prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act.

The Attorney-General: As in the case of a prosecution for any offence, before I authorise a prosecution under the Official Secrets Acts I consult any person who I consider is likely to be able to inform me of considerations which I might wish to take into account in deciding whether a prosecution would be in the public interest. If I have no reason to think that there are any such considerations, I do not consult anybody except for my hon. Friend the Solicitor-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Ponting Trial

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Attorney-General whether he was consulted by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the prosecution about the judge's indication on Wednesday 6 February that he intended to give an instruction to convict to the jury in the Ponting case.

The Attorney-General: No.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Attorney-General how many cases of legal proceedings have been instituted resulting from assaults on striking miners since the commencement of the coal strike.

The Attorney-General: This information is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of Her Majesty's Government's aid to Ethiopia in the last 12 months was redirected from other programmes.

Mr. Renton: None. Our aid to Ethiopia of around £29 million during the last 12 months has come from allocations already agreed for food aid, disaster relief of other specific purposes, from a reserve set aside for contingencies and from unavoidable slippage elsewhere in the aid programme. The Ministry of Defence has provided a substantial contribution by sending a Hercules detachment to assist in the distribution of relief supplies and this has naturally had some effect on its other flying activities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Immigration (Waiting Times)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long is the waiting time for first interview in *(a)* the main queue and *(b)* the priority queue in Dhaka, Bombay, New Dehli and Islamabad.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is published quarterly in the Home Office bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics". As shown in this bulletin, at the end of third quarter of last year, waiting time to first interview for applicants in the non-priority queue in Dhaka was 22 months; in Bombay, 6 months; in New Dehli, 10½ months; and in Islamabad, 10½ months. Applicants placed in priority queues were interviewed in six months or less in Bangladesh and in two months in India and Pakistan.

World Disarmament Campaign

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds his Department has given to the world disarmament campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strong) on 28 November 1984 at column 68.

Nuclear Technology

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries, not being signatories of the non-proliferation treaty, have received nuclear technology from the United Kingdom since 1980.

Mr. Luce: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the transfer of nuclear equipment of facilities. If that is the case, no NPT non-party has received such technology from the United Kingdom since 1980.

Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to seek to ensure that the 1980 breakdown on the non-proliferation treaty review conference does not recur at the 1985 review conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Although the 1980 review conference did not agree a substantive final document endorsing the treaty, there was broad agreement between the parties on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and no delegation contested the indispensable role played by the non-proliferation treaty in maintaining global security. Since 1980, the treaty has remained intact. No state party has withdrawn, and there have been eight new parties. Our policy towards the 1985 NPT review conference will reflect our very firm commitment to the treaty. We shall

be working with other supporters of the NPT to achieve a satisfactory outcome which strengthens the Treaty in the long term.

GCHQ (Staff)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the 83 staff in scientific and technical grades who resigned in 1984 from the Government communications headquarters for reasons other than retirement, transfer to another department, maternity or marriage, had already taken the £1,000 offered by the Government on relinquishing the right to join a trades union.

Mr. Rifkind: Of the 83 staff in the scientific and technical grades who resigned in 1984, 72 received the £1,000 in recognition of the loss of their statutory rights under the Employment Protection Acts of 1975.

"Government Spending"

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures will be taken by his Department following the conclusions of the report, "Government Spending."

Mr. Renton: The FCO is currently considering what action it will take to implement the recommendations of the report on Government purchasing as Departments have been asked to prepare action documents by 1 April. We have, however, already identified some areas where we can achieve greater value for money. These include improved arrangements for travel, freighting of officers' personal effects and obtaining supplies through central agencies.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the consequences for the United Kingdom of the failure of the European Assembly to approve a budget for the Community for 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: In the absence of an approved Community budget for 1985, Community spending, including spending in the United Kingdom is governed by the provisional twelfths regime. This limits payments to the level provided for in the relevant chapter of the 1984 budget, released on a month-by-month basis.

THE ARTS

Manchester Opera Festival

Mr. Arnold asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts when the Arts Council expects to consider the request it has received for financial support for the proposed Manchester opera festival in 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Arts Council is considering what it can do to support the festival, but can make no formal allocation of funds until its own grant has been voted to them by Parliament.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Unemployment Costs

Mr. Ashley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in tabular form his estimate of the average monthly cost to the Exchequer when an adult male worker on average weekly earnings, (on the basis of all industry and services covered by the "New Earnings Survey", updated if appropriate by the average earnings index, and assuming pay was not affected by absence) becomes unemployed, showing separately *(a)* for single men and *(b)* for a married man with two children, one aged under five years and the other between five and 10 years, the following disbursements: (i) unemployment benefit, (ii) supplementary benefit, (iii) income tax rebate, (iv) rent and rate rebate, and the following losses of revenue: (v) from income tax, (vi) from taxes on consumption of goods and services, (vii) from employers' national insurance contributions and (viii) from employees' national insurance contribution.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Inland Revenue Staff

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reduce the level of Inland Revenue staff during the next three financial years.

Mr. Moore: The Government's plans for Civil Service manpower for the period to 1988 were published on 22 January 1985 in the Public Expenditure White Paper—Cmnd. 9428—"The Government's Expenditure plans 1985-86 to 1987-88." The figures for the Inland Revenue were as follows:

1 April	*Number*
1985	69,724
1986	69,274
1987	66,274
1988	62,874

Public Expenditure

Mr. Malone asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for the latest years now available, identifiable public expenditure by programme in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the United Kingdom expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* as a percentage of United Kingdom total identifiable public expenditure, *(c)* as an amount per capita and *(d)* as an amount per capita expressed as a percentage of the United Kingdom amount per capita.

Mr. Peter Rees: Tables 1 to 5 show figures of identifiable public expenditure according to main function in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These are the only available figures comparing public expenditure on programmes in the four countries of the United Kingdom. The analysis is presented for the past five years, the only period for which data are available on a consistent basis. The term "identifiable expenditure" refers to expenditure that can be identified from official records as having been incurred in a particular country. Table 6 compares, for the latest year, 1983-84, expenditure in Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland

programmes with total identifiable expenditure in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. It shows that identifiable expenditure has a wider coverage than expenditure within the responsibility of the Secretaries of State in the case of Scotland or Wales, and in the case of Northern Ireland, it has a slightly wider coverage than the Northern Ireland programme in the public expenditure survey. This table also shows all unidentifiable expenditure by programme.

Unidentifiable expenditure includes expenditure on defence, overseas aid and other overseas services which are deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole. It also includes Government net lending to, and the market and overseas borrowing of, the public corporations, because of the difficulties of allocating the finance to expenditure in particular countries. Total identifiable public expenditure represents about 80 per cent. of total public expenditure on programmes.

The extent to which expenditure can be identified may vary from year to year and between countries. The coverage of particular programmes can also vary between countries — for example, in Northern Ireland, expenditure on Arts and Libraries is contained in the education programme.

The following tables use the terms and definitions of the Public Expenditure White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd. 9428). The figures have therefore been classified to the definitions of public expenditure used in Cmnd. 9428 and may differ slightly from those published previously. The territorial analysis exercise was carried out before the figures in Cmnd. 9428 became available. The latter incorporate later information and show total expected outturn for 1983-84 to be £102·3 billion, that is, some £300 million higher than the planning total shown in table 6. The additional sum will be incorporated in the next territorial analysis.

1984 Territorial analysis: Summary tables

Table S1: Identifiable public expenditure 1979-80 to 1983-84

	£ million					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
1979-80	48,451·0	6,869·8	3,186·2	2,473·5	60,980·5	79·5	11·3	5·2	4·1
1980-81	58,567·1	8,260·7	3,904·8	2,983·1	73,715·7	79·4	11·2	5·3	4·0
1981-82	65,342·8	9,301·3	4,377·5	3,310·1	82,331·7	79·4	11·3	5·3	4·0
1982-83	71,712·8	10,148·9	4,797·3	3,614·3	90,273·3	79·4	11·2	5·3	4·0
1983-84	76,363·2	10,702·2	5,209·6	3,937·1	96,212·1	79·4	11·1	5·4	4·1

Table S2: Identifiable public expenditure 1979-80 to 1983-84

	£ per head					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure per head			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
1979-80	1,037·5	1,321·1	1,137·9	1,545·9	1,085·1	95·6	121·7	104·9	142·5
1980-81	1,251·4	1,588·6	1,394·6	1,864·4	1,309·3	95·6	121·3	106·5	142·4
1981-82	1,396·2	1,788·7	1,563·4	2,068·8	1,459·8	95·6	122·5	107·1	141·7
1982-83	1,532·3	1,951·7	1,713·3	2,258·9	1,603·4	95·6	121·7	106·9	140·9
1983-84	1,631·7	2,058·1	1,860·6	2,460·7	1,705·9	95·7	120·6	109·1	144·2

Table 1a. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1979-80

	£ million					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	540·1	160·4	65·8	123·0	889·3	60·7	18·0	7·4	13·8
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	1,464·6	359·0	193·0	246·8	2,263·4	64·7	15·9	8·5	10·9
Arts and Libraries	376·0	45·1	23·4	—	444·5	84·6	10·1	5·3	—
Roads and Transport	2,283·4	402·8	222·6	113·2	3,022·0	75·6	13·3	7·4	3·7
Housing	4,520·5	733·9	207·1	211·9	5,673·4	79·7	12·9	3·7	3·7
Other Environmental Services	2,330·0	396·2	206·2	104·2	3,036·6	76·7	13·0	6·8	3·4
Law, Order and Protective Services	2,058·7	251·2	111·5	258·3	2,679·7	76·8	9·4	4·2	9·6
Education and Science	8,645·5	1,291·1	537·1	389·9	10,863·6	79·6	11·9	4·9	3·6
Health and Personal Social Services	8,898·7	1,232·9	543·3	382·1	11,057·0	80·5	11·2	4·9	3·5
Social Security	16,294·1	1,806·7	992·9	597·6	19,691·3	82·7	9·2	5·0	3·0
Other Public Services	600·8	148·3	60·8	27·4	837·3	71·8	17·7	7·3	3·3
Common Services	438·6	42·2	22·5	19·1	522·4	84·0	8·1	4·3	3·7
Planning total	48,451·0	6,869·8	3,186·2	2,473·5	60,980·5	79·5	11·3	5·2	4·1

Table 1b. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1979-80

	£ per head					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure per head			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	11·6	30·8	23·5	76·9	15·8	73·4	194·9	148·7	486·7
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	31·4	69·0	68·9	154·3	40·3	77·9	171·2	171·0	382·9
Arts and Libraries	8·1	8·7	8·4	—	7·9	102·5	110·1	106·3	—
Roads and Transport	48·9	77·5	79·5	70·8	53·8	90·9	144·1	147·8	131·6
Housing	96·8	141·1	74·0	132·4	101·0	95·8	139·7	73·3	131·1
Other Environmental Services	49·9	76·2	73·6	65·1	54·0	92·4	141·1	136·3	120·6
Law, Order and Protective Services	44·1	48·3	39·8	161·4	47·7	92·5	101·3	83·4	338·4
Education and Science	185·1	248·3	191·8	243·7	193·3	95·8	128·5	99·2	126·1
Health and Personal Social Services	190·6	237·1	194·0	238·8	196·7	96·9	120·5	98·6	121·4
Social Security	348·9	347·4	354·6	373·5	350·4	99·6	99·1	101·2	106·6
Other Public Services	12·9	28·5	21·7	17·1	14·9	86·6	191·3	145·6	114·8
Common Services	9·4	8·1	8·0	11·9	9·3	101·1	87·1	86·0	128·0
Planning total	1,037·5	1,321·1	1,137·9	1,545·9	1,085·1	95·6	121·7	104·9	142·5

Table 2a. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1980-81

	£ million					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	605·7	193·7	78·4	124·7	1,002·5	60·4	19·3	7·8	12·4
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	2,228·9	490·5	305·4	328·5	3,353·3	66·5	14·6	9·1	9·8
Arts and Libraries	450·8	56·9	26·8	—	534·5	84·3	10·6	5·0	—
Roads and Transport	2,765·9	454·2	262·9	120·4	3,603·4	76·8	12·6	7·3	3·3
Housing	4,462·4	781·9	209·2	238·8	5,692·3	78·4	13·7	3·7	4·2
Other Environmental Services	2,741·8	444·8	228·2	120·9	3,535·7	77·5	12·6	6·5	3·4
Law, Order and Protective Services	2,479·9	312·7	133·5	322·0	3,248·1	76·3	9·6	4·1	9·9
Education and Science	10,548·2	1,572·3	658·1	458·9	13,237·5	79·7	11·9	5·0	3·5
Health and Personal Social Services	11,361·6	1,546·1	692·7	484·3	14,084·7	80·7	11·0	4·9	3·4
Social Security	19,704·3	2,173·0	1,214·9	724·9	23,817·1	82·7	9·1	5·1	3·0
Other Public Services	739·0	185·1	71·0	34·1	1,029·2	71·8	18·0	6·9	3·3
Common Services	478·6	49·5	23·7	25·6	577·4	82·9	8·6	4·1	4·4
Planning total	58,567·1	8,260·7	3,904·8	2,983·1	73,715·7	79·4	11·2	5·3	4·0

Table 2b. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1980-81

	£ per head					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure per head			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	12·9	37·3	28·0	77·9	17·8	72·5	209·6	157·3	437·6
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	47·6	94·3	109·1	205·3	59·6	79·9	158·2	183·1	344·5
Arts and Libraries	9·6	10·9	9·6	—	9·5	101·1	114·7	101·1	—
Roads and Transport	59·1	87·3	93·9	75·3	64·0	92·3	136·4	146·7	117·7
Housing	95·4	150·4	74·7	149·3	101·1	94·4	148·8	73·9	147·7
Other Environmental Services	58·6	85·5	81·5	75·6	62·8	93·3	136·1	129·8	120·4
Law, Order and Protective Services	53·0	60·1	47·7	201·3	57·7	91·9	104·2	82·7	348·9
Education and Science	225·4	302·4	235·0	286·8	235·1	95·9	128·6	100·0	122·0
Health and Personal Social Services	242·8	297·3	247·4	302·7	250·2	97·0	118·8	98·9	121·0
Social Security	421·0	417·9	433·9	453·1	423·0	99·5	98·8	102·6	107·1
Other Public Services	15·8	35·6	25·4	21·3	18·3	86·3	194·5	138·8	116·4
Common Services	10·2	9·5	8·5	16·0	10·3	99·0	92·2	82·5	155·3
Planning total	1,251·4	1,588·6	1,394·6	1,864·4	1,309·3	95·6	121·3	106·5	142·4

Table 3a. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1981-82

	£ million					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	638·4	199·0	75·6	119·2	1,032·2	61·8	19·3	7·3	11·5
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	2,651·6	542·9	364·6	360·3	3,919·4	67·7	13·9	9·3	9·2
Arts and Libraries	492·4	69·8	29·4	—	591·6	83·2	11·8	5·0	—

	£ million					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Roads and Transport	3,039·3	512·1	292·5	126·0	3,969·9	76·6	12·9	7·4	3·2
Housing	3,128·4	721·8	123·2	234·2	4,207·6	74·4	17·2	2·9	5·6
Other Environmental Services	2,852·8	471·6	237·7	127·2	3,689·3	77·3	12·8	6·4	3·4
Law, Order and Protective Services	2,965·5	366·0	158·0	356·1	3,845·6	77·1	9·5	4·1	9·3
Education and Science	11,496·1	1,730·6	719·1	500·1	14,445·9	79·6	12·0	5·0	3·5
Health and Personal Social Services	12,723·6	1,766·0	783·5	544·4	15,817·5	80·4	11·2	5·0	3·4
Social Security	24,002·2	2,663·7	1,492·8	878·4	29,037·1	82·7	9·2	5·1	3·0
Other Public Services	801·5	194·4	75·3	36·8	1,108·0	72·3	17·5	6·8	3·3
Common Services	551·0	63·4	25·8	27·4	667·6	82·5	9·5	3·9	4·1
Planning total	65,342·8	9,301·3	4,377·5	3,310·1	82,331·7	79·4	11·3	5·3	4·0

Table 3b. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1981-82

	£ per head					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure per head			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	13·6	38·3	27·0	74·5	18·3	74·3	209·3	147·5	407·1
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	56·7	104·4	130·2	225·2	69·5	81·6	150·2	187·3	324·0
Arts and Libraries	10·5	13·4	10·5	—	10·5	100·0	127·6	100·0	—
Roads and Transport	64·9	98·5	104·5	78·8	70·4	92·2	139·9	148·4	111·9
Housing	66·8	138·8	44·0	146·4	74·6	89·5	186·1	59·0	196·2
Other Environmental Services	61·0	90·7	84·9	79·5	65·4	93·3	138·7	129·8	121·6
Law, Order and Protective Services	63·4	70·4	56·4	222·6	68·2	93·0	103·2	82·7	326·4
Education and Science	245·6	332·8	256·8	312·6	256·1	95·9	129·9	100·3	122·1
Health and Personal Social Services	271·9	339·6	279·8	340·3	280·5	96·9	121·1	99·8	121·3
Social Security	512·9	512·3	533·1	549·0	514·8	99·6	99·5	103·6	106·6
Other Public Services	17·1	37·4	26·9	23·0	19·6	87·2	190·8	137·2	117·3
Common Services	11·8	12·2	9·2	17·1	11·8	100·0	103·4	78·0	144·9
Planning total	1,396·2	1,788·7	1,563·4	2,068·8	1,459·8	95·6	122·5	107·1	141·7

Table 4a. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1982-83

	£ million					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	666·2	197·4	84·6	137·4	1,085·6	61·4	18·2	7·8	12·7
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	2,775·2	673·7	342·9	365·2	4,157·0	66·8	16·2	8·2	8·8
Arts and Libraries	569·8	73·2	32·4	—	675·4	84·4	10·8	4·8	—
Roads and Transport	3,495·6	538·8	322·2	110·8	4,467·4	78·2	12·1	7·2	2·5
Housing	2,655·9	692·8	125·6	284·5	3,758·8	70·7	18·4	3·3	7·6
Other Environmental Services	3,288·9	499·7	269·7	140·1	4,198·4	78·3	11·9	6·4	3·3
Law, Order and Protective Services	3,314·8	407·4	178·1	375·9	4,276·2	77·5	9·5	4·2	8·8
Education and Science	12,296·9	1,871·4	774·3	535·5	15,478·1	79·4	12·1	5·0	3·5
Health and Personal Social Services	13,816·8	1,913·1	860·4	589·1	17,179·4	80·4	11·1	5·0	3·4
Social Security	27,389·6	3,016·4	1,700·5	1,005·1	33,111·6	82·7	9·1	5·1	3·0
Other Public Services	842·7	196·1	77·9	42·1	1,158·8	72·7	16·9	6·7	3·6
Common Services	600·4	68·9	28·7	28·6	726·6	82·6	9·5	3·9	3·9
Planning total	71,712·8	10,148·9	4,797·3	3,614·3	90,273·3	79·4	11·2	5·3	4·0

Table 4b. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1982-83

	£ per head					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure per head			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	14·2	38·0	30·2	85·9	19·3	73·6	196·9	156·5	445·1
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	59·3	129·6	122·5	228·3	73·8	80·4	175·6	166·0	309·3
Arts and Libraries	12·2	14·1	11·6	—	12·0	101·7	117·5	96·7	—
Roads and Transport	74·7	103·6	115·1	69·3	79·3	94·2	130·6	145·1	87·4

	£ per head					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure per head			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Housing	56·8	133·2	44·9	177·8	66·8	85·0	199·4	67·2	266·2
Other Environmental Services	70·3	96·1	96·3	87·6	74·6	94·2	128·8	129·1	117·4
Law, Order and Protective Services	70·8	78·3	63·6	234·9	76·0	93·2	103·0	83·7	309·1
Education and Science	262·8	359·9	276·5	334·7	274·9	95·6	130·9	100·6	121·8
Health and Personal Social Services	295·2	367·9	307·3	368·2	305·1	96·8	120·6	100·7	120·7
Social Security	585·2	580·1	607·3	628·2	588·1	99·5	98·6	103·3	106·8
Other Public Services	18·0	37·7	27·8	26·3	20·6	87·4	183·0	135·0	127·7
Common Services	12·8	13·3	10·3	17·9	12·9	99·2	103·1	79·8	138·8
Planning total	1,532·3	1,951·7	1,713·3	2,258·9	1,603·4	95·6	121·7	106·9	140·9

Table 5a. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1983-84

	£ million					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	648·1	209·2	102·9	155·4	1,115·6	58·1	18·8	9·2	13·9
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	3,070·7	621·5	355·8	384·4	4,432·4	69·3	14·0	8·0	8·7
Arts and Libraries	585·3	77·6	33·8	—	696·7	84·0	11·1	4·9	—
Roads and Transport	3,641·7	566·7	376·5	121·8	4,706·7	77·4	12·0	8·0	2·6
Housing	2,947·4	690·7	177·5	305·8	4,121·4	71·5	16·8	4·3	7·4
Other Environmental Services	3,407·9	577·4	280·4	157·6	4,423·3	77·0	13·1	6·3	3·6
Law, Order and Protective Services	3,713·3	451·7	199·9	406·3	4,771·2	77·8	9·5	4·2	8·5
Education and Science	12,941·3	1,943·5	813·6	564·4	16,262·8	79·6	12·0	5·0	3·5
Health and Personal Social Services	14,755·3	2,047·4	918·5	635·1	18,356·3	80·4	11·2	5·0	3·5
Social Security	29,657·3	3,273·9	1,849·2	1,117·2	35,897·6	82·6	9·1	5·2	3·1
Other Public Services	1,064·6	236·5	100·8	52·6	1,454·5	73·2	16·3	6·9	3·6
Common Services	−69·7	6·1	0·7	36·5	−26·4	264·0	−23·1	−2·7	−138·3
Planning total	76,363·2	10,702·2	5,209·6	3,937·1	96,212·1	79·4	11·1	5·4	4·1

Table 5b. Identifiable Public Expenditure 1983-84

	£ per head					As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure per head			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Forestry	13·8	40·2	36·8	97·1	19·8	69·7	203·0	185·9	490·4
Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment	65·6	119·5	127·1	240·3	78·6	83·5	152·0	161·7	305·7
Arts and Libraries	12·5	14·9	12·1	—	12·4	100·8	120·2	97·6	—
Roads and Transport	77·8	109·0	134·5	76·1	83·5	93·2	130·5	161·1	91·1
Housing	63·0	132·8	63·4	191·1	73·1	86·2	181·7	86·7	261·4
Other Environmental Services	72·8	111·0	100·1	98·5	78·4	92·9	141·6	127·7	125·6
Law, Order and Protective Services	79·3	86·9	71·4	253·9	84·6	93·7	102·7	84·4	300·1
Education and Science	276·5	373·8	290·6	352·8	288·3	95·9	129·7	100·8	122·4
Health and Personal Social Services	315·3	393·7	328·0	396·9	325·5	96·9	121·0	100·8	121·9
Social Security	633·7	629·6	660·4	698·3	636·5	99·6	98·9	103·8	109·7
Other Public Services	22·7	45·5	36·0	32·9	25·8	88·0	176·4	139·5	127·5
Common Services	−1·5	1·2	0·3	22·8	−0·5	300·0	−240·0	−60·0	−4,560·0
Planning total	1,631·7	2,058·1	1,860·6	2,460·7	1,705·9	95·7	120·6	109·1	144·2

Table 6:—Planning total analysed by territorial area 1983-84

£ million

	England	Scotland			Wales			Northern Ireland			Not identified*	United Kingdom
		Prog 15	Other	Total	Prog 16	Other	Total	Prog 17	Other	Total		
Defence	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15,474·7	15,474·7
Overseas aid and other overseas services	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,279·8	2,279·8
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	648·1	161·0	48·2	209·2	81·1	21·8	102·9	83·6	71·8	155·4	1,261·6	2,377·2
Industry, energy, trade and employment	3,070·7	167·3	454·2	621·5	70·0	285·8	355·8	380·2	4·2	384·4	2,475·1	6,907·5
Arts and libraries	585·3	66·4	11·2	77·6	27·0	6·8	33·8	—	—	—	24·7	721·4
Roads and transport	3,641·7	538·5	28·2	566·7	314·3	62·2	376·5	121·8	—	121·8	678·4	5,385·1
Housing	2,947·4	690·7	—	690·7	177·5	—	177·5	305·8	—	305·8	—	4,121·4
Other environmental services	3,407·9	573·1	4·3	577·4	276·6	3·8	280·4	157·6	—	157·6	355·9	4,779·2
Law, order and protective services	3,713·3	439·2	12·5	451·7	—	199·9	199·9	392·3	14·0	406·3	758·3	5,529·5
Education and science	12,941·3	1,689·7	253·8	1,943·5	674·0	139·6	813·6	562·8	1·6	564·4	58·3	16,321·1
Health and personal social services	14,755·3	2,047·4	—	2,047·4	918·5	—	918·5	635·1	—	635·1	12·9	18,369·2
Social security	29,657·3	—	3,273·9	3,273·9	—	1,849·2	1,849·2	1,106·5	10·7	1,117·2	338·2	36,235·8

	England	Scotland			Wales			Northern Ireland			Not distributed*	United Kingdom
		Prog 13	Other	Total	Prog 16	Other	Total	Prog 17	Other	Total		
Other public services	1,064·6	90·9	139·6	230·5	30·7	70·1	100·8	29·1	24·5	52·6	350·2	1,804·7
Common services	−69·7	0·6	5·5	6·1	—	0·7	0·7	31·8	4·7	36·5	940·5	923·1
Total expenditure on programmes	76,363·2	6,470·8	4,231·4	10,702·2	2,569·7	2,639·9	5,209·6	3,805·6	131·5	3,937·1	25,017·6	121,229·7
Special sales of assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−1,137·0	−1,137·0
Planning total	76,363·2	6,470·8	4,231·4	10,702·2	2,569·7	2,639·9	5,209·6	3,805·6	131·5	3,937·1	23,880·6	120,092·7
Of which—												
Government net lending to public corporations†	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	339·4	339·4
Public corporations' market and overseas borrowing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−113·4	−113·4

* Including government net lending to, and the market and overseas borrowing of, the nationalised industries and certain other public corporations.
† Including the nationalised industries.

SCOTLAND

Duich Moss (Peat Stripping)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what letters he has received from the European Commission inquiring about his decision approving peat stripping from Duich Moss (Islay); and if he will publish his response made to such inquiries.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend has received no letters from the European Commission on this subject.

Garnock Valley (Redevelopment)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider re-establishing the task force, originally set up by his Department in 1979, to promote the redevelopment of the site at Garnock valley previously occupied by the recently closed steel works.

Mr. Younger: No. The role of the Garnock valley task force has now been taken over by the Garnock valley development executive, and the executive, supported by the Scottish Development Agency, will be able to undertake any redevelopment which may be necessary once the future of the site has been considered by British Steel Corporation.

Hunterston A Power Station

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide information on the output and discharges from Hunterston A power station in the calendar year 1984 on the same basis as was provided for power stations in England and Wales by the Secretary of State for Energy on 25 January, *Official Report*, columns *545-7*.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Following is the information for 1983-84:

Thermal output (Gwh)	*Fuel discharged (tonnes u)*
8,828	66

Fenitrothion

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost to the Forestry Commission of the control experiment directed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1984 in which 142 hectares of land in Speymouth were aerially sprayed with Fenitrothion.

Mr. John MacKay: The cost to the Forestry Commission was approximately £2,500.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those species of woodland birds known to be involved in the control experiment directed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1984 in which 142 hectares of Forestry Commission land in Speymouth were aerially sprayed with Fenitrothion.

Mr. John MacKay: The purpose of the experiment was to test the effect of the treatment on a range of species selected as being representative of the population of resident breeding birds. These were: robin, chaffinch, willow warbler, goldcrest and coal tit.

Police Surveillance

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria have been laid down for the use of equipment in police surveillance in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Guidelines on the use of equipment in police surveillance operations were issued to chief constables of Scottish forces in March 1978. These explain that the primary purpose of the use of such equipment must be to help confirm or dispel a suspicion of serious crime and that the authorising officer must be satisfied on each occasion that the use of such equipment is operationally necessary, feasible and justified in all the circumstances. The guidelines are being reviewed at present and when the review is completed I shall place a copy of the revised guidelines in the Library of the House.

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish teachers' unions in respect of establishing pay review bodies.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The teachers' side of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education (SJNC(SE)), which comprises representatives from four teachers' unions, has asked for an independent review of teachers' pay in Scotland. My right hon. Friend has indicated that in his view the appropriate procedure would be to undertake a review of both pay and conditions of service within the existing statutory machinery by the SJNC(SE) itself.

Regional Grant Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what basis the Scottish Development Agency

has stated that regional grant aid on offer in Scotland was insufficiently large to attract to Scotland the proposed £165 million investment from Advanced Micro Devices Ltd. of California.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Advanced Micro Devices' decision not to locate in Scotland was a matter for the commercial judgment of the company. Within the ceilings set by the European Community, Scotland offers highly attractive regional grant aid, and additional benefits are available in the form of European Community loans and enterprise zone fiscal incentives. But the availability of grants is only one of many factors influencing the choice of location for internationally mobile projects.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for felling licences for broadleaved woodlands clearance were rejected by the Forestry Commission in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date against the advice of the Agriculture Ministries and Departments.

Mr. John Mackay [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1985, c. *243*]: The Agriculture Departments do not normally provide the Forestry Commission with advice on whether felling licence applications should be granted for the conversion to agricultural use.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings are owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at the latest date.

Mr. Scott: This a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that at 31 December 1984 the Executive owned 183,612 dwellings, including occupied and vacant dwellings in redevelopment areas, short and long-term voids and vacant dwellings scheduled for demolition.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total rental income of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Scott: This a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that gross rental income from dwellings and garages in 1984-85 is estimated at £128 million.

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings are let by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at the latest date.

Mr. Scott: This a matter for the Northern Ireland Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the number of dwellings let at 31 December 1984 was 175,014; this excludes occupied dwellings in redevelopment areas.

Sinn Fein (Meetings)

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings have taken place since he took office between civil servants in Northern Ireland Government Departments and Sinn Fein representatives to discuss constituency matters; and who have been the Sinn Fein representatives involved.

Mr. Hurd: Since September 1984 there have been two meetings between officials of Northern Ireland Departments and Sinn Fein councillors. Both meetings took place at local level and related to constituency matters. In addition, officials of Northern Ireland Department have attended six meetings with district councils and council committees, at which Sinn Fein councillors were present, together with other councillors from Belfast city council and Omagh district council. I do not believe that it would be right to give details of the individuals involved.

Orlit Houses

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to introduce an Order in Council to authorise the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to re-purchase Orlit dwellings.

Mr. Scott: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) on 7 February 1985 at column *649*.

Loans (Interest Rates)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider ways and means of reducing the burden on farmers who took out loans at fixed rates of interest from the Department of Agriculture (Northern Ireland) in the late 1970s when interest rates were very high.

Dr. Boyson: No, but there is no penalty for early repayment of such loans and borrowers are free to re-finance their borrowings from the private sector if they so wish.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest figures for *(a)* the total number of people arrested on miners' pickets lines over the past 11 months and *(b)* the total number of policemen injured while on picket duty.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Up to 18 February the figures were as follows:

(a) 9,355 persons arrested in connection with the mining dispute.

(b) 1,389 police officers injured while carrying out duties connected with the dispute.

Notes:

(1) The figures do not distinguish arrests and injuries on the picket lines from those which occurred elsewhere in connection with the dispute.

(2) Where the same person has been arrested (or injured) on different occasions, more than one entry will have been made in the figures given.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide for the latest convenient date, a table indicating neighbourhood watch schemes currently operating in each London borough;

(2) how many neighbourhood watch schemes are currently operating in London.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, at the end of December 1984 the latest date for which collated information is available, there were 1,282 neighbourhood watch schemes operating within the Metropolitan police district. A breakdown of the number in each London borough and in other areas within the Metropolitan police district is currently being prepared and I will arrange for this information to be sent to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to promote the development of neighbourhood watch schemes to combat crime and vandalism and, in particular, intimidation of old people.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The introduction of neighbourhood watch or any other crime prevention scheme receiving police support is a matter for the chief officer of police of the area concerned. The Home Office crime prevention unit and the Home Office crime prevention centre, Stafford, have issued joint guidance for police forces introducing neighbourhood watch schemes, and we are providing forces with publicity material to support such schemes.

Black Community

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about broadcasting for the black community.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received a variety of representations about broadcasting from a number of ethnic minority groups. These have included comments on individual programmes and the provision of programmes in specific ethnic minority languages, and inquiries about the use of community radio to broadcast to ethnic minority groups.

Nuclear Burst

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training courses are available for local authority emergency planning staff on the effects of nuclear electromagnetic pulse and protective measures.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The majority of courses held at the Civil Defence college cover this effect. I would also refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on 21 January at column 272.

European Assembly Elections (Candidates)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if returning officers check and record the citizenship of nominated candidates for European Assembly elections.

Mr. Mellor: No. A candidate is not required to state his citizenship, and returning officers have no power to enquire into it. However, a candidate must state in his consent to nomination that to the best of his knowledge and belief he is not disqualified for election to the European Parliament: a person is so disqualified if he is not a British or other Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland. The election of a person who appears to be disqualified may be questioned by an election petition under part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Arrested Persons (Toilet Facilities)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that all people arrested on disorderly charges have access to wash and brush-up facilities before they are required to appear in court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The conditions for the detention of people in police cutody are at present governed by the judges' rules and administrative directions, which provide that reasonable arrangements should be made for the comfort of those in custody. The code of practice on the detention, treatment and questioning of suspects to be made under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 will provide that access to toilet and washing facilities must be provided. These provisions apply to all persons detained in police custody for whatever offence.

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many directions and temporary directions have been made under section 13 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 since 1975.

Mr. Mellor: Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, directions may be made against medical practitioners under the provisions of section 13(1) (which deals with prescribing certain controlled drugs to addicts when unlicensed and failure to notify cases of addiction) and section 13(2) (which deals with irresponsible prescribing).

The number of directions under section 13 made from 1975 to date is 12.

Temporary directions are made under the provisions of section 15 of the Act and subsequently have to be confirmed by reference to a tribunal.

The number of temporary directions made from 1975 to date is five of which three have been confirmed by tribunals and are included in the number quoted above.

Drugs Branch Inspectorate

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are currently serving in the drugs branch inspectorate; at what grades; and with what relevant qualifications.

Mr. Mellor: One chief inspector (senior principal (grade 6)), three senior inspectors (senior executive officers) and 11 inspectors (higher executive officers). There are no specific qualifications for posts in the inspectorate. Staff are chosen having regard to their overall experience and personal qualities.

Drug Addicts (Notification)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases since 1975 disciplinary action has been taken against a doctor for failing to notify an addict or suspected addict to the Chief Medical Officer of his Department.

Mr. Mellor: Under the provisions of section 13(1) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and on the recommendation

of a tribunal, a direction may be made against a medical practitioner who fails to notify cases of addiction, prohibiting him from prescribing controlled drugs. From 1975 to date, no directions have been made solely in respect of failure to notify, but in this period nine doctors have been referred to tribunals in cases where failure to notify formed part of the allegation. This resulted in five directions being made.

Devizes Police Station (Incident)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Wiltshire on the circumstances under which a woman was held in custody at Devizes police station on the nights of 16 and 17 February; on whose authority she was held; and what was the charge;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Wiltshire on the circumstances under which four women were held in custody at Devizes police station on the night of Friday 15 February; on whose authority they were held there; and what were the charges.

Mr. Brittan: I understand from the chief constable of Wiltshire that four women were arrested by Ministry of Defence police on 15 November after an incident during a military exercise on Salisbury Plain. They were taken to Devizes police station and held in police custody in accordance with section 43 of the Magistrates' Court Act 1980 until it was practicable to bring them before a court. They appeared in court on the morning of Saturday 16 November and were charged with trespassing on Ministry of Defence land. The woman held in Devizes police station on the nights of 16 and 17 February had been arrested in similar circumstances and was detained in police custody under the same authority. She appeared before magistrates on the morning of Monday 18 February and was charged with trespassing on Ministry of Defence land.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why a special magistrate's court was held in Devizes police station on Saturday 16 February.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that Devizes police station is appointed as an occasional court-house under section 147 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 and that the magistrates' court sits there whenever there are cases to be heard and its normal accommodation is unavailable, as happened on Saturday 16 February.

Parliamentary Constituencies (Reviews)

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Boundary Commissions for England and Wales intend to conduct any interim review of parliamentary constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: The Boundary Commissions for England and Wales have informed me that they intend to conduct interim reviews of 28 parliamentary constituencies under the powers provided in section 2(3) of the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1949. The constituencies concerned are as follows:

ENGLAND
COUNTY AND CONSTITUENCIES
Cambridgeshire
North East Cambridgeshire CC
South East Cambridgeshire CC
South West Cambridgeshire CC
Cornwall
Falmouth and Camborne CC
St. Ives CC
South East Cornwall CC
Truro CC
Hampshire
Basingstoke CC
East Hampshire CC
Eastleigh BC
Fareham CC
Havant BC
North West Hampshire CC
Romsey and Waterside CC
Winchester CC
North Yorkshire
Skipton and Ripon CC
Somerset
Bridgwater CC
Taunton CC
West Yorkshire
Keighley CC
WALES
COUNTY AND CONSTITUENCIES
Clwyd
Alyn and Deeside
Clwyd North West CC
Clwyd South West CC
Delyn CC
Wrexham CC
Gwynedd
Caernarfon CC
Conwy CC
Meirionnydd Nant Conwy CC
Powys
Montgomery CC

ENVIRONMENT

Concessionary Television Licence

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will estimate, for the latest year in which this is possible, the total cost borne by district councils in England and Wales in the collection and payment of the 5p concessionary television licence;

(2) if he will list *(a)* the district councils in England and Wales which collect the 5p concessionary licences from eligible tenants and *(b)* the district councils in England and Wales which elect to pay the 5p concessionary television licence themselves, rather than collect it from eligible tenants;

(3) if he will estimate, for the latest year for which this is possible, the total number of man days expended by district councils in England and Wales in the collection and payment of the 5p concessionary television licence.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Central London (Office Space)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, as part of his planned future responsibility for strategic planning in Greater London, he will obtain and publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the office space now vacant in central London and the equivalent figures for each of the preceeding two years.

Mr. Macfarlane: My Department's planning research programme for 1985-86 includes a project to ascertain the

character and extent of offices in London and the south-east having regard to current and future rates of office demand. An estimate of office space vacant in central London is likely to form part of that project.

It will be for the London Planning Commission to advise my right hon. Friend on his future responsibility for strategic planning in Greater London. Their advice will be published.

Radioactive Material (Lumns Lane, Salford)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will quantify the amount of radioactive material which he has given permission to be dumped at Lumns Lane, Salford; whether there are any other sites available in the Greater Manchester area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The authorisation issued under section 6 of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 permits the disposal at this site in any one month of waste containing up to 1,400 megabequerels of radioactivity. The site was originally suggested for consideration by Greater Manchester council in 1982, though it subsequently raised formal objection to its use for this purpose. The council did in fact carry out a survey of other waste disposal sites within Greater Manchester, but was unable to identify any alternative which could be made available. The Radiochemical Inspectorate of the Department are satisfied that the Lumns Lane site is suitable for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste as now authorised, and that there are no grounds for fearing any harm to local residents or others from it.

Refuse Disposal

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing such information as he has for each appropriate local authority in England on the average cost per ton of refuse disposed, indicating for each the main method of disposal.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in its publication "Waste Disposal Statistics".

Its "1983-84 Actuals" contains the latest figures and shows that the average cost of waste disposal for English county waste disposal authorities in 1983-84 was £7·60 per tonne.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply on 29 November 1984, *Official Report*, column *558*, if he will publish the expressions of support for the abolition of the Greater London council that he has received from Conservative leaders of London borough councils.

Sir George Young: I have asked the chairman of the London Boroughs Association, who initiated the letter of support subscribed to by the leaders, to sent the hon. Member a copy.

East Country Yard, Southwark

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the London Docklands Development Corporation intends to purchase compulsorily East Country Yard in Southwark.

Sir George Young: Yes.

ILEA (Precept)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial information, necessary to determine a precept in respect of the Inner London Education Authority, was not available to his Department at the time of making the rate precept limitation order and had to be replaced by assumptions of his own making.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has always made it clear that he would have been prepared to discuss the calculation of proposed precept limits in the context of negotiations with the individual authority about a different maximum.

Urban Programme

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources he is proposing to make available under the urban programme in 1985-86 to the other designated districts.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Despite the great pressure on public expenditure this year, the allocation for 1985-86 for industrikal and commercial projects to be carried out by the other designated districts will be the same in cash terms as that for 1984-85. The total sum available for allocation is £8 million and the provisional allocation on a regional basis is:

	£ million
Northern	
Hartlepool, Langbaurgh	1·550
North West	
Burnley, Wigan	1·100
Merseyside	
Sefton, St. Helens	1·100
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, South Yorkshire	1·850
West Midlands	
Walsall	0·550
Greater London	
Ealing, Haringey, Southwark, Newham, Greenwich, Lewisham	1·850

Allocations to individual authorities are made subject to the quality of individual projects submitted.

Additional resources, over and above these allocations will be available to these authorities for approved urban development grant schemes.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last reviewed the operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to his answer*, 18 February 1985, c. *328-9*]: In my reply to my hon. Friend's question on Monday 18 February I said that I had no plans for further amendments at present to the Caravan Sites Act 1968. There are, of course, a number of technical amendments, consequential upon the proposals to abolish metropolitan county councils. These are contained in schedule 8 to the Local Government Bill now before Parliament.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the cost of the Trident system, calculated at the current sterling-dollar exchange rate.

Mr. Lee: As stated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 29 January (Columns 134-137) the current Trident estimate is £9,285 million at 1984-85 prices and at £1 = $1·38. $1·38 is the rate used by the Department for this year's recosting of the defence programme.

In view of the public interest in exchange rates, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has made available to the Select Committee on Defence the Public Accounts Committee an indication of the effects of changes in the exchange rates on programme costs, so that those wishing to predict the effect of possible exchange rate changes over the procurement period are able to do so. The following table shows the broad exchange rate effect of a 1 cent. change around the following alternative exchange rates:

$=£1	*£ million*
1·0	55
1·1	47
1·2	40
1·3	35
1·4	30
1·5	25
1·6	22
1·7	20

The above figures are based on the assumption that the chosen rate of exchange will remain constant throughout the life of the project.

Hong Kong Ferry

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his Department will place a further order for a Hong Kong ferry.

Mr. Lee: This department has not ordered any Hong Kong ferries nor has any plans to do so.

Single Role Minehunter

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his Department will place its order for the construction of the first single role minehunter.

Mr. Lee: A single tender has been received from Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd. It is being considered. No decision has yet been taken.

Mines Counter-measure Vessels

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his Department will place its order for the 12th and 13th mines counter-measure vessels.

Mr. Lees: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 5 February at col. *511*.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for new bylaws under the Military Lands Act relating to the regulation of access by unauthorised persons at RAF Molesworth; and if he will make a statement on the powers to be taken.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend, in exercise of his powers under the Military Lands Act 1892, is proposing to make byelaws covering Ministry of Defence land at RAF Molesworth. The Act requires the proposed byelaws to be advertised in the locality before they are made, and this will be done for a period of 21 days from 25 February.

The purpose of the proposed byelaws is to regulate the use of RAF Molesworth for defence purposes. The main provisions will make it an offence for unauthorised persons to enter the defined area or to interfere with or damage Crown property, including the security fence. Persons suspected committing an offence will be liable to arrest and to be brought before a court of summary jurisdiction. The maximum penalty for an offence against any byelaw is £100. Similar sets of byelaws are in force at other defence establishments.

Ascension Island (NAAFI Stores)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Defence when was the last occasion that only Bulgarian beef was available in the NAAFI store on Ascension Island.

Mr. Lee: NAAFI does not supply fresh meat to Her Majesty's Forces on Ascension Island and the origin of beef supplied as a commercial service to the civilian community is a matter for them.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the practice in relation to the offering of British beef for sale at the NAAFI store at Ascension Island.

Mr. Lee: NAAFI does not supply fresh meat to Her Majesty's Forces on Ascension Island. Any beef held in the NAAFI store is provided as part of NAAFI's commercial services to the civilian community and is a matter for them.

Departmental Staff (Education Grants)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to give his Department's employees postings that will permit their offspring to obtain higher education grants.

Mr. Lee: I cannot give the assurance sought.

Rules governing eligibility for higher education grants (which apply equally to the public and private sectors) are a matter for the Department of Education and Science, but of course my Department does its best to avoid such difficulties for its staff when they are posted.

Departmental Cleaning Contracts

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many private firms have been awarded cleaning contracts by his Department's establishments.

Mr. Lee: About 75 private firms have cleaning contracts, arranged centrally, with the Department; there are others of small value which are let locally.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines he has issued to companies who have been awarded cleaning contracts by his Department's establishments in respect of levels of pay for employees.

Mr. Lee: Following the decision of the House of Commons to rescind the fair wages resolution, levels of pay are a matter for contractors and their employees; contracts no longer set guidelines.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what security checks were made on the Clean Industrial Company prior to the award of the contract for the cleaning of his Department's buildings.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what agreement exists between the Clean Industrial Company and his Department for the cleaning of his Department's buildings; and what are the conditions of employment for cleaners contained in the agreement.

Mr. Lee: There are contracts with Clean Industrial Services Ltd. which are standard for office cleaning work but conditions of employment for cleaners are not included. Conditions of employment for cleaners are decided between the contractor and the employees.

Clean Industrial Services Ltd.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether officers of the Clean Industrial Company have signed the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what powers he has vested in Clean Industrial to monitor security and vet employees working in his Department's buildings.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the cleaning contract his Department has with Clean Industrial for his Department's buildings; and on what basis he calculates savings accruing from privatisation of the cleaning services in these buildings.

Mr. Lee: Clean Industrial Services Ltd. has a number of contracts with the Department including two for cleaning headquarters buildings, but the price is commercially confidential between the Department and the contractor concerned. Calculation of savings is on the basis of a comparison of the cost of the service performed by a contractor with the cost of the work by direct labour.

Cleaners (Vetting)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what procedures his Department uses for vetting cleaners for security purposes.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Mrs. Molly Balkinson

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations took place between the Clean Industrial company and his Department over *(a)* the security vetting and *(b)* the sacking of Mrs. Molly Balkinson.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Arms Exports

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the payment arrangements for United Kingdom arms exported to Third world countries; and what are the terms of any credit given.

Mr. Lee: When selling arms to Third world and other countries a number of factors need to be taken into consideration including the nature of the equipment, the state of the economy of the customer and the value of the sale. Payment arrangement and credit terms vary in accordance with these factors.

TRANSPORT

A303 (Road Schemes)

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to speed up progress on road schemes along the A303.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The six schemes in the White Paper "Policy for Roads in England: 1983" main trunk road programme and reserve list are progressing on target for work to start in the periods indicated. It is not practicable to advance these start dates which take into account the time required to carry out the statutory and other procedures.

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the Attorney General's statement on 12 February, *Official Report*, column 180, and the papers laid before the House by the Secretary of State for Defence on 18 February, she will make it the practice of Her Majesty's Government to consider answering on their merits individual parliamentary questions about discussions between Ministers and the advice given by officials to Ministers.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

No. The Government have made it very clear that this was an entirely—I hope uniquely—exceptional case.

Polaris Submarines (Radiation)

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister whether she will establish a survey to investigate the effects of radiation on service men and the families of service men who have served on board Polaris submarines; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Radiation levels in Polaris, as in all other Royal Navy nuclear powered submarines, are monitored continuously

to ensure that they remain at all times within levels recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. These levels have never been exceeded nor has there ever been a leakage of radioactivity which has affected the safety of a submarine crew.

There is no evidence to justify an inquiry of the sort suggested.

Official Information (Leak)

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister, if the discovery of a leak of official information from the Ministry of Defence to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was notified to the Security Commission.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.
No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufactured Goods

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give consideration to providing a computer database of imported manufactured goods with data available on regionally-based terminals to enable British companies to identify potential markets for investment.

Mr. Butcher: I am not convinced that such a database would be a cost-effective means of helping companies with their market research. Import statistics based on Customs and Excise returns are already available from the Department. In addition, the Government have encouraged private sector initiatives aimed at identifying opportunities for United Kingdom companies, notably exhibitions of imported products arranged for that purpose.

Hall Russell Shipbuilders, Aberdeen

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many offers to purchase Hall Russell Shipbuilders, Aberdeen, have been received by his Department as at 15 February.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I can confirm that initial offers have been received for Yarrow Shipbuilders and Hall Russell. It is not in the interest of British Shipbuilders or the Government to reveal the names or numbers of bidders while negotiations are in train.

Falmouth Shiprepair Ltd.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will explain the reason for the delay in the privatisation of Falmouth Shiprepair Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: British Shipbuilders has been negotiating with several potential purchasers but has not yet been able to reach an unconditional agreement on terms which the corporation regards as satisfactory. It is hoped that the sale will be completed shortly.

Ferrous Scrap

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what results have been achieved through representations made to the EEC Commission and to the Italian Industry Minister concerning the Italian Government's decision to subsidise imported ferrous scrap.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *362-63*]: In early August the Italian Council of Ministers agreed on a draft Bill authorising payments of a subsidy of 50 lira per kilogram towards the import of ferrous scrap from third countries. The Government made representations to the Commission about the proposed measure in August and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State raised the issue with the Italian Industry Minister on 2 October.

I understand that no payments have been made to Italian scrap importers under the recently introduced Transport Subsidy Act. Such aid requires the approval of the European Commission and to date this has not been given.

Support for Innovation Programme (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he is satisfied that industrialists in Yorkshire and Humberside region are sufficiently aware of the availability of grants under the support for innovation programme;

(2) what percentage of the total amount of money paid in grants under the support for innovation programme has been received in Yorkshire and Humberide region.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *363*]: As my hon. Friend announced last November, the Department is currently reviewing its policy in support of industrial research and development. While this exercise is under way, support for certain categories of projects has been curtailed including research and development projects in single firms. I cannot anticipate the outcome of the review but an announcement of future policy will be made shortly.

I hope that firms in all regions accept that the Department's aim is to encourage and assist British trade, industry and commerce. If firms in Yorkshire and Humberside are uncertain about the range of support that is available, I urge them to make contact with the Department's office in Leeds.

Of the amount spent under the support for innovation programme since it was launched on 6 May 1982, firms in Yorkshire and Humberside have accounted for 7·9 per cent. of the offers made, 4·4 per cent. of the value of assistance offered and 3·7 per cent. of the assistance paid.

Mr. Duffy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give preferential rates of grant in assisted areas to promote high technology development under the support for innovation programme.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 February 1985, c. *363*]: The long term aim of support for innovation is that of wealth creation. In order to maximise this aspect, it is important to support those projects which offer the best potential rate of return to the country. Obviously, this can be done only on a national basis. In so far as we respond to the best projects, the scheme is demand-led.

Departmental Services

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 6 February, *Official*

Report, column *579*, if he will indicate the profit and loss or income and expenditure account and the balance sheet of the services and groups of services listed in his previous answer.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *508*]: The costs and income in 1983-84 of the services listed in my answer of 6 February are as follows:

Services and groups of services the charges for which are aimed to recover full cost

	Cost £	*Income* £
Patent Office	29,931,000	29,444,000
Companies Registration Office	14,232,000	20,466,000
Insolvency Service	25,698,000	28,233,000
Pattern Examination by National Weights & Measures Laboratory	286,000	222,000
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	8,216,000	8,478,000
National Engineering Laboratory	3,828,000	3,828,000
Warren Spring Laboratory	7,314,000	7,410,000
National Physical Laboratory	2,220,000	2,482,000
Licensing under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958	121,500	124,100
Use of facilities at Royal Aircraft Establishment for European Space Agency Project	141,000	141,000
National Remote Sensing Centre	168,900	168,900
Dialtech (On-Line Computerised information service in science and technology	538,200	503,400
NATLAS (National Testing Laboratory Accreditation Scheme)	384,000	250,000
British Calibration Service	322,100	258,800
National Corrosion Service	43,400	42,900
Services for which charges are not set to recover full cost		
BOTB Export Services	23,138,800	6,612,400
Small Firms Counselling Service	3,686,500	64,900
Wireless Telegraphy Licensing	12,413,400	9,358,200

Soviet Union

Mr. Cockeram asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government policy over maintaining freedom of trade between the united Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 February 1985, c. *508*]: The Government are strongly in favour of the further development of this trade on the basis of mutual benefit. It is the Government's policy to promote freedom of trade between the two countries within the constraints imposed by our international obligations.

Unit Costs

Mr. Parris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the movement in United Kingdom unit costs, including non-wage factors such as employers' national insurance contributions, on a common currency basis compared with the United States of America, Canada, Japan, West Germany, France and Italy between 1975, 1977 and 1979, respectively, and the present day, extrapolating the cost trend in national currencies apparent over the last two quarters for which figures are available.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 February 1985, c. *434*]: I have been asked to reply.

The information is in the table:

Unit labour costs in manufacturing*

	Percentage changes *1975 to 1984*	*1977 to 1984*	*1979 to 1984*
United Kingdom	+43	+47	−10
France	−1	−1·5	−27
Canada	+44	+30	+26
Federal Republic of Germany	+14	+1·5	−25
Italy	+10	+15	−11
Japan	+9·5	−1	−16
United States of America	+39	+46	+24

* In United States S terms.

Note:

1984—estimates based on the first three quarters.

Source:

International Monetary Fund.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Whitefish

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what account was taken, in drawing up the United Kingdom's area VII f/g (west coast) whitefish quotas for sole and plaice for 1984-85 of the fact that the plaice catch during the quota reference period was more than twice that for sole;

(2) what account was taken when drawing up the United Kingdom's VII f/g plaice quota for 1984-85 of the predominance of Belgian beam trawler activity during the reference period.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom quotas for sole and plaice in area VII f/g for 1985, like those of Belgium and other Member States, were calculated on the basis of the Member States' shares of each stock that were fixed by the common fisheries policy settlement of January 1983. These shares have "staying power" for the lifetime of the current CFP. The United Kingdom's share of the total allowable catch for VII f/g plaice reflects our historic performance during the reference period of 1973-78 amended slightly to take account of the application of the "Hague Preference" in favour of Ireland. In the case of VII f/g sole we secured a share substantially in excess of our historic performance.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the United Kingdom and the French plaice quotas for 1984-85 have been set at 10 times the sole quotas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The only area where United Kingdom and French plaice quotas are currently about 10 times their sole quotas is the Irish Sea (VIIa). These quotas reflect the current levels of total allowable catch (TAC) for each stock and the member states' percentage shares of the TACs. The common fisheries policy settlement of January 1983 fixed member states' shares of each stock independently, taking account of catches during the 1973-78 reference period. The TAC's are based on the latest scientific advice on the state of the stocks, the plaice TAG in this area being 4 times as large as the sole TAC.

Agricultural Products (Exports)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total value of exports of *(a)* cereals and *(b)* other agricultural products in each year

since 1979 in actual and constant prices; and what is the percentage increase in each case in constant prices showing 1979 as 100.

Mr. MacGregor: The table shows the information requested:

UK Exports of Cereals and Other Agricultural Products

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Actual Value (£ million)						
Cereals	264	456	698	774	741	993
Other agricultural products*	2,404	2,567	2,662	2,849	3,162	3,424
Value at constant 1980 prices						
(a) *£ million*						
Cereals	288	456	671	690	628	813
Other agricultural products*	2,578	2,567	2,507	2,473	2,679	2,770
(b) *In index form (1979 = 100)*						
Cereals	100	158	234	240	218	282
Other agricultural products*	100	100	96	96	104	108

Source: UK Trade Statistics.
* Includes food, feed and beverages.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to review the safety clearance or approval of pesticides containing *(a)* dieldrin, *(b)* aldicarb, *(c)* methyl isothiocyanate, *(d)* 2,4,5-T, *(e)* captan, *(f)* thiram, *(g)* dichlorvos, *(h)* aldrin, *(i)* triadimefon, *(j)* oxydemeton methyl, *(k)* captafol, *(l)* triazophos, *(m)* phosalone and *(n)* paraquat.

Mr. MacGregor: The safety position of pesticides is kept under continuous review.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has collected information on the volume of pesticide product or active ingredient used in any case or with respect to particular areas; and if he will publish such data.

Mr. MacGregor: The Pesticide Usage Survey Group collects data on pesticide usage crop by crop, and when a cycle is completed publishes a review of the situation in agriculture, horticulture and forestry together. The review for the period 1980-83 is now in preparation and will be available to hon. Members later this year. The data is presented in terms of area of crop and tonnes of pesticide sprayed, and by crop types.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for which pesticides clearance has been withdrawn under the pesticides safety precautions scheme, wholly or mainly on grounds of the hazard they posed to human or animal health or safety or the environment.

Mr. MacGregor: Pesticides whose clearance has been withdrawn under the pesticides safety precaution scheme for safety reasons, since the inception of the scheme:

Antu
Azobenzene
Cadmium compounds
Calcium arsenate
Chlordecone
DDT
Epdrin
Ethylene dibromide
Hexachlorobenzene
Inorganic fluorides
Mercuric Chloride
Methyl mercury
Nitrofen
Phenylmercury salioylate
Potassium arsenate
Selenium compounds
Sodium arsenite
1,1, 2,2—tetracholorethane

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *108*, in which of the past 10 years for which records are available his Department assesses pesticide usage to have been the minimum consistent with efficient food production.

Mr. MacGregor: It has been the Government's policy to impose strict safety standards on the use of pesticides since the establishment of the Advisory Committee for Pesticides in 1955. Ministers have been publishing advice to farmers and growers on the efficacy of pesticides under the agricultural chemicals approved scheme since 1961, with the intention that only the most effective pesticides for a particular operation should be employed. This policy was made more explicit in 1983 with the publication of the Government's response to the Seventh Report of the Royal Commission for Environmental Pollution when the Government accepted the Royal Commission's recommendation that

"it should be a declared policy aim to reduce pesticide usage to a minimum consistent with food production."

It is not possible to monitor the success of this policy year by year, but the introduction of a criterion of efficacy for approval under the Food and Environment Protection Bill is intended to make a significant contribution to its achievement.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those publications produced by or on behalf of his Department which enable farmers to determine whether pesticide usage on an agricultural enterprise has been reduced to the minimum consistent with efficient agricultural and horticultural production.

Mr. MacGregor: The Ministry's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service and the Agriculture and Food Research Council are researching into more efficient application techniques, integrated pest control systems, pest and disease-resistant plant varieties and better forecasting techniques for pest and disease incidence. The benefits of this work are systematically passed on to farmers and growers by a variety of means, which do not necessarily involve publications. However

ADAS produces a range of leaflets devoted to pest control and managed disease control which advise farmers and others on when spraying would be most effective.

I am sending examples to the hon. Member.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported coffee from Angola, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mexico, New Guinea, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Rwanda, Uganda and Venezuela;

(2) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported *(a)* peppers and *(b)* strawberries from Mexico;

(3) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported bananas from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico;

(4) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported sugar from Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, India and Thailand;

(5) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon, and malathion on imported olives from Italy and Spain;

(6) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported tapioca from Thailand;

(7) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported cacao from Cost Rica and Ecuador;

(8) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported tea from Sri Lanka and India;

(9) whether he will carry out tests for the presence of DDT, DDE, BHC, lindane, dieldrin, heptachlor, diazinon and malathion on imported tomatoes from Mexico and Spain.

Mr. MacGregor: The working party on pesticide residues which reports to the interdepartmental steering group on food surveillance and the Advisory committee on Pesticides monitors foods, including imported foods, for a wide range of pesticide residues frequently including the organochlorine and organophospherous compounds mentioned in the question. A desciption of the methods of working of the working party, including ways in which priorities for residue analysis on specific foods are decided and pursued within the resources currently available for these activities has been published (The Ninth Report of the steering group on food surveillance). This report contains information on for example the analysis of total diet samples, which would have included bananas, for the organochlorines, and similarly, information on the organophosphorus compounds in these samples.

I expect a further comprehensive report of the more recent activities of this working party to be published later this year. This will present inter alia the results of a survey of pesticide residues on home-produced and imported fruits and vegetables including the organochlorines and certain organophosphorus compounds.

No recent work has been carried out under the auspices of the working party on organochlorine and organophosphorus residues in sugar, coffee, cocoa and tapioca. Further work on tea has recently been proposed.

All imported foodstuffs are subject to control under the Imported Food Regulations (1984), the enforcement of which is the responsibility of the port health authorities or of local authorities inland where Customs examination is not completed at the port of entry.

Paraquat

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the grounds on which the herbicide paraquat has been banned in West Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: We understand that the West German authorities are concerned that on certain soils biologically available residues of paraquat may persist. We await a full explanation from the West German authorities, which has recently been requested by West Germany's EC partners.

Alachlor

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has studied recent cancer investigations made by the Environment Protection Agency in the United States of America, relating to the herbicide alachlor; if this pesticide is in use in the United Kingdom; and what plans he has to issue a warning to users.

Mr. MacGregor: Full details of certain replacement studies of alachlor, which is used on a very small scale in the United Kingdom, have been submitted to my Department. Ministers are taking the advice of the Advisory Committee for Pesticides on the appropriate reaction to this data.

Conservation

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that conservation matters are fully taken into account when all applications for grants submitted to his Department are considered.

Mr. Jopling: In accordance with my statutory responsibilities, it has been my Department's policy for some years to have conservation aspects of claims for capital grants taken into account.

Farmers (Subsidy Allocations)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to amend subsidy allocations for farmers.

Mr. Jopling: Planned expenditure for agriculture is set out in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd. 9428), published on 22 January 1985. These plans will be reviewed during 1985, taking account of pricing decisions reached under the common agricultural policy.

Eggs Authority

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make an announcement about the review of the Eggs Authority.

Mr. Jopling: The other Agricultural Ministers and I are glad to say that the right hon. Lord Peyton of Yeovil has agreed to lead a small committee which will carry out the review of the Eggs Authority. The other members of the committee will be Professor Denis Britton, CBE and Mr. Oscar Colburn, CBE.

Their terms of reference will be to determine whether there is a continuing need for the Eggs Authority and, if so, whether any changes are required to its constitution, functions and financial provisions and to make recommendations.

In carrying out their task the committee will consult all the interests concerned with the future of the Eggs Authority. It is our intention that the review committee's report should be published and presented to Parliament.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 73**

SESSION 1984-85

11th February—22nd February 1985

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speakers ruling and statement'.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading 'Speaker'.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of the volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

Abortifacients 318w

Abortion 217-8w
Administrative delays 156w
Hospital discharges 501w
Private Members motions (11.02.85) 40-72
Young people 156-8w

Abse, Mr Leo
Debates etc
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 173
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 642-3, 665-8
Questions
Heath Hospital, Cardiff 3-4
Heath Hospital, Compensation 48-9w
Limited list prescribing 2

Absent voters list (13.02.85) 351-424

Access to buildings
Handicapped 35w

Accounting
Corporation tax 291w
NHS 598w

Accrington
School buildings (20.02.85) 1172-80

Acid rain
Forestry Commission 575w
Research 175w, 575w
Trees 575w

Acute beds 68-9w
Greater London 68-9w

Adams, Mr Allen
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 345

Addis Ababa 301-2w

Adjournment debates
Speakers rulings & statements (13.02.85) 458

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 345
Questions
Budget 557w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-2
Cyprus 203w
National security 476
Public order policing, Fees & charges 509w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 118w

Administration of Justice Bill (HL) 1984/85 524w

Administrative costs
Dept of Education & Science 5w
Dept of Energy 354w
Dept of Health & Social Security 214w
Dept of the Environment 85w
Dept of Transport 19-20w
Health services 386w
Housing benefits 275w
Income tax 202w
NHS 586w
Office of Arts & Libraries 202w
Treasury 56w

Administrative delays
Abortion 156w
Driving tests 437w
Magistrates courts 342-3w
VAT registration 493w

Adult education
Student numbers 426w
Unemployed 191w

Advanced Micro Devices 616-7w

Advertising
Banks 566-7w
Private health insurance 8w

Advisory bodies
Dept of Health & Social Security 79-80w

Advisory Committee on Pesticides 107-8w, 579w

Advisory Committee on the Supply & Education of Teachers 455-6w, 850

Afghanistan 477-8w
Refugees 470w

Africa
World Bank 32w, 341w

Age participation rates 405w
Higher education 405w

Agricultural cooperatives (18.02.85) 827-34

Agricultural land 257w
Forestry 320-1w

Agricultural production
Beans 469-70
EC countries 582w
Lupins 470
Peas 469-70

Agricultural products
EC external trade 581w
Exports 632-4w
Imports 581w

Agricultural research 260w

Agricultural subsidies 256w, 467, 637-8w
Expenditure 323-4w
Netherlands 465

Agricultural & Horticultural Cooperation Scheme 1985 (18.02.85) 827-34

Agriculture 579w
Aircraft 265w
Civil defence 107w, 111w
EC budget 492w
Environment protection 258w, 457w, 467-8
Government grants (18.02.85) 827-34
Nature conservation 67-8w, 636w
Scotland 331

AIDS 7w, 14, 47w, 71w, 160w, 279w, 320w, 350-1w, 388w, 446w, 498-500w, 585-6w, 600w
Blood donors 160w, 585-6w, 600w
Blood transfusion service 155
Death 71w
Haemophilia 446w, 498w
Health service staff 320w, 388w
Medical research 279w
Notifiable diseases 14, 71w
Scotland 7w
Screening 600w
Wales 14

Air force
Defence procurement (21.02.85) 1242-98
Helicopters 50w
West Germany 167-8

Air freight transport 370w, (14.02.85) 625-32

Air pollution
Lead 535-6w

Air transport (14.02.85) 625-32

Aircraft
Agriculture 265w

Airports
London docklands 331-2w
Scotland 366w
Spain 1022

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Questions
Business statement 482

Alachlor
Pesticides 636w,

Alcoholic drinks duties 562w

Alcoholism
Medical treatments 497w

Alert signs 431w
Territorial Army 431w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Questions
Black economy 561w
Education, Expenditure 418w
Educational standards 841
Petroleum exploration, Newark 412-3w

Allerdale
Community programme 185w
Youth training scheme 185w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 53-6, 70
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 552, 554, 556, 557, 571-6, 580
Questions
Church schools, Liverpool 422w
European monetary system 561w
Forestry 240w
Forestry Commission, Felling licences 131w
Ionizing radiation, Research 101w
Iran, Human rights 469w
Nuclear weapons tests 853
Nuclear weapons tests, Death rate 198w
Polaris submarines, Radiation hazards 628-9w
Road salting & gritting 491w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 100-1w, 281-2w

Aluminium
Water supply 588-9w

Amateur radio
Licensing 305w

Ambulance services 162w
Finance 80w
Strathclyde 132w

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 760-2

Amess, Mr David
Questions
Greater London Council, Manpower 329-30w
Hospitals, Costs 495w
Industrial training schemes, Young people 514-6w
Local government staff, Greater London Council 482w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Basildon 229w
Teachers, Pay 416w

Ancram, Mr Michael, *Parliamentary Under Secretary Scottish Office*
Questions
Asbestos, Scotland 574w
Asbestos stripping, Scotland 574-5w
Buses, Scotland 7-8w
Civil defence, Scotland 358w
Council house sales, Scotland 332-3
Drug abuse, Scotland 241w
Drug squads, Scotland 241w
Emergency committees, Scotland 212w
Godden, Stephen Anthony, Police custody 240w
Housing associations, Scotland 206w
Housing subsidies, Scotland 206w
Insulation grants, Scotland 313w
Legal aid, Scotland 574w
Local government mortgages, Scotland 448w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 205w
Peat, Islay 615w
Rate support grants, West Lothian 447w
Rent control, Shetland 460w
Road safety barriers, Scotland 8-9w
Salmon, Fees & charges 447w
Scottish Special Housing Association, Rent increases 207w
Surveillance, Scotland 616w
Town & country planning, Scotland 207w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 174-5
Questions
Council house sales, Wales 9
Council housing, Wales 226w, 427w
Housing starts, Wales 188w, 226w
Planning permission, Housing 328w
South Africa, Foreign policy 466w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 70-1w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 276w
Unemployment, Swansea 12

Welsh Water Authority, Finance 188w

Animal feed 65w
Milk & milk products 580w

Animal husbandry
Norfolk Broads 435w

Animal Welfare Bill 1984-85
1R (19.02.85) 859
2R order read (22.02.85) 1391

Anniversaries
UN declaration on decolonisation 302w
World War II 230w

Antarctic
Research 601w

Antifouling paints 175w

Antismoking campaign
Wales 4-5

Anti-progesterone pills
Clinical trials 318w

Appeals
School closures 422-3w
Taxation 289w

Application forms 180w

Apprentices (13.02.85) 349-50
Coal mining 2w

Archaeology
City of Westminster 36w

Argentina
Defence equipment 200w

Armagh Prison 539-41w

Armed forces
Entertainers 285-6w
Heart diseases 285w
Nutrition 285w

Armed forces cadets
Training 529w

Armed forces catering services
RAF Brize Norton 529w

Armed forces civilians
Teachers 528-9w

Armed forces deployment
Pirate radio stations 285w

Armed forces recruitment 527w

Armed forces training
El Salvador 302w
Iraq 506w
Sri Lanka 286w
USA 317w, 432-3w

Arms control treaties 440w, 467w, 474-5w, 855
Chemical weapons 475w

Arms embargoes
Israel 1025

Arms exports 628w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 507w

Arms trade
EC action 481w
Guatemala 1021-2
Israel 1025
Middle East 858, 1024-6
Sri Lanka 142w, 285w

Arnold, Mr Tom
Questions
Manchester Opera Festival, Arts finance 605w

Arrests
Ministry of Defence police 621w
Picketing 509w

Art works
Objects in lieu of tax 31w

Arts Council
Arts finance 450w

Arts finance 16
Arts Council 450w
Local government expenditure 450-2w
Manchester Opera Festival 605w
National Theatre 14-6, 450w

Arts sponsorship
Taxation 17

Asbestos
Scotland 574w
South Yorkshire 41w

Asbestos stripping 517w, 574w
Scotland 574-5w

Ascension Island
NAAFI 626w
Police 537-8w
Wild cats 537w

Ash dieback 575w
Research 575w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 182

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1247, 1265-7, 1296
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1336, 1343-5, 1363-4
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 818
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1162-3
Severe weather payments, Standing Order No 10 applications (18.02.85) 731-2
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1117-9, 1125, 1130-1, 1146-8
Questions
Air force, Helicopters 50w
Armed forces cadets, Training 529w
Coal, Imports 719-20
Concessionary television licences, Costs 622w
Government Communications Headquarters, Resignations 605w
HMS Starling, Log books 51-2w
Military bands, Road accidents 168
Nuclear reactors, Parliamentary questions 299w
Plutonium, Production 299w, 406-7w
Smallholdings, Local authorities 468-9
Trident, Nuclear non proliferation treaty 478w

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Debates etc
British Tinnitus Association, Public petitions (22.02.85) 1331
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1225
Questions
Business statement 484
Health services, Homelessness 599w
NHS finance, Teaching hospitals 169-71w
Nurse practitioners 598-9w
Tax yields, Fringe benefits 571w
Taxation, Pensions 560w
Teacher training, Special education 850-1
Unemployment, Costs 606w
VAT, Building alterations 1191

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Gas supply industry, Financial targets 564-5w
Rampton Hospital, Theft 81-2w

Assisted areas 363w
Wales 45w

Association of Community Health Councils 388-9w
Finance 388-9w

Atkins, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1246, 1253, 1254, 1267-9, 1286, 1295
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1042
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 344
Questions
British Leyland 232w
British Leyland, Privatisation 232w
Child workers 846
Eggs Authority Review 636w
Hospital closures, Wrightington Hospital 153

Atkinson, Mr David
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 634
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Unemployment benefits 441w
Job centres 184w
Personal taxation, OECD countries 200-1w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w
Public libraries, Privatisation 31w
Retirement pensions 216w
School meals, Costs 189-90w
School meals, Teachers 189w
Student grants, Earnings rules 421w
Unemployment benefits, Earnings rules 149-50w

Atkinson, Mr Norman
Questions
Arms control treaties 475w
Crime prevention, Flats 234w
Crime prevention, Publicity 234w
Local government finance, Haringey 20-1
Science & technology research 424w

Attendance allowance
Kidney patients 582-3w

Attorney-General
Prosecutions (11.02.85) 38, (12.02.85) 180-7

Auchenshuggle
Prime Minister domestic visits 229w

Audio recordings
Copyright 408w

Autumn Statement
Unemployment 563-4w

Average earnings
Scotland 207w

Axle weights
Goods vehicles 803-4w

A1(M) 369w

A12 253-4w, 491w

A38 173w
Road works 173w

A55
Road works 45-6w

A303 628w
Road works 628w

A642 369w
Road traffic 369w

Baby care units
Waiting lists 445w

Back pain
Nurses 74w

Bagier, Mr. Gordon A T
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 198
Questions
Business statement 488

Bahai sect
Iran 478-9w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, Minister for Local Government
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 80, 114-6
Questions
Local government practices & procedure inquiry 311w
Urban programme, Finance 624w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Questions
British embassies 470w

Balance of trade
Manufactured goods 1189-90
West Germany 569w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Debates etc

Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 130-1
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 757, 781, 786-8
Questions
Africa, World Bank 341w
Agricultural subsidies, Expenditure 323-4w
Church schools, Oxfordshire 298w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 296-7w
Food, Marketing 256w
Goods vehicles, Axle weights 303-4w
Limited list prescribing 583w
Personal taxation 307-8w
School leaving, Take-up of employment 347-8w
Trident, Defence procurement 505-6w
University finance 122-6w
VAT registration, Administrative delays 493w

Balkinson, Molly 628w

Ballot papers (14.02.85) 493-622

Bananas 473

Bank loans
Industry 362w

Bank notes 493w

Banks
Advertising 566-7w
NHS 216w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Licensing laws, Scotland 233w
Sudan, Foreign policy 472w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 947
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 76, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 92, 97, 104-6
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1042-3, 1048-9, 1057, 1064, 1074
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R, (19.02.85) 867, 868-9, 871, 881-8, 926, 936, 941
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 291, 293-7, 304, 305, 306
Questions
Arts finance 16
Buses White Paper 21-2w
Civil defence 345w
Civil defence, Regional fire advisers 343-5w
Civil defence, Scotland 358w
Cyprus 476w
Greater London Council, Property transfer 487w
Gypsies, EC action 407w
Inner London Education Authority, Rate limitation 624w
Land acquisition, St Stephens Parish Council 370w
Local government expenditure, Greater London 537w
Local government reform 37-42w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 623w
Local government reform, Property transfer 536w
Local government services, Fees & charges 335w
London docklands, Compulsory purchase 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 624w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Corporate plans 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Inner-Action 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Land acquisition 488w
M25, Land acquisition 439w
Rate limitation 284w, 489w
Rate limitation, Haringey 335w
Riverside Studios 31w
Unemployment 563w, 856

Barking Hospital 442w
Industrial disputes 442w

Barnett, Mr Guy
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 947-8
Questions
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 149w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Coal mining, Standing Order No 10 applications (14.02.85) 491
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 443-4
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1055, 1058, 1066
Motion to introduce negatived (19.02.85) 860-5
Protection of National Energy Resources, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (19.02.85) 860-1
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 394, 405-6 (14.02.85) 527, 555, 562, 570-1, 597, 602, 613-6, 617
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 665, 668
Questions
Amateur radio, Licensing 305w
Business statement 488
Caribbean, Ministers visits abroad 259w
Coal mining 711-4
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1205
European Communities 480w
Exceptional needs payments, Beds 157w
VAT, Newspaper press 557w, 1193

Basildon
Prime Minister domestic visits 229w

Bathgate
British Leyland 205w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Questions
Science & technology research 423w
Technical & vocational education initiative 189w

Beam trawlers 632w

Beans
Agricultural production 469-70

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1034
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 185
Questions
EC budget 1031-2
European Communities, Finance 480w
General Belgrano 478
Graduates, Scientists 416w
Parliamentary papers, Members facilities 724
Sterling 1183

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 430, 438-42, 448
Questions
Nejoma, Sam 465w
Social security reviews 159
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 149w

Bedfordshire
Radioactive waste disposal 329-30w
Structure plans 329-30w

Beds
Exceptional needs payments 157w

Beef premiums 242w, 259-60w, 459w, 463-7

Beef & veal
Northern Ireland 43w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1257, 1275-7
Questions
Civil service recruitment, Northern Ireland 180w
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 376w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 270w, 376w
Land drainage 468
Sewage, Larne 43-4w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 449-50w

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 177
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 427, 435-6, 437, 448
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 367-8, 371-2, 392-4, 394-5, 396-7, 404, 409, 410, 412-3, 418-21 (14.02.85) 515, 518-9, 520-2, 523-5, 533-4, 536, 537-42, 546-51, 554, 569, 579, 580, 585-7, 590, 597-8, 616-7
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 692-7
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 986-8, 989, 993, 995
Questions
House of Commons, Equal opportunities officers 140w
House of Commons staff, Pay 250-3w
House of Commons staff, Trade union membership 253w
Orders & regulations, House of Commons debates 723

Belize
Overseas aid 4w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Medium term financial strategy 1181-2
Unemployment 1195

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
Bus services, Privatisation 491w
Horticulture, EC accession 255w
Teachers, Pay 416w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
AIDS, Blood donors 600w

Benefits in kind
Tax thresholds 567w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 788-91
Questions
Business statement 483, 1211
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 716-7, 1199-200

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Questions
Central America 473w
Child workers 846
Defence land 315-7w
Economic growth 1187
Ethiopia, International assistance 297-8w
Higher education, Age participation rates 405w
Supplementary benefits, Students 151w
Teacher training, Special education 851
University finance 417w

Benyon, Mr W
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 185
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 680

Berenstein, Josef 29w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 356-9, 365-6, 378, 406, 408, 411, 416, (14.02.85) 514, 528, 529-30, 531-3, 562, 573, 577-8, 607-8, 615, 619-20

Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1114
Questions
Insulation, VAT 721

Best, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1247, 1256, 1277-9
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 949-53, 976, 993
Questions
A55, Road works 45-6w
Civil defence, Wales 13
Drugs, Prescriptions 3
Falkland Islands, Expenditure 526w
Local government revenue, Wales 6
UN World Disarmament Campaign 604w
Under-fives initiative, Wales 523w

Betting & gaming duties
Newspaper press 565w

Bideford
Job centres 27w

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 893-5, 919
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1236
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 245-7, 257-8

Biffen, Rt Hon John, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 177-9, (19.02.85) 946-8
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 73-9
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1038-9, 1072-4
Ponting, Clive (11.02.85) 22
Rate limitation, Orders & regulations (19.02.85) 859
Questions
Business statement 481-92, 1208-17
Civil Servants 526w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1196-7
County Hall 723
Dalyell, Tam, Disclosure of information 629w
Employment level 1194
General Belgrano 525w
House of Commons accommodation 723
House of Commons galleries, Demonstrations 573w
House of Commons questions, Disclosure of information 628w
House of Commons questions, Procedure Select Committee 597w
House of Commons times of sittings 360w
Intelligence services, MI5 1194-5
Limited list prescribing 1193-4
Magistrates 32-3w
Members facilities, Communication 724
Ministry of Defence, Dismissal 1197
New Parliamentary building 723
Nicaragua 1196
Olympic Games 1195-6
Orders & regulations, House of Commons debates 723
Parliamentary papers, Members facilities 724-5
Polaris submarines, Radiation hazards 628-9w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Dartmouth 525w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Parkhead 525w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Welwyn Garden City 525w
Prime Minister domestic visits, West Balgrochan 525w
Prime Minister official engagements 525-6w
Scargill, Arthur 1197
Sunday trading 1195
Taxation, Pensions 1197-8
Unemployment 1195
Unemployment, Strathclyde 1194

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1310-2
Questions
Gibraltar 1022
House of Commons accommodation 723
Terrorism, International cooperation 467w
Transplant surgery 154w
UN declaration on decolonisation, Anniversaries 302w
UN Economic Commission for Africa, Conference centres 301-2w
United Nations, Expenditure 302w

Bilateral diffuse pleural thickening 601w

Birmingham City Council Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Birmingham General Hospital 278-9w
Surgery 278-9w

Birmingham Prison 14w

Birth rate
Young people 168-70w

Bitumens
Road construction 438w

Black Committee see Inequalities in Health Between Social Classes Working Group

Black economy 561w

Blackburn, Dr John G
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1233-4
Questions
USSR, Postal services 474w

Blair, Mr Tony
Questions
Interest rates 1189
Prosecutions, Ponting, Clive 161

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
Arms control treaties 467w
General Belgrano 163
USSR, Human rights 1023

Blind
Scotland 239w

Block grant 333-4w, 488-9w
Local government expenditure 33-5w

Blood
Factor VIII 446-7w
Screening 498-500w
Wales 47w

Blood donors
AIDS 160w, 585-6w, 600w

Blood transfusion service 446-7w
AIDS 155

Board & lodging charges 70-1w, 149w, 394w
Supplementary benefits 70-1w, 149w

Body, Mr Richard
Questions
Agriculture, Civil defence 107w
"Home Defence & the Farmer" 106-7w
New Zealand, Imports 261w

Body searches 539-41w
Northern Ireland 539-41w

Boiler conversion scheme 464w

Bonnybridge Denny Morbidity Review 244w

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 73, 878-81, 882
Questions
Metropolitan Police, Costs 237w

Books
VAT, 7w, 308w, 557w

Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Questions
Spain, EC accession 1028

Border security in Ireland 181-2w
Farmers 181-2w

Bottled water 486w
Water supply 486w

***Bottomley, Mr Peter** Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 123, 136-8
Questions
Employment level, Pay 26w
European Social Fund, Textile industry 28-9w
European Social Fund, Young people 28w
Factories, Hazardous materials 133w
Methyl isocyanate 136-7w
Motor industry, Pay 516w
National Freight Company, Sheffield 515w
Pesticides 517w
Pesticides, Industrial health & safety 429w
Pesticides, Safety measures 430w
Pesticides, Training 430w
Power stations, Demolition 517w
Presses, Industrial accidents 245-6w
Public corporations, Dept of Employment 517-8w
Sex monitoring, Dept of Employment 249w
Wages councils 516w
Wood preservatives 250w
Wood preservatives, Information 136w
Wood preservatives, Poisoning 136w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1228
Questions
EC Finance Council 291w
Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise Review of Enforcement Powers Committee 145w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Heating allowances 156

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 925-7
Questions
Civil defence, Health services 149
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 205w, 353-4w, 413w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse, Welsh Office 12-3

Boxing (22.02.85) 1392-400

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 93, 94-5, 98-102
Questions
Business statement 490
EC Foreign Affairs Council, Integrated Mediterranean programmes 481w
Educational maintenance allowance, Sutton 126w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 13w, 35w, 51w
Insulation, Manufacturing industries 721
North East Regional Emergency Committee 35-6w
Prime Minister visits abroad 300w
School leaving, Sunderland 137w
Student numbers 415w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 149w
Turkey, Human rights 1019-20

Boyson, Dr Rhodes, Minister of State Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Beef & veal, Northern Ireland 43w
Civil servants background, Northern Ireland 449w
Civil service recruitment, Northern Ireland 180w
Dairy farming, Northern Ireland 43w, 105w

Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 376w
Fair Employment Agency, Northern Ireland 371w
Farmers, Northern Ireland 618w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 270w, 376w
Industrial development, Northern Ireland 269w
Kilroot Power Station 450w
Petroleum exploration licences, Northern Ireland 105w
Sex monitoring, Northern Ireland Office 449w
Short Brothers, Government assistance to industry 269w
Short Brothers, Manpower 268-9w
Short Brothers, Profits 269w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 449-50w

Boyson Committee see Children & Young Peoples Benefits Review

Bradford
Thornton View Hospital 151w

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 48-53
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 344
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 663-5, 684
Questions
Antarctic, Research 601w
European Security Conference 271-3w
World War II, Anniversaries 230w

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Questions
USSR, Religious discrimination 1022-3

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1360-1
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 691-2
Questions
European Space Agency, UK contributions 414w
Tax thresholds 1185-6

Brazil
Trade fairs 465w

Brent
Community care 500w
Rate limitation 309w

Brent Health Authority 500w

Bright, Mr Graham
Questions
Company law 19w
Retail trade, Training 134w

Brinton, Mr Tim
Questions
Central America, Peace negotiations 470w

British Aerospace 506w

British Airways
Privatisation 405w

British Antarctic Survey 601w

British Council
English education 455w

British embassies 470w
Iraq 271w
Sierra Leone 142-3w
Syrian Arab Republic 271w

British Empire
Museums & galleries 32w

British Gas Corporation 148-9w

British Leyland 232w
Bathgate 205w
Privatisation 232w

British National Oil Corporation
Oil prices 413w

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd
Construction costs 431w
Nuclear safeguards 355-6w

British Overseas Trade Board 408w

"British Pharmacopeia" 383w

British Railways Bill 1984/85
2R order read (21.02.85) 1181

British Railways Board
Communication 438w

British Safety Council 16w

British Shipbuilders
Privatisation 629w

British Standards Institution
Upper Waiting Hall 16w

British Steel Corporation
External financing limits 231w

British Telecom
Northern Ireland 5w
Shares 176w

British Tinnitus Association (22.02.85) 1331
Public petitions (22.02.85) 1331

Brittan, Rt Hon Leon, *Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Interception of Communications Bill, 1R (14.02.85) 492
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 421-4
1R (14.02.85) 492
Questions
Detention centres 196-7w
Extradition 463w
Interception warrants 511-2w
Magis, James 94-5w
Metropolitan Police, Costs 237w
Parliamentary constituencies 621-2w
Parole 514w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 464w
Police custody, Devizes 621w
Police powers, Ports 509w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 296w, 464w
Public corporations, Home Office 510-2w
Sex monitoring, Home Office 295-6w
Syrian Arab Republic, Deportation 12w, 14-5w

Broadbent, Ewen 407w
Radio programmes 407w

Broadcasting
Ethnic minorities 619w

"Broadleaves in Britain" 313-4w, 321-2w, 324w, 357w

Brooke, Mr Peter, *Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Adult education, Student numbers 426w
Adult education, Unemployed 191w
Engineering education, Student numbers 532w
European Space Agency, UK contributions 414w
High Energy Particle Physics Review Group 115-6w
Higher education 424w
Higher education, Educational finance 532-3w
Higher education, Student numbers 424w, 426w, 533w
Iran, Overseas students 421w
Medical education, Cost per student 115w
Medical research 120w
Medical research, Cancer 350-1w
Medical research, Mental illness 119-20w
Medical research, Nervous system disorders 120w
Medical research, Schizophrenia 120w
Medical Research Council, Finance 221w
Medical Research Council, Research finance 418-9w
Medical students, Student grants 415w, 420w
National Association of Teachers in Further & Higher Education 415w
Natural Environment Research Council 117w
Natural Environment Research Council, Corporate plans 222w
Open University, Expenditure 421w
Oxford University 221w, 847, 849-50
Oxford University, Student numbers 222w
Polytechnics, Student numbers 425-6w
Science & technology research 419w, 423-4w
Staff-student ratios, West Midlands 192w
Student grants 852-3
Student grants, Earnings rules 421w
Student loans 853
Student numbers 415w
Student unions 115w, 222w, 425w
Student unions, Ultra vires payments 350w
Teacher exchanges 117-8w
Teachers 5w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 119w
Universities, Cost per student 6w
Universities, Gifts & endowments 221w
Universities, Women 119w
University finance 413-4w, 417w, 420w, 846-7
University Grants Committee 420-1w
University teachers, Job security 417w
University teachers, Research 189w
Youth Options Menu 120-1w
Youth Unit 424w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Severe weather payments (13.02.85) 454-58, 460
Questions
Housing benefits, Young people 501w
Hypothermia, Scotland 240-1w
Levene, Peter, Conditions of employment 52w, 186w
Levene, Peter, Pensions 198w
Ministry of Defence, Cleaning services 627-8w
Ministry of Defence, Contract cleaning 627-8w
Regional aid, Scotland 616-7w
Severe weather payments 76w
Specialist claims control units 82w
Unemployment 563w

Brown, Mr Hugh
Questions
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 323-4

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1070
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 536
Questions
Television licences 93w
Turkey, Ministers visits abroad 1019

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Combined heat & power 186-7w
Combined heat & power, Newcastle upon Tyne 238w
Sudan, Human rights 204w

Brown, Mr Ron
Questions
Community care, Lothian 356w
Factory closures, Rowntree Mackintosh 1192
Prosecutions, Scotland 204w
Residential care, Lothian 356w
Surveillance, Scotland 616w
Unemployment, Scotland 210w

Browne, Mr John
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 800-2
Questions
Medium term financial strategy 1182
South Atlantic Campaign memorial 527w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 27

Oral questions, Scottish Office (13.02.85) 342
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1143
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 1008
Questions
Farm capital grant scheme 257w
Severe weather payments 159-60
Teacher training, Special education 850
Teachers, Scotland 321

Bruinvels, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 45, 65
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 133-5
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 752
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1304
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 355, 357-8, 364, 369, 372, 377, 380, 383-4, 387-8, 396-7, 407-8, 414, 415, 420 (14.02.85) 502-4, 537, 557-60
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 683
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 717, 721, 1206
Gibraltar 1021-2
House renovation grants, Leicester City Council 331w
Housing starts, Leicester City Council 411w
Indian subcontinent, Immigration applications 96w
M25, Road accidents 12w, 24w
Nursery schools 298-9w
Official secrets 325w
Official secrets, Prosecutions 325w
Parking offences, Diplomatic service 193-5w
Parliamentary papers, Members facilities 724-5
Public order policing, Leicester 234w
Road accidents, Northern Ireland 44w
Safety belts 529-30w
Safety belts, Greater London 513w
Stateless persons, Statistics 195-6w
Teachers, Educational standards 425w

Bruntsfield Hospital 313w

Buchan, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 346
Questions
Business statement 486-7
International Youth Year 332
Namibia, Human rights 469w
National Theatre, Arts finance 16
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse, Wales 12

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick, Minister of State for Energy
Questions
Energy consumption 238w
Gas consumption, Future 98w, 523w
Gas reserves 523w
Natural gas 98w
Natural gas, Gas reserves 98w
Natural gas, Production costs 98w
North Sea oil 722
Oil industry, Land drilling 354w
Oil prices, British National Oil Corporation 413w
Oil recovery 354w
Petroleum, Imports 238-9w
Petroleum, Production 239w
Petroleum exploration, Newark 412-3w
Petroleum production 722
Power industry, External financing limits 98w
Sleipner field 187w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Bananas 473
EC budget 1032
Human rights, Northern Ireland 555-6w

Budget 557w

Budget March 1985
Social security reviews 158-9

Building alterations
VAT 572w, 1190-1

Building industry 402w
Scotland 322-3

Building regulations
Handicapped 35w

Building repairs
Council housing 427w
Defective housing 411-2w
Prefabricated housing 485w

Building Research Establishment 409-10w

Building societies
Prefabricated housing 485w

Building Societies Association 485w

Bureaux de change 178w

Burglary
Society for the Protection of Unborn Children 513-4w

Burnham Committee 116-7w
Professional Association of Teachers 116-7w

Burnley
Job release scheme 28w
Redundancy 246w
Unemployment 135w

Burt, Mr Alistair
Questions
Cash limits, Dept of Employment 139w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Industrial disputes 169w
Emery Air Freight 370w
Maternity services 500-1w

Burton on Trent 534w

Bury St Edmunds 173w

Bus services (12.02.85) 269-81, 282-9, 437-8w
Northern Ireland 505w
Privatisation (12.02.85) 192-266, 491w
Public petitions (13.02.85) 452-3
Wales 47w

Bus services subsidies 20-1w, 47w, (12.02.85) 269-81, 369-70w

Bus substitution services 302-3w

Buses
Government grants to local authorities 370w
Scotland 7-8w

"Buses White Paper" 21-2w, (13.02.85) 452-3

Business expenses
Taxation 306-7w

Business motions (19.02.85) 1008, (20.02.85) 1037-77
Speakers rulings & statements (20.02.85) 1069

Business premises
VAT 306w

Business questions
Speakers rulings & statements (21.02.85) 1216

Business sponsorship incentive scheme 17

Business statement (12.02.85) 177-9, 481-92, (19.02.85) 946-8, 1208-17

Butcher, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1361-8
Questions
Amateur radio, Licensing 305w
British Safety Council 16w
British Standards Institution, Upper Waiting Hall 16w
British Telecom, Shares 176w
Bureaux de change 178w
Certification quality marks 16w
Citizens band radio, Church services 16-7w
Citizens band radio, Codes of practice 365w
Citizens band radio, Southampton 366w
Consumer protection, Secondhand cars 361w
Falmouth Shiprepair 629w
Grocery trade 364w
High technology 630w
Industry, Bank loans 362w
Information technology 364-5w
Italy, Scrap metal 629-30w
Kenya, Restraint equipment 178w
Manufactured imports, Data banks 629w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial investment 365-6w
Microelectronics industry, Government assistance to industry 18w
Middle East, Overseas trade 362w
Optical fibres 177-8w
Overseas trade, UK membership of EC 360-1w
Pirate radio stations 362w
Public corporations, Dept of Trade & Industry 630-1w
Scrap metal, Italy 362-3w
Semiconductor devices 365w
Sex monitoring, Dept of Trade & Industry 361w
Standards Quality & International Competitiveness White Paper 16w
Support for innovation scheme, Yorkshire & Humberside 630w
Syrian Arab Republic, Overseas trade 362w
Telephones, Licensing 17-8w
Tourist industry, EC grants & loans 363w
Trade marks 361w

Butler, Rt Hon Adam, Minister of State for Defence Procurement
Questions
Air force, Helicopters 50w
Argentina, Defence equipment 200w
Eastern Europe, Defence equipment 287-8w
Eastern Europe, Defence procurement 51w
HMS Starling, Log books 51-2w
Kings Bay, Costs 199w
Levene, Peter, Conditions of employment 52w
Levene, Peter, Pensions 198w
MCV80, Defence contracts 286-7w
Nuclear test ban 287w
Nuclear weapons tests, Death rate 198w
Rapier missiles, Costs 199w
Remotely piloted vehicles, Defence contracts 142w
Sri Lanka, Arms trade 285w
Trident, Costs 199w, 287w
Trident, Expenditure 430-1w
USA, Strategic defence initiative 50w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 655
Questions
Blood donors, AIDS 160w
Blood transfusion service, AIDS 155

Bypasses
Road traffic 253-4w
Tree planting 20w

C & G Band 286w

Cabom, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 131-3
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 254-5
Transport Bill, Money res (12.02.85) 269-71
Questions
Business statement 1214
National Freight Company, Sheffield 515w
South Africa, Criminal proceedings 465w
South Africa, Nuclear Power 142w
VAT, Newspaper press 1193

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
Education, Expenditure 532w
Educational finance, EC countries 532w

Engineering education, Student numbers 532w
Government assistance to industry, Heywood 454w
Government grants to local authorities, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council 330w
Higher education, Educational finance 532-3w
Higher education, Student numbers 533w
Industry, Bank loans 362w
Primary education, Cost per pupil 533w
Secondary education, Rochdale 533w
Sixth form education 533w
Supplementary benefits 443-4w
Supplementary benefits, Middleton 445w
Teachers, Pay 416w
Youth unemployment 348w

Calling of Members
Speakers rulings & statements (13.02.85) 327, (20.02.85) 1036, (21.02.85) 1216

Cambridge City Council Bill 1984/85 2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Campaign for the Single Homeless 70w

Campbell, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 698

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 763
Oral question time intervention (21.02.85) 1198
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 185
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 568, 571, 573, 589-90, 592, 600, 603, 613, 615, 618-9
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1114
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 657-9, 683
Questions
Advisory Committee on Pesticides 107w
Agricultural land 257w
Business statement 492, 1213
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 722
Community industry scheme, West Cumbria 135-6w
Community programme, Cumbria 185w
European Regional Development Fund 99w
Farm incomes 474
Food imports, Pesticide residues 635-6w
Housing subsidies, Cumbria 174w
Income tax, Tax yields 308w
Industrial development, Northern Ireland 269w
Inflation 561-2w
Job centres, Workington 184w
Location of industry, North West region 230-1w
Methyl isocyanate 136-7w
Paraquat, West Germany 636w
Pesticides 108w, 633-4w
Pesticides, Alachlor 636w
Pesticides, Codes of practice 508-9w
Pesticides, Departmental publications 634-5w
Pesticides, Environment protection 107w
Pesticides, Future 108w
Pesticides, Orders & regulations 107w
Pesticides, Safety 633-4w
Pesticides, School attendance 117-8w
Pesticides safety precautions scheme 266-7w
Redundancy, Workington 247w
Regional aid, North West region 178w
Small businesses 1188
Supplementary benefits, Workington 276w
Tax yields 63-4w
Taxation 288-9w
Temporary short time working compensation scheme 184-5w
Unemployment, Cumbria 135-6w
University Grants Committee 420-1w
Wood preservatives 250w
Wood preservatives, Information 136w
Wood preservatives, Poisoning 136w
Youth training scheme, Allerdale 185w
Youth training scheme, Cumbria 183w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1311, 1313
Questions
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 1189-90
Namibia 466w
Taxation 572w

Cancer
Medical research 350-1w

Canterbury bypass 253-4w

Capital gains tax 63w

Capital investment 155, 566w
Church schools 414w
Infrastructure 1184
Local government expenditure 5, 563w
Manufacturing industries 1184-5
Northern region 572-3w
Sewers 1184

Caravan sites
Gypsies 328-9w

Caravan Sites Act 1968 328-9w, 410, 481-2w, 625w

Cardiff
Heath Hospital 3-4
New College 97w

'Care of the Mother & Baby' 500-1w

Caribbean
Ministers visits abroad 259w, 472-3

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 174
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 186
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 525, 527-9, 530, 558, 580, 604, 605
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 970, 976
Questions
Ambulance services, Finance 80w
Council house sales, Wales 10
Fire services, Local government services 13w
Magis, James 94-5w
Mid Wales Development Board, Finance 5-6
Police, Local government finance 13w
Smart, Ernest Trevor, Social security appeals 393w
Styal Prison, Prison staff 196w
Styal Prison, Young offenders 196w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Agriculture, Environment protection 457w
Capital investment, Manufacturing industries 1184
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 718-9

Carlisle, Rt Hon Mark
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1223
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1315
Questions
Police cautions 426-7w

Carter-Jones, Mr Lewis
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1246, 1269-71, 1293
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 354
Questions
British Airways, Privatisation 405w
Community health councils, Family practitioner committees 73w
Hospital closures, Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital 153-4
Leeward Islands, HS748 aircraft 453w
Limited list prescribing 73w
Nurses, Back pain 74w
Radioactive waste disposal, Greater Manchester 623w
VAT, Building alterations 1190

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 88-90, 91
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 876-8
Questions
Business statement 1209-10
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 856-7
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 99w
Forestry Commission 210w
Israel, Arms trade 1025
Local government finance, Haringey 2
Youth training scheme 29w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 650, 656, 687

Cash limits
Dept of Employment 139w
Dept of Energy 413w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 267w
Scottish Office 213w
Welsh Office 188-9w

Catering
Work permits 428w

Cattle 260w

Cefn Mably Hospital 50w, 227w

Central America 473w, 1030
Peace negotiations 470w

Central Bureau for Educational Visits & Exchanges 117-8w

Central Electricity Generating Board
Coal 237-8w

Centre for Applied Microbiology & Research 161w

Centre for Employment Initiatives 208-9w

Cereal substitutes 377-8w
Imports 377-8w

Cereals
Intervention stocks 435-6w
Weedkillers 580w

Certification quality marks 16w

Chain stores
Planning permission 331w

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (13.02.85) 351-2, 367-8, 372, 384-5, 416-7, (14.02.85) 493, 519, 527, 533, 534-5, 542, 585, 606, (20.02.85) 1084
Committee stage, House of Commons papers (14.02.85) 534
Members interventions (14.02.85) 573, 614, 615
Scope of debate (13.02.85) 351, 370, 383, 415, (14.02.85) 528, 529, 613, (20.02.85) 1081

Chalker, Mrs Lynda, Minister of State for Transport
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1085-6, 1089-90, 1107
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 288-91, 295, 304-7
Questions
A1(M) 369w
A642, Road traffic 369w
Bitumens, Road construction 438w
Bypasses, Tree planting 20w
Chelmsford bypass, Lighting 491w
Chelmsford bypass, Road safety barriers 491w
Cycling, Conferences 492w

Dial-a-ride, Greater London 173w
Driving tests, Administrative delays 437w
Driving tests, Costs 367w
Driving tests, Huddersfield 367w
Driving tests, Waiting lists 367w
Goods vehicles, Axle weights 303-4w
Land acquisition, St Stephens Parish Council 370w
Lorries, Spray suppression 367-9w
Lorry drivers, Driving licences 303w
Moore Lane Bus Station 370w
Motorways 439w
Motorways, Lighting 113w
Motorways, North West region 114w
M20, Expenditure 438w
M25, Land acquisition 439w
M25, Road accidents 24w
M62 113w
National Road Maintenance Condition Survey 114w
Public transport, Government grants to local authorities 370w
Rear seat belts 529w
Road construction, Expenditure 113w
Road construction, Lancashire 113w
Road construction, Local authorities 253w
Road freight transport 23-4w
Road safety barriers 25-6w
Road salting & gritting 491w
Road traffic 23
Road traffic, Bypasses 253-4w
Road Traffic Law Review Committee 303w
Road works, Expenditure 20w
Road & rail transport comparisons 173w
Roads 114w
Roads, Lancashire 114w
Roads, Ports 366w
Safety belts 529-30w
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 491-2w
Speed limits 23w
TRRL Laboratory Report 439w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul, Minister of State for Trade
Questions
British Overseas Trade Board 408w
EC internal trade 361w
EC internal trade, Non-tariff barriers 454w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Arms exports 507w
Export prices, Manufactured exports 508w
Exports 507w
Industrial production 407-8w
Insurance, EC countries 19w
Manufactured imports 15-6w
Motor insurance, EC action 18-9w
Overseas trade, USSR 631w
Productivity, OECD countries 631-2w
Riding hats, Standards enforcement 17w

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
Civil service recruitment 726
Council house sales, Legal costs 536w
Energy Efficiency Office 720-1
Landlord & tenant, Judgments 489w
Mutual & balanced force reductions 475w
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 155w
Soil Survey of England & Wales, Finance 259w

Charities
VAT 1190-1

Charities Bill (HL) 1984/85
2R order read (22.02.85) 1394

Charter Trustees Bill 1984/85
2R* (15.02.85) 703

Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy 489w
Exhibitions 489w

Chatterton Hey 393w
Drug abuse 393w

Chelmsford bypass 491w
Lighting 491w
Road safety barriers 491w

Chemical weapons 527w
Arms control treaties 475w
NATO 141-2w

Child benefit 148w, 587w
Married personal allowance 292w
Taxation 404w

Child care 396w

Child patients
Hospital admissions 76-7w

Child Poverty Action Group 70w, 501w

Child workers 845-6
Industrial accidents 185-6w
West Yorkshire 217w

Children
Exceptional needs payments 154w
Poisoning 162-6w

Children & Young Peoples Benefits Review 275w

Chile
Exports 439w
Human rights 469w

Chope, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1235
Questions
Agricultural subsidies 256w
Citizens band radio, Codes of practice 365w
Citizens band radio, Southampton 366w
Falmouth Shiprepair 629w
Hicks, Margaret, Compensation 30w
Hong Kong, Ferries 625w
House of Commons times of sittings 360w
Matrimonial & Family Proceedings Act 1984 327w
Navy, Defence procurement 51w
Warships, Shipbuilding 625-6w

Christmas bonus 158

Church buildings
Cruise missile sites (13.02.85) 348
RAF Molesworth 433w

Church Commissioners
South Africa 453w

Church schools (20.02.85) 1172-80
Capital investment 414w
Construction 298w
Liverpool 422w
Oxfordshire 298w

Church services
Citizens band radio 16-7w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Questions
Family income 62w
Rateable value, Domestic rates 36w
Rating revaluations 36w
Tax yields, Low pay 63w

Citizens band radio
Church services 16-7w
Codes of practice 365w
Southampton 366w

City of Westminster
Archaeology 36w

Civil Aviation Authority
Crop spraying 438w

Civil defence 345w
Agriculture 107w, 111w
Conferences 107w
Departmental publications 111w
Early warning systems 343-4w
Emergency control centres 95-6w
Health services 149-50
Local authorities 95w
Military exercises 344w
Nuclear war 353-4w
Recruitment 229w
Regional fire advisers 343-5w, 358w
Scotland 358w
Training 619w
Wales 13

Civil servants 526w
Disclosure of information 345w, 726
Industrial disputes 725, 727-8
Official secrets 325-6w
Select committees 509w

Civil servants background
Northern Ireland 449w

Civil service 726-7
Decision taking 351w
Ethnic minorities 197-8w
Ethnic monitoring 198w
Overtime 56-8w
Sex monitoring 728

Civil service manpower 59w
European Communities 273-4w
Health services 386w
Inland Revenue 606w
Social security 386w

Civil service recruitment 726-7
Northern Ireland 180w

Civil service unions 725, 727-8

Clark, Mr Alan, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Child workers, Industrial accidents 185-6w
Coal mining, Yorkshire & Humberside 349w
Dept of Employment, Computers in government departments 348-9w
Employment level 348w
Employment level, Greater Manchester 428-30w
Employment level, Yorkshire & Humberside 349-50w
Employment level by sector, Lancashire 184w
Employment opportunities, South West region 27w
Enterprise allowance scheme 185w
Factory closures, Merseyside 300-1w
Fisheries, Yorkshire & Humberside 349w
Job release scheme, Burnley 28w
Motor industry, Pay 183w
Nurses, Merseyside 137w
Redundancy, Burnley 246w
Redundancy, Greater Manchester 430w
Redundancy, Lancashire 246-7w
Redundancy, Workington 247w
Social security, Sex discrimination 27w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Equal opportunities 138-9w
Temporary short time working compensation scheme 184-5w
Trade union elections, Secret ballot 136w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 137-8w
Unemployment 248w, 348w
Unemployment, Burnley 135w
Unemployment, Cumbria 135-6w
Unemployment, South West region 26-7w
Unemployment, Yorkshire & Humberside 349-50w
Unemployment benefits, Doctors 26w
Vacancies, Lancashire 135w
Work permits, Catering 428w
Youth training scheme, Equal opportunities 138w
Youth unemployment, School leaving certificates 351w

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc
Agricultural & Horticultural Cooperation Scheme 1985 (18.02.85) 832
Questions
Tanker ships, Coastal areas 369w

Clark, Dr Michael
Questions
Far East, Prisoners of war 158w
Milk, Production quotas 258w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 423w

Clark, Sir William
Questions
Capital investment, Infrastructure 1184
Wages councils 1188

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Minister of State for Health
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 66-72
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 678-86
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 952, 973-83, 986, 988
Questions
Abortion 217-8w
Abortion, Administrative delays 156w
Abortion, Hospital discharges 501w
Abortion, Young people 156-8w
Advisory bodies, Dept of Health & Social Security 79-80w
AIDS 498-500w
AIDS, Blood donors 585-6w, 600w
AIDS, Death 71w
AIDS, Health service staff 320w, 388w
AIDS, Medical research 279w
AIDS, Notifiable diseases 71w
AIDS, Screening 600w
Association of Community Health Councils, Finance 388-9w
Baby care units, Waiting lists 445w
Barking Hospital, Industrial disputes 442w
Birth rate, Young people 168-70w
Blood, Factor VIII 446-7w
Blood donors, AIDS 160w
Blood transfusion service, AIDS 155
Clinical trials, Anti-progesterone pills 318w
Committee on Safety of Medicines 445w
Community health councils, Family practitioner committee 73w
Dental students 280-1w
Dental students, Student numbers 397-8w
Dentists, Prescriptions 277w
Dispensing doctors 318-9w
Dispensing doctors, Costs 79w
District health authorities, Expenditure 588-96w
Doctors, Prescriptions 79w
Drug industry, Profits 585w
Drug side effects 215-6w
Drugs, Expenditure 171w
Drugs, Prescriptions 278w
Family doctors 72w, 151w
Family doctors, Prescriptions 168w, 447w, 583-4w
Family doctors, Proprietary drugs 83-4w
Family doctors, Winterton 72w
Haemophilia, AIDS 446w, 498w
Hay fever, Vaccination 386-7w
Health services, Administrative costs 386w
Health services, Homelessness 599w
Health services, Social class 586w
Hospitals, Ophthalmic services 598w
Ketoconazole, Drug side effects 79w
Limited lists prescribing 73w, 151-2w, 216-7w, 276-7w, 319w, 383-4w, 441w, 583w
Limited list prescribing, Drugs 583w
Liverpool Health Authority, Privatisation 166w
Mental Health Act 1983 151w
Mentally handicapped 445w
National Staff Committee for Nurses & Midwives 584w
NHS 153w
NHS, Accounting 598w
NHS, Administrative costs 586w
NHS, Banks 216w
NHS, Expenditure 214-5w, 496w
NHS, Managers 72w, 585w
NHS, Privatisation 281-2w, 319-20w
NHS, Security 446w
NHS administration, Public appointments 160-1, 497w
NHS charges 167w
NHS finance 155-6
NHS finance, East Anglia 584-5w
NHS finance, Nurses 155
NHS finance, Regional health authorities 155w
NHS finance, Teaching hospitals 169-71w
Nurse practitioners 598-9w
Nurses, Back pain 74w
Prescriptions 382w
Prescriptions, Costs 501-2w
Prescriptions, EC countries 382w
Prescriptions, Rural areas 495-6w
Public corporations, Dept of Health & Social Security 172w
Rampton Hospital, Theft 81-2w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 69w
Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre 446w
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital 156w
Sex education 584w
Steroid drugs 69w
Surrogate mothers 155w
Swindon Health Authority, Public appointments 441-2w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 167-8w
Vaccination, Prices 442w
Venereal diseases, Young people 77w
Waltham Forest Health Authority 160-1w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1239
Questions
Business statement 487-8
Council house sales, Scotland 333
Dental charges, Scotland 340
Legal aid, Scotland 574w
Middle East, Arms trade 858, 1024-5

Clay, Mr Bob
Debates etc
Transport Bill, Money res (12.02.85) 273
Questions
Business statement 488
South Africa, Criminal proceedings 465w

Clean Industrial Company 627w

Cleaning services
Ministry of Defence 627-8w

Clinical trials 318w
Anti-progesterone pills 318w

Clothing
Exceptional needs payments 150w
Residential care 161-2w

Clwyd
Unemployment 8

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 41, 50, 51-2
Air force (21.02.85) 1245
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 175
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1035
Questions
Business statement 73, 489
Electricity generation 718
Fishing quotas 632w
Fontainebleau Summit 1033
Housing, Cynon Valley 6
Official secrets, Disclosure of information 346-7w, 432w
Public expenditure, Infrastructure 1183
Unemployment, Wales 11
US National Guard, Military exercises 317w
USA, Armed forces training 317w, 432-3w

Coal
Central Electricity Generating Board 237-8w
Domestic energy consumption 187w
Imports 26w, 719-20

Coal closure areas 99w
Employment opportunities 99w

Coal fired power stations
Northern Ireland 450w
Pollution control 523-4w

Coal firing scheme 354w, 464w
Government grants 464w

Coal generation
Electricity 352w

Coal liquefaction 464-5w

Coal mining 711-4, 720, (19.02.85) 860-5
Apprentices 2w
Industrial disputes 204w, 235w, 254w, 295w, 329-30, 352-3w, 509w, 558w, 603w, 618w, 711-9, 721-2, 856-7, 1186, 1188, 1196-7, 1199-200, 1200-7
Kent 715
Newark 412-3w
Respiratory diseases (20.02.85) 1078-80
Scotland (11.02.85) 36, 329-30
Standing order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 36, (14.02.85) 491
Yorkshire & Humberside 349w

Coal stocks 295w

Coastal areas
Tanker ships 369w

Cockerham, Mr Eric
Questions
Beef premiums 466
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 152-3w
Employment level 1194
Mathematics education 414w
Overseas trade, USSR 631w

Codes of practice
Citizens band radio 365w
Pesticides 508-9w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1054-8, 1067
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1087, 1095
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 889-93, 898, 902, 911-2, 914
Torture, Public petitions (21.02.85) 1321
Questions
Armed forces, Entertainers 285-6w
Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy, Exhibitions 489w
Defence research 141w
Dial-a-ride, Greater London 173w
Diseases, Medical research 161w
Electricity generation, Oil consumption 353w
Exceptional needs payments, Insulation 153w
Immigration appeals, Translation services 91w
Iran, Intimidation 461w
NATO, Chemical weapons 141-2w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 598w
Nutrition & health 257w
Police custody 620w
Prime Minister official engagements 229w
Viruses, Genetic engineering 161w
Waltham Forest Health Authority 160-1w

Colchester bypass 253-4w

Coleman, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Animal Welfare Bill, 1R (19.02.85) 859, 863
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 175-6

Colleges of education
Costs 455w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
Milk, Production quotas 470
School population 852
VAT, Licensed premises 562w

Combined heat & power 186-7w
Expenditure 97-8w
Newcastle upon Tyne 238w

Committee on Enforcement Powers of the Revenue Departments see Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise Review of Enforcement Powers Committee

Committee on Safety of Medicines 445w

Committee stage
House of Commons papers (14.02.85) 534

Common cold
Medical research 350-1w

Common farm prices 66-8w, 255-6w
EC budget 480w
Scotland 241w

Commonwealth 476w, 478w

Communication
British Railways Board 438w
Members facilities 724

Community care
Brent 500w
Lothian 356w

Community health councils
Family practitioner committees 73w

Community industry scheme
West Cumbria 135-6w

Community programme
Allerdale 185w
Cumbria 185w
Training 515w
Women 515w

Companies Acts 19w

Companies political contributions (22.02.85) 1387-9

Companies (Political Donations) Bill 1984/85 (22.02.85) 1387-9

Company law 19w

Compensation
Heath Hospital 46w, 48-9w
Hicks, Margaret 30w

Complaints
Hospitals (22.02.85) 1371-86
Solicitors (12.02.85) 189-91

Complaints against police
Scotland 240w

Composition labelling
Food 260-1w

Compulsorily detained mental patients
Wales 225w

Compulsory purchase
London docklands 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation 624w

Computech
Industrial training schemes 301w

Computer applications
EC internal trade 307w
Passports 725

Computer software (22.02.85) 1332-70

Computer threshold scheme 514-6w

Computer training
Teachers 423w

Computers in government departments
Dept of Employment 348-9w

Computers in schools
Special education 119w

Concannon, Rt Hon J D
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 212-3

Concert halls
VAT 147-8w

Concessionary television licences 622w
Costs 622w

Conditions of employment
Levene, Peter 52w, 186w

Conference centres
UN Economic Commission for Africa 301-2w

Conferences
Civil defence 107w
Cycling 492w

Conlan, Mr Bernard
Debates etc
Control of Political Expenditure Bill, 1R (14.02.85) 492

Consent to medical treatment
Mental patients 187-8w
Wales 187-8w

Constitutions
South Africa 474w

Construction
Church schools 298w
NHS 159-60w
Prisons 10w
Schools 190w
Voluntary schools 190w

Construction costs
British Nuclear Fuels Ltd 431w

"Consultants on the Make" (11.02.85) 34

Consumer protection
Secondhand cars 361w

Consumption
Sugar 65w

Contract cleaning
Ministry of Defence 627-8w

Contracts
Lighthouses 26w

Contracts for services
Regional health authorities 281-2w

Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 123-41

Control of Political Expenditure Bill 1984/85
1R (14.02.85) 492
2R order read (22.02.85) 1391

Conventional war
Falkland Islands (18.02.85) 733-826

Conventional weapons
Defence procurement 505-6w

Conway, Mr Derek
Questions
Milk, Production quotas 379-81w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 28
Unparliamentary expressions (12.02.85) 165
Questions
Business statement 487

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 430-4, 439, 444
Questions
Rate support grants, West Lothian 447w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 213-6
Questions
Armed forces, Heart diseases 285w
Armed forces, Nutrition 285w
British Standards Institution, Upper Waiting Hall 16w
Clinical trials, Anti-progesterone pills 318w
Swindon Health Authority, Public appointments 441-2w

Cope, Mr John, Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household
Debates etc
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 996

Copyright
Audio recordings 408w
Video recordings 408w

Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill 1984/85 2R (22.02.85) 1332-70

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 769
MI5s Official Secrets, Standing Order No 10 applications (21.02.85) 1240-1
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 379, 399 (14.02.85) 519-20, 537
Questions
Interception warrants 511-2w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 948
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1046, 1049-50, 1052, 1056, 1065
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 897, 899-903, 904, 908, 909, 911, 912, 915, 916, 917, 918
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 304-6
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 990
Questions
Central America, Peace negotiations 470w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear fuels 353w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 1021

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Questions
Business statement 484-5
Drugs, Expenditure 171w
Land drainage 468

Corporal punishment
Scotland 9w

Corporate plans
London Docklands Development Corporation 488w
Natural Environment Research Council 222w

Corporation tax
Accounting 291w

Corrie, Mr John
Questions
Committee on Safety of Medicines 445w
Drug abuse, Scotland 460-2w
House renovation grants, Cunninghame 573-4w
Public expenditure, Scotland 448w

Cost per pupil
Primary education 421w, 533w
Secondary education 421w, 425w, 847

Cost per student
Medical education 115w
Teacher training 455w
Universities 6w

Cot deaths 155w

Cottesloe Theatre 14-6

Council house sales 335-41w, 412w
Legal costs 536w
Scotland 332-3
Wales 9, 10

Council housing
Building repairs 427w
Wales 226w, 427w

"Counter benefits" 75-6w

County Hall 723

Cowans, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 78, 87, 92
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 231-3
Questions
Imports 1183
Middle East 475w

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
AIDS, Blood donors 585-6w
India, Political refugees 463w

Co-responsibility levy (20.02.85) 1151-71

Craigen, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Transport Bill, Ways & means res (12.02.85) 280-2, 283
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1120-1, 1124, 1130, 1131, 1139-40, 1142

Questions
Drugs, Hexafluorosilic acid 446w, 587w
Local government mortgages, Scotland 448w
Natural Environment Research Council, Corporate plans 222w
Tourist industry, Scotland 334

Cranborne, Viscount
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 754
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 32-3
Questions
Fontainebleau Summit 1033

Crime prevention
Flats 234w
Publicity 234w

Crimes of violence
Hospital staff 13-4w

Criminal injuries compensation
McQuarrie, IM 14w

Criminal proceedings
South Africa 465-6w

Crofters Commission 335

Crofting
Highlands of Scotland 334

Crop spraying 110w, 357-60w, 438w, 575w, 579w, 615-6w
Civil Aviation Authority 438w

Crops
Nuclear winter 264w

Crouch, Mr David
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 126-8, 135
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1226
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 28
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 653-7
Questions
Business statement 1210

Crowther, Mr Stan
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 193
Questions
Italy, Scrap metal 629-30w
Military aircraft, Training aircraft 433w
Scrap metal, Italy 362-3w
Support for innovation scheme, Yorkshire & Humberside 630w
Tourist industry, EC grants & loans 363w

Croxteth Hall 245w
Liverpool 245w

Cruelty to children 77w
West Midlands 77w

Cruise missile sites (14.02.85) 623-4
Church buildings (13.02.85) 348
Prosecutions 327w

Cruise missiles 433w
NATO 50w

CR6 taxis (18.02.85) 835-40

Culham
Government laboratories 1-2w

Cumbria
Community programme 185w
Housing associations 174w
Housing subsidies 174w
Unemployment 135-6w
Youth training scheme 183w

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Questions
Lebanon 470-1w
Unemployment, Autumn Statement 563-4w

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 112-4
Questions
Block grant 333-4w
Local government finance, Haringey 19-20
Local government reform 309-11w
Peat, Islay 615w
Rate limitation 334w

Cunninghame
House renovation grants 573-4w
Insulation grants 573-4w

Curriculum
Physics 6w
Sex discrimination 119w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 428-30, 433, 438, 442
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 714-5
Industrial development, Garnock valley 615w
Planning inquiries, West Chellaston 411w
University finance 420w

Customs officers
Dartmouth 556w
Manpower 289w
Salcombe 556w
Scotland 292w, 308-9w, 404w

Customs & Excise
Drug seizures 726
Manpower 59w

Customs & Excise Investigation Division 308w

Cycling
Conferences 492w

Cynon Valley 6
Housing 6

Cyprus 203w, 476w, 1018-9

Cystic fibrosis 153-4, 159w
Pendlebury Hospital 159w

C-Poultry Company Limited Bill 1984/85 (21.02.85) 1181
2R Order read (14.02.85) 463

Dairy farming 437w
EC action (20.02.85) 1151-71
Northern Ireland 43w, 105w
Outgoers scheme 259w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1279-82
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 735, 739, 743, 745, 761, 767, 769-74
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1042
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 182
Questions
British Leyland, Bathgate 205w
Chile, Exports 439w
Civil servants, Select committees 509w
Coal fired power stations, Pollution control 523-4w
Falkland Islands, Submarines 318w
General Belgrano 525w
General Belgrano, Fieldhouse, Sir John 164
Jury vetting, Scotland 336-7
Medical Research Council, Finance 221w
Official secrets, Prosecutions 345w
Physics, Curriculum 6w
Sulphur dioxide, Pollution control 524w
Teachers 5w

Dalyell, Tam 629w
Disclosure of information 629w

Dangerous Vessels Bill (HL) 1984/85
2R order read (22.02.85) 1394

Dartmouth
Customs officers 556w
Prime Minister domestic visits 525w

Data banks
Manufactured imports 629w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 750-60

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Acid rain, Research 575w
Agricultural land, Forestry 320-1w
Agriculture 579w
Agriculture, Aircraft 265w
Aluminium, Water supply 588-9w
Ash dieback, Research 575w
Broadcasting, Ethnic minorities 619w
"Broadleaves in Britain" 313-4w, 321-2w, 324w, 357w
Bus substitution services 302-3w
Cefn Mably Hospital 50w, 227w
Cereals, Weedkillers 580w
Civil Aviation Authority, Crop spraying 438w
EC budget 1032
Electricity generation 718
Food, Pesticide residues 588w
Forest protection 314w
Forestry, Scotland 330-1
Forestry Commission, Pesticides 357-60w
Forests, Pesticides 576w
Forests, Speyside 575-6w, 615-6w
Insecticides, Pest resistance 579w
Milk, Production quotas 258w
Ministers correspondence, Costs 254w
National Association of Teachers in Further & Higher Education 415w
Pesticides 265-6w, 517w
Pesticides, Fenitrothion 579w
Pesticides, Safety 579w
Pesticides, Warble fly 587-8w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w
Private education, Wales 49w
Sites of special scientific interest, Pesticides 536w
Tree felling, Licensing 243w, 313w, 617w
Trees, Acid rain 575w
Unemployment, Mid Glamorgan 10
Weedkillers, Pest resistance 580w

Davis, Mr Terry
Questions
Business statement 485
Civil service unions 725
Lowdham Grange youth custody centre 14w
Lowdham Grange youth custody centre, Funerals 236w
Public expenditure 1192
Taxation, Unemployment 1186
Winson Green Prison, Prisoners on remand 14w

Deaconess Hospital 313w

Deakins, Mr Eric
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1045, 1048-9, 1052, 1055-6, 1064, 1069, 1072
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1091, 1094, 1110
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 907, 909-10, 919-25
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 289, 294
Questions
Africa, World Bank 32w, 341w
Arms exports 628w
Barking Hospital, Industrial disputes 442w
British Council, English education 455w
Common farm prices 256w
Defence 141w
EC budget 53-4w, 492w, 1031
EC budget, Own resources 204w
EC budget, UK repayments 148w, 400-1w
Employment level, Pay 26w
European monetary system 290w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Arms exports 507w
Fergusson, Adam 359w
Free school meals 426w
Indirect taxation 570w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 32w
Kenya, Restraint equipment 178w
Motor industry, Pay 516w
NATO, Cruise missiles 50w

NATO, Nuclear weapons 50-1w
NATO, Nuclear weapons policy 140-1w
NHS, Managers 72w
Nuclear non proliferation treaty 604-5w
Nuclear power, Technology transfer 604w
Nuclear test ban 287w
Nuclear weapons tests 142w
Overseas trade, UK membership of EC 360-1w
Personal tax allowances 289-90w
Poverty 68w
Power industry, External financing limits 98w
Sex education 584w
Spain, Extradition 233-4w
Supplementary benefits, Married people 71w
Teacher training, Cost per student 455w
Trade competitiveness 53w
Trident, Expenditure 430-1w
USA, Strategic defence initiative 50w
USSR, Defence expenditure 527w
Women, Injuries 162w
Youth unemployment, School leaving certificates 351w

Death
AIDS 71w
Hospital patients 518-22w
Prisoners 91-2w
Unemployed 397w

Death rate
Nuclear weapons tests 198w

Debts 563w
Interest payments 507w

Decision taking 351w
Civil service 351w

Deer
Scotland 314-5w

Deer (Firearms etc) (Scotland) order 1984 8w, 314-5w

Defamation 227-8w

Defective housing 85w, 226-7w, 411-2w, 485-7w
Building repairs 411-2w
Reema houses 85w

Defence 141w

Defence contracts
MCV80 286-7w
Remotely piloted vehicles 142w, 433w

Defence equipment
Argentina 200w
Eastern Europe 287-8w

Defence expenditure 430-1w
USSR 527w
Weapons 527w

Defence land 315-7w

Defence procurement
Air force (21.02.85) 1242-98
Conventional weapons 505-6w
Eastern Europe 51w
Harrier aircraft 431w
Military vehicles 286-7w
Navy 51w
Public appointments 52w, 198w
Trident 505-6w

Defence research 141w

Demolition
Power stations 517w

Demonstrations
House of Commons galleries 573w

Dental charges
Scotland 340

Dental services
Educational health services 117w

Dental students 280-1w
Northern Ireland 270w
Scotland 244w
Student numbers 397-8w

Dentists
Prescriptions 277w

Departmental coordination
Sex discrimination 100-1w

Departmental correspondence 277w

Departmental publications
Civil defence 111w
Pesticides 634-5w
Post-neonatal mortality 69w
Rent officers 86-7w

Deportation
Syrian Arab Republic 12w, 14-5w, 30-1w, 477w

Dept of Education & Science
Administrative costs 5w
Privatisation 414-5w

Dept of Employment
Cash limits 139w
Computers in government departments 348-9w
Public corporations 517-8w
Sex monitoring 249w

Dept of Energy
Administrative costs 354w
Cash limits 413w
Procurement 352w
Sex monitoring 295w

Dept of Health & Social Security
Administrative costs 214w
Advisory bodies 79-80w
Government information services 386w
Industrial disputes 169w
Information officers 385-6w
Members correspondence 445w
Public corporations 172w
Public relations 385-6w
Sex monitoring 387w
Statistics 82-4w

Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 75-6w
Unemployment benefits 441w

Dept of the Environment
Administrative costs 85w
Sex monitoring 309w

Department of Trade & Industry
Fees & Charges 630-1w
Public corporations 630-1w
Sex monitoring 361w

Dept of Transport
Administrative costs 19-20w
Public corporations 530-2w

Derelict land
West Midlands 535w
Yorkshire & Humberside 332-3w

Design
Taxis (18.02.85) 835-40

Detention centres 196-7w

Development land tax 147w, 1191-2

Development Land Tax Act 1976 147w

Development of Tourism Act 1969 96-7w

Devizes
Magistrates courts 621w
Police custody 621w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Questions
Jury vetting, Scotland 337
Teachers, Scotland 322
Unemployment, Scotland 330

DHSS circular HDC(77)1 149

Dial-a-ride 173w
Greater London 173w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 758
Questions
Scargill, Arthur 1197

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 920-1, 923, 924, 927

Didcot
Local Government Boundary Commission for England 174w

Diets 455w

Diplomatic relations
Guatemala 468w
Nicaragua 468w

Diplomatic service 470w
Costs 479w
Iran 271w
Iraq 271w
Parking offences 193-5w

Direct taxation 564w

Director of Public Prosecutions 432w
Interviews 524w

DIR79/7/EEC 27w

Disaster relief
Ethiopia 99w, 296-7w

Disciplinary proceedings 542w, 620-1w

Disclosure of information
Civil servants 345w, 726
Dalyell, Tam 629w
House of Commons questions 628w
Official secrets 327-8w, 346-7w, 431-2w
Railway accidents 24w
Speakers rulings & statements (11.02.85) 18

Diseases
Medical research 161w

Dismissal
Ministry of Defence 1197

Dispensing doctors 79w, 318-9w
Costs 79w
Scotland 324-6, 356-7w

Distinction awards 69w

Distributive Industries Training Trust 134w

District health authorities
Expenditure 588-6w

District heating 85w

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc
Bus services, Public petitions (13.02.85) 452-3
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 928
Questions
North Eastern Electricity Board, Electricity tariffs 238w
Retirement pensions, Public expenditure 395-6w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill, 2R & rem stages (22.02.85) 1378-81
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1047-8, 1053-4
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1086-8, 1089-90, 1096, 1107-10
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 891, 903-14, 915
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 658-9
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 980
Questions
Advisory bodies, Dept of Health & Social Security 79-80w
Archaeology, City of Westminster 36w
District health authorities, Expenditure 588-96w
Fire services 12-3w
Industrial production 561w
NHS, Privatisation 281-2w, 319-20w
Rent increases, Greater London 86w

Rent officers, Departmental publications 86-7w
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 387-8w
Supra-regional Services Advisory Group 80w
Tranquillisers, Drug abuse 77-8w
Transplant Advisory Panel 80w

Doctors
Drug abuse 620-1w
Prescriptions 79w
Unemployment benefits 26w

Doctor-patient ratios 151w

Domestic energy conservation 330w

Domestic energy consumption
Coal 187w

Domestic rates
Rateable value 36w

Domiciliary Oxygen Service 503w

Dormand, Mr Jack
Questions
Coal firing scheme, Government grants 464w
Coal liquefaction 464-5w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-3
South Africa, Foreign policy 465w

Dorrell, Mr Stephen
Questions
Trade marks 361w

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 178
Coal mining, Standing order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 36
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 798-800
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 25
Questions
Arms control treaties 467w
Business statement 485
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-3, 1205-6
Teachers, Scotland 335-6

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1274-5
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 806-7
Questions
Drug crimes, Scotland 337-8
Harrier aircraft, Defence procurement 431w
International Youth Year 331-2

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Drug abuse, Young people 419w

Drains Bay, Larne 43-4w

Driving licences
Lorry drivers 303w

Driving tests
Administrative delays 437w
Costs 367w
Huddersfield 367w
Waiting lists 367w

Drug abuse 599-600w
Chatterton Hey 393w
Doctors 620-1w
Prescriptions 620w
Prestwich Hospital 159-60w
Scotland 236-8w, 241w, 243-4w, 460-2w
Tranquillisers 77-8w
Young people 419w

Drug crimes
Grampian 339
Lancashire 192-3w
Scotland 337-8, 339-40, 524w

Drug industry
Profits 585w
Wales 2

Drug seizures 59-60w
Customs & Excise 726

Drug side effects 215-6w
Ketoconazole 79w

Drug squads 241w
Scotland 241w

Drugs
Expenditure 171w, 214-5w
Generic prescribing 441w, (21.02.85) 1219-29
Hexafluorosilic acid 446w, 587w
Licensing 441w, 599-600w
Limited list prescribing 583w
Prescriptions 1-3, 73w, 150, 151-2w, 216-7w, 277-8w, 319w, 383-4w, 405w, 460w, 583w
Rural areas 441w
Smuggling 59-60w

Drugs Branch Inspectorate 620w

Drugs licensing 445w

Drugs & crime
Greater London 341-2w

du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Debates etc
Air transport (14.02.85) 625-9

Dublin Summit 481w

Dubs, Mr Alfred
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 917, 927-31
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 360-1 (14.02.85) 543, 594-5, 609-10
Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure) Bill, 1R (12.02.85) 189-91
Questions
Business statement 488-9, 1215-6
Economic policy 294w
Immigration appeals 461w
Iran, Human rights 1026-7
Irish, Passports 89w
Magistrates courts, Devizes 621w
Mentally ill 495-6w
Nicaragua 1196
Police custody, Devizes 621w
Trial in camera 9-10w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1243, 1261-3
Questions
High technology 630w
Industrial development, Yorkshire & Humberside 363w
Public expenditure 1186
South Africa, Trials 466w

Dunn, Mr Bob, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science
Debates etc
St Oswalds School, Accrington (20.02.85) 1174-80
Questions
Advisory Committee on the Supply & Education of Teachers 455-6w
British Council, English education 455w
Burnham Committee 116w
Burnham Committee, Professional Association of Teachers 116-7w
Child workers 845-6
Church schools, Capital investment 414w
Church schools, Liverpool 422w
Church schools, Oxfordshire 298w
Curriculum, Sex discrimination 119w
Drug abuse, Young people 419w
Education, Expenditure 418w, 532w
Education, West Indians 602w
Education & industry 118-9w
Educational health services, Dental services 117w
Educational maintenance allowance, Sutton 126w
Educational standards 841
Educational standards, Ethnic minorities 602w
Free school meals 426w
Grammar schools 421w
Literacy 419w
Mathematics education 414w
Nursery schools 298-9w, 418w
Pesticides, School attendance 117-8w
Physics, Curriculum 6w
Primary education, Cost per pupil 533w
Primary education, Under-fives 190-2w
Religious education, Surrey 350w
School attendance 423w
School closures 6w
School closures, Appeals 422-3w
School closures, Shoggs Head School 351w
School closures, Staffordshire 534w
School leaving certificates 126-9w
School meals 455w
School meals, Costs 189-90w
School meals, Teachers 189w
School population 852
School population, Under-fives 420w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 421w, 425w, 847
Secondary education, Grammar schools 129-31w
Secondary education, Rochdale 533w
Sixth form education 533w
Special education, Computers in schools 119w
Special education, Expenditure 423w
Teacher training, Cost per student 455w
Teacher training, School discipline 192w
Teacher training, Special education 850-1
Teacher training, Student numbers 456w
Teachers, Computer training 423w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 222-3w
Teachers, Secondary education 603w
Voluntary schools, Construction 190w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 871-4, 875, 876, 941
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1047
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1081-4, 1185, 1186, 1090-2, 1097-8, 1101-3
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 291-3
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 199-207, 257
Transport Bill, Ways & means res (12.02.85) 283
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 950
Questions
Railway accidents, Severn tunnel 530w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 76-7, 89, 91, 97
Questions
Business statement 1214
Eastern Europe, Foreign policy 473-4w
Economic situation 565w
Intervention stocks 255-6w
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital 156w
VAT, Newspaper press 1193

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Debates etc
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 31
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 719
Firearms, Scotland 338-9
Unemployment, Scotland 329

Ealing
Government grants to local authorities 282-3w

Ear disorders
Hospital closures (22.02.85) 1331

Early warning systems
Civil defence 343-4w

Earnings rules
Student grants 421w
Unemployment benefits 149-50w

East Anglia
NHS finance 584-5w

East Country Yard 624w

East Dyfed Health Authority 11
Intensive care units 11

East West relations 469w, 471w

Eastern Europe
Defence equipment 287-8w
Defence procurement 51w
EC external trade 436w
Foreign policy 473-4w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Business statement 1214-5
Eastern Europe, Defence equipment 287-8w
Eastern Europe, Defence procurement 51w
Education, Expenditure 418w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 847

EC accession
Horticulture 255w
Portugal 479w, 1028-30
Spain 479w, 1028-30

EC action
Arms trade 481w
Dairy farming (20.02.85) 1151-71
Fertilisers 457w
Gypsies 407w
Motor insurance 18-9w
Non-tariff barriers 361w
Postage stamps 103w
Poverty 481w
Summertime 236w
Wines (14.02.85) 622

EC aid 32w

EC budget 53-4w, 299w, 403-4w, 492w, 558w, 605w, 1031-2
Agriculture 492w
Common farm prices 480w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 479w
European Social Fund 492w
Own resources 204w
UK contributions 571-2w
UK repayments 148w, 400-1w, 1032-3

EC budget contributions 204w, 403w, 571w
VAT 480w

EC Cons Doc 11159/83 (12.02.85) 187, (20.02.85) 1171

EC countries
Agricultural production 582w
Educational finance 532w
Fisheries 261w
Income tax 54-5w
Insurance 19w, 231-2w
National income 54-5w
Prescriptions 382w

EC Draft 9219/83 (12.02.85) 187, (20.02.85) 1171

EC Draft 9691/83 67-8w

EC Draft 11039/84 (12.02.85) 187, (20.02.85) 1171

EC Draft 11388/84 (14.02.85) 622

EC Draft 4096/84 (14.02.85) 622

EC Draft 9182/84 (14.02.85) 622

EC Draft 4421/85/1 (20.02.85) 1151-71

EC Draft 4421/85/2 (20.02.85) 1151-71

EC Draft 4421/85/3 (20.02.85) 1151-71

EC external relations 1030

EC external trade
Agricultural products 581w
Eastern Europe 436w
USSR 436w

EC Finance Council 291w

EC Foreign Affairs Council 480w, 538w
EC budget 479w
Integrated Mediterranean programmes 481w
Own resources 480w

EC grants & loans 582w
Horses 378w
Strathclyde 243w, 577-8w
Tourist industry 363w, 408-9w

EC internal trade 361w, 1030-1
Computer applications 307w
Non-tariff barriers 454w
VAT 291w

EC law
Water supply 312w

Economic growth 558w, 560w, 1187

Economic models 56w
Exchange rates 55-6w

Economic policy 294w
USA 854-6

Economic situation 565w, 568w

Education
Expenditure 418w, 532w
Local government expenditure 422w
West Indians 602w

"Education for Unemployed Adults" 191w

Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups Committee of Inquiry 602w

Education & industry 118-9w

Education (School Budgets) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (15.02.85) 703, (22.02.85) 1394-5

Educational administration 321

Educational finance 851-2
EC countries 532w
Greater Manchester 534w
Higher education 532-3w
Leicestershire 425w
Rotherham Borough Council 118w
Scotland 132-4w

Educational health services
Dental services 117w

Educational maintenance allowance
Sutton 126w

Educational standards 841
Ethnic minorities 602w
Teachers 417w, 425w

Edwards, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for Wales
Debates etc
Heath Hospital, Ministerial statements (12.02.85) 169-76
Speaker, Members correspondence (11.02.85) 18
Questions
Assisted areas, Wales 45w
"Broadleaves in Britain" 324w
Cash limits, Welsh Office 188-9w
Cefn Mably hospital 50w, 227w
Civil defence, Wales 13
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 46w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85, Welsh Office 518w
Farm capital grant scheme, Wales 97w
Heath Hospital, Cardiff 3-4
Heath Hospital, Compensation 46w
IDC Company 382w
Iron & steel industry, Wales 8
Local government expenditure, Wales 5
Local government revenue, Wales 6
Mid Wales Development Board, Finance 5-6
Milk, Wales 46-7w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse, Wales 12
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse, Welsh Office 12-3
Public appointments, Welsh Office 48w
Regional aid, Wales 8-9
Regional development grants, Wales 381w
Skillcentres, Wales 11
Unemployment, Mid Glamorgan 10
Unemployment, Swansea 12
Unemployment, Wales 8-9, 11, 13
Welsh Plant Breeding Station 46w

Eggar, Mr Tim
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 874-6
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 230-1
Questions
Civil service, Decision taking 351w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1201
Economic growth 558w
NHS 153w
Public corporations, Dept of Employment 517-8w
Public corporations, Dept of Health & Social Security 172w
Public corporations, Dept of Trade & Industry 630-1w
Public corporations, Dept of Transport 530-2w
Public corporations, Home Office 510-2w
Public corporations, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food 112w
Public corporations, Ministry of Defence 528w
Sizewell Inquiry 353w
Teachers appraisal 848

Eggs Authority 636w

Eggs Authority Review 636w

El Salvador
Armed forces training 302w
Foreign policy 204w

Elderly
Heating allowances 156-7
NHS finance 155-6w
Nursing homes 153w
Scotland 205w, 324, 326

Electoral law (13.02.85) 351-424, (14.02.85) 493-622

Electricity
Coal generation 352w

Electricity area boards
Finance 355w

Electricity consumption 353w
Scotland 213w

Electricity Council 148-9w

Electricity generation 718
Nuclear power 718-9
Oil consumption 353w
Scotland 212w

Electricity supply industry
Financial targets 564-5w

Electricity tariffs 1-2w, 464w, (14.02.85) 491
North Eastern Electricity Board 238w

Elstow
Radioactive waste disposal 410w

Embassies
Terrorism 467-8w

Emergency Committees 175w
North West region 175w
Scotland 212w

Emergency control centres 95-6w, 513w
Civil defence 95-6w
Wales 513w

Emery Air Freight 370w

Emphysema (Compensation of Coalminers) Bill 1984/85
1R (20.02.85) 1078-80

Employers contributions
National insurance 1185

Employers statutory sick pay scheme 152-3w

Employment
Pay 493w

Employment level 348w, 1194
Greater Manchester 428-30w
Pay 26w, 55-6w, 201-2w
Yorkshire & Humberside 349-50w

Employment level by sector
Lancashire 184w

Employment of Young People Bill 1984/85
1R (13.02.85) 349-50

Employment opportunities
Coal closure areas 99w
Enterprise zones 174w
Income tax 569-70w
Northern Ireland 376w
Pay 516w, 559w, 565-6w, 569w
Scotland 328-9
South West region 27w

Employment schemes 182-3w
Costs 248-9w

Empty housing
Public sector housing 309w

Energy conservation
NHS 394-5w

Energy consumption 238w

Energy Efficiency Office 720-1

Energy research
Expenditure 97-8w

Enforcement Powers of the Revenue Departments Committee see Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise Review of Enforcement Powers Committee

Engineering education
Student numbers 532w

Engineers
Graduates 416w

English education
British Council 455w

Enterprise allowance scheme 185w

Enterprise zones
Employment opportunities 174w

Entertainers
Armed forces 285-6w

Environment protection
Agriculture 258w, 457w, 467-8
Pesticides 107w

Environment Select Committee 258w

"Environment Select Committee on Wildlife & Countryside Act" 258w

Environmental corps (13.02.85) 349-50

Equal opportunities
Technical & vocational education initiative 138-9w
Training 138w
Women 137-40w
Youth training scheme 138w

Equal Opportunities Commission
Government grants 93-4w

Equal opportunities officers 140w
House of Commons 140w

Equal Opportunities Unit 449w

Essendon
Prime Minister domestic visits 405w

Ethiopia 472w
Disaster relief 99w, 296-7w
International assistance 297-8w
Overseas aid 603-4w
Refugees 346w

Ethnic minorities
Broadcasting 619w
Civil service 197-8w
Educational standards 602w

Ethnic monitoring 197-8w
Civil service 198w

EURATOM 355-6w

European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund 582w
Expenditure 66-8w

European Assembly candidates
Nationality 619-20w

European Communities 480-1w
Civil service manpower 273-4w
Expenditure 54w
Finance 480w
Ministerial policy advisers 359w

European Convention on Human Rights 93w

European Council 480-1w
Voting methods 1027-8

European currency unit 492w, 570w, 581-2w
Exchange rates 570w

European Economic Community 203w

European monetary system 290w, 561w, 1188-9

European Regional Development Fund 99w

European Security Conference 29w, 271-3w, 472-3w

European Social Fund
EC budget 492w
Textile industry 28-9w
Young people 28w

European Space Agency
UK contributions 414w

European unit of account 492w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1221
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1239
Questions
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 564w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Electricity tariffs 464w
Local government services, Privatisation 283-4
MCV80, Defence contracts 286-7w
Taxation, Appeals 289w
Youth training scheme 183w, 347w

Evidence
Witnesses 342w

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1228
Oral questions, Scottish Office (13.02.85) 342
Teachers, Scotland (11.02.85) 145
Questions
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 323-4

Exceptional needs payments (13.02.85) 454-62, (18.02.85) 731-2
Beds 157w
Children 154w
Clothing 150w
Heating allowances 76w, 159-60, 389-93w
Industrial disputes 150-1w
Insulation 153w
Social security abuse 78-9w
Supplementary benefits 150-1w, 153-4w, 157w

Exchange rates 101w, 559-60w, 569w, 854-6
Economic models 55-6w
European currency unit 570w
Oil revenues 290w, 307w

Exercise Autumn Forge 51w

Exercise Brave Defender 14w, 51w

Exercise Fandango 344w

Exercise Reforger 432-3w

Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 4w, 13w, 35w, 46w, 51w, 86w, 114w, 199w, 344w, 513w, 518w
Wales 513w
Welsh Office 518w

Exhibitions
Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy 489w
Greater London Council 193w
Police 193w

Explosives
Testing 342w

Export Credits Guarantee Department
Arms exports 507w

Export prices 508w
Manufactured exports 508w

Export rebates
Meat 262-3w

Exports 507w
Agricultural products 632-4w
Chile 439w
Petroleum 238-9w
Sheep meat 581w

External financing limits
British Steel Corporation 231w
Nationalised industries 1187
Power industry 98w

Extradition 463w
Spain 11w, 29w, 233-4w

Factor VIII 446-7w, 585-6w
Blood 446-7w

Factories
Hazardous materials 133w

Factory closures
Liverpool (18.02.85) 730
Merseyside 300-1w
Rowntree Mackintosh 1192

Fair Employment Agency
Northern Ireland 371w

Fairbairn, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 56-8
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1138-9
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 952, 954, 956, 957, 963-4, 965, 966-8, 973, 974, 980, 991, 1002-3, 1005
Questions
Jury vetting, Scotland 337
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 325-6
Road signs, Scotland 334

Falkland Islands
Conventional war (18.02.85) 733-826
Expenditure 526w
Submarines 318w
Territorial waters 475w

Fallon, Mr Michael
Questions
Capital investment, Northern region 572-3w

Falmouth Shiprepair 629w

"Families Rent Apart" 501w

Family doctors 72w, 151w
Expenditure 501-2w
Medical certificates 81w
Prescriptions 168w, 447w, 583-4w
Proprietary drugs 83-4w
Winterton 72w

Family income 62w, 403w

Family practitioner committees
Community health councils 73w

Far East
Prisoners of war 158w

Farm buildings
Nuclear war 264w

Farm capital grant scheme 97w, 242w, 257w
Scotland 242w
Wales 97w

Farm incomes 260w, 474
Statistics 473-4

Farm wardens 110-1w

Farmers
Border security in Ireland 181-2w
Government grants 3w
Health hazards 587-8w
Loans 618w
Northern Ireland 182w, 618w

Farr, Sir John

Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 363, 370, 382-3, 397-8, 409, 414, 416, 417-8, (14.02.85) 506, 513, 515
Questions
Beef premiums 467
Cattle 260w
Falkland Islands, Territorial waters 475w
Firearms 90-1w
Maternity hospitals 159w
Trident 164
VAT, Footwear 557w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Companies political contributions (22.02.85) 1387-9
Companies (Political Donations) Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1387-9
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 93-6, 97, 99
Questions
Child workers 845-6
Child workers, Industrial accidents 185-6w
Child workers, West Yorkshire 217w
EC budget contributions, VAT 480w
Exceptional needs payments, Industrial disputes 150-1w
Heating allowances, Elderly 157
Investment 566w
Local government expenditure, Metropolitan counties 536-8w
Local government reform 176w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Business questions intervention (21.02.85) 1212
Questions
Exchange rates, Oil revenues 290w, 307w
Museums & Galleries Commission, Public appointments 102w
Nostell Priory 202-3w
Oil prices, British National Oil Corporation 413w
Petroleum, Imports 238-9w
Petroleum, Production 239w

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 107
Questions
Family doctors 151w
Literacy 419w
Teacher training, Special education 850

Fees & Charges
Dept of Trade & Industry 630-1w
Local government services 335w
Public order policing 509w
Salmon 447w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory 530-2w

Felixstowe Dock & Railway Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Felling licences 131w, 313w
Forestry Commission 131w

Fenitrothion
Forests 575-6w, 615-6w
Pesticides 579w

Fenner, Mrs Peggy, *Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Questions
Advisory Committee on Pesticides 107-8w
Agricultural land 257w
Agricultural research 260w
Agriculture, Aircraft 265w
Agriculture, Civil defence 107w, 111w
Agriculture, Environment protection 258w
Caribbean, Ministers visits abroad 259w
Civil defence, Departmental publications 111w
Crops, Nuclear winter 264w
Environment Select Committee on Wildlife & Countryside Act 258w
Farm buildings, Nuclear war 264w
Farm wardens 110-1w
Fertilisers, EC action 457w
Food, Composition labelling 260-1w
Food consumption 463-4
Food stocks, Wars 265w
Food supply, Wars 264-5w
"Home Defence & the Farmer" 106-7w, 111w
Horticulture, EC accession 255w
Land drainage 467-8
Land drainage, Government grants 259w
Livestock, Wars 265w
Netherlands, Glasshouse growers 260w
Nutrition & health 257w
Pesticides 108w, 110w, 265-6w
Pesticides, Environment protection 107w
Pesticides, Future 108w
Pesticides, Orders & regulations 107w
Pesticides, Safety 108w
Pesticides, Safety measures 435-6w
Pesticides safety precautions scheme 266-7w
Sheep scab 256-7w
Smallholdings, Local authorities 468-9

Fergusson, Adam 30w, 359w
Ministerial policy advisors 30w

Ferries
Hong Kong 625w

Fertilisers
EC action 457w

Fertility (15.02.85) 637-702

Field, Mr Frank
Questions
Factory closures, Merseyside 300-1w
South Africa 304w
South Africa, Church Commissioners 453w

Fieldhouse, Sir John
General Belgrano 164

Fields, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Liverpool (21.02.85) 1323-6
Questions
El Salvador, Armed forces training 302w
Fire escapes, Multiple occupation 296w
Fontainebleau Summit 480w
Local Government Practices & Procedure Inquiry 311w

Financial services 306w

Financial targets
Electricity supply industry 564-5w
Gas supply industry 564-5w
Water authorities 482-4w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc
Open questions (21.02.85) 1218
Questions
Arts finance, Arts Council 450w
Gypsies, Hampstead Heath 10w
Motorways 439w
Parliamentary papers, Members facilities 724
Teachers, Pay 1192

Fire escapes 235w, 296w
Multiple occupation 235w, 296w

Fire services 12-3w
Local government services 13w

Firearms 90-1w
Scotland 338-9

Fires
Multiple occupation 236w

Fish conservation
Scotland 240w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (12.02.85) 152, 153
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 185
Questions
Limited list prescribing 150
Oil revenues, North Seal oil 1192
Open University, Expenditure 421w
Public libraries, Finance 17
Teachers, Pay 845

Fisheries
EC countries 261w
Yorkshire & Humberside 349w

Fishing catches
Salmon 458w

Fishing quotas 632w

Fishing vessels
Submarines 140w

£5 notes 493w

Fixed penalties
Scotland 524-5

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 41-2, 53
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 138
Oral question time point of order (14.02.85) 480
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1312-5
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1235
Wheelchairs (19.02.85) 1009-11
Questions
Business statement 4485-6
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 558w
Employment level, Yorkshire & Humberside 349-50w
Pacific Islands 474w
Prime Minister official engagements 229w
Teachers, Pay 415-6w, 843
Wheelchairs, Prescriptions 160w

Flats 226-7w
Crime prevention 234w
Northern Ireland 375w

Fletcher, Mr Alex, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Questions
Company law 19w
Debts, Interest payments 507w
Insurance, EC countries 231-2w
Isle of Man Steam Packet Company 231w
South Africa 304w

Fluoridation
Scotland 448w
Water supply (19.02.85) 949-1008

Fontainebleau Summit 148w, 480w, 1033

Food
Composition labelling 260-1w
Marketing 256w
Nutrition labelling 458-9w
Pesticide residues 588w
Production 263-4w

Food aid
Sudan 346w

Food aid from EC
Sudan 346w

Food consumption 463-4

Food from Britain (18.02.85) 827-34

Food imports 263w
Pesticide residues 635-6w

Food Manufacturers Federation 264w

Food stocks
Wars 265w

Food supply
Wars 264-5w

Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL) 1984/85 107-8w, 263w, 436w

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 715
National Theatre, Arts finance 15
Regional aid, Wales 8-9

Footwear
VAT 557w

Foreign policy
Eastern Europe 473-4w
El Salvador 204w
Lebanon 203-4w
South Africa 465-6w
Spain 1021-2
Sudan 472w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Government purchasing 605w
Overtime 29w
Sex monitoring 301w
Temporary staff 30w

Forest protection 314w

Forestry 240w, 357w
Agricultural land 320-1w
Scotland 330-1

Forestry Commission 210w
Acid rain 575w
Felling licences 131w
Pesticides 357-60w

Forests
Fenitrothion 575-6w, 615-6w
Pesticides 576w
Speyside 575-6w, 615-6w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Questions
European Security Conference 472-3w
Investment 566w
Public sector borrowing requirement 1182

Forrester, Mr John
Questions
School closures, Staffordshire 534w

Forsyth, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1142
Questions
Cash limits, Scottish Office 213w
Crofters Commission 335
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 325
Medical research 120w
Medical research, Mental illness 119-20w
Medical research, Nervous system disorders 120w
Medical research, Schizophrenia 120w
NHS, Accounting 598w
Student unions 115w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Bus services, Northern Ireland 505w

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1055
Oral questions, Scottish Office (13.02.85) 342
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 357, 360, 369-70, 403-5, 408, (14.02.85) 494, 507-9, 518, 535, 538, 549 551-3, 556, 608
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1233
Questions
Council house sales, Scotland 333
Family doctors, Prescriptions 583-4w
Farm incomes, Statistics 474
Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise review of Enforcement Powers Committee 494w
Spain, EC accession 1029

Foster, Mr Derek
Questions
Relationship between Employment & Wages 565w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (14.02.85) 477
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 183
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 344-5
Teachers, Scotland (11.02.85) 147
Questions
Argentina, Defence equipment 200w
Belize, Overseas aid 4w
Common farm prices 66-8w
EC aid 32w
European Communities, Civil service manpower 273-4w
European Communities, Expenditure 54w
Fergusson, Adam, Ministerial policy advisors 30w
Guatemala, Military aid 4w
HMS Conqueror, Log books 287w
Nursing homes, Elderly 153w
St Lucia, Metropolitan Police 235w
Stanley, John 230w
Teachers, Pay 206w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Social Services*
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing, Ministerial statements (21.02.85) 1219-29
Questions
Administrative costs, Dept of Health & Social Security 214w
Christmas bonus 158
Dept of Health & Social Security, Industrial disputes 169w
Government information services, Dept of Health & Social Security 386w
Health services, Civil service manpower 386w
Homeopathy 151
Information officers, Dept of Health & Social Security 385-6w
Limited list prescribing 150-3
Limited list prescribing, Pharmacists 152
Sex monitoring, Dept of Health & Social Security 387w
Social security reviews 157-9
Social security reviews, Budget March 1985 158-9
Supplementary Benefit Review 157-8

Fox, Mr Marcus
Questions
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 856

France
Passports 270w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Questions
NHS, Construction 159-60w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment)Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1092
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 926
Questions
Drugs & crime, Greater London 341-2w
Local authorities, Public Health Acts 341w
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 462-3w
Skillcentres 428w
Unemployment 348w

Fraser, Mr Peter, *Solicitor-General for Scotland*
Questions
Drug crimes, Grampian 339
Drug crimes, Scotland 337-40, 524w
Firearms, Scotland 338-9
Fixed penalties, Scotland 524-5
Jury vetting, Scotland 336-7
Matrimonial property, Scotland 337
Owen, Steven, Police custody 315w
Prosecutions, Scotland 204w
Trespass, Scotland 338
Warrant sales, Scotland 205w

Fraud
Shipping (12.02.85) 314-22

Free school meals 426w
Costs 102w

Freeman, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 633
Questions
Armed forces recruitment 527w
British Railways Board, Communication 438w
Debts, Interest payments 507w
EC budget 1031
Ethiopia, Overseas aid 603-4w
Exchange rates 855-6
Government securities, Pension funds 291w
NHS, Banks 216w
Schools, Construction 190w

Freeson, Rt Hon Reg
Questions
Syrian Arab Republic, Deportation 12w, 14-5w, 31w

Freshwater fishing 447w

Freud, Mr Clement
Questions
Advisory Committee on the Supply & Education of Teachers 455-6w
Armed forces civilians, Teachers 528-9w
Further education 121-2w
Land drainage, Government grants 259w
Medical students, Student grants 420w
National Theatre, Arts finance 14
School closures, Shoggs Head School 351w
Teacher training, Student numbers 456w
Teachers, Pay 842-3
VAT, Books 7w

Fringe benefits
Tax yields 571w

Fry, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 207-12, 258, 260
Transport Bill, Ways & means res (12.02.85) 284

Funerals
Lowdham Grange youth custody centre 236w

Further education 121-2w
Youth training scheme 516w

Fusion reactors
Research 1-2w

Future
Gas consumption 98w, 523w
Pesticides 108w

"Future for the Inverclyde Training Centre" 208-9w

FX4 taxis (18.02.85) 835-40

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Youth Unit 424w

Galley, Mr Roy
Questions
Cot deaths 155w
Hospitals, Ophthalmic services 598w
Limited list prescribing, Pharmacists 152
Oxford University 849

Gaming (Bingo) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (22.02.85) 1394

Garel-Jones, Mr Tristan, *a Lord Commissioner*
Debates etc
Transport Bill, Ways & means res (12.02.85) 283

Garnock valley
Industrial development 615w

Garrett, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 128-30, 134

Gas consumption
Future 98w, 523w

Gas reserves 523w
Natural gas 98w

Gas supply industry
Financial targets 564-5w

Gas tariffs 1w

Gateway House Hotel 529w

General Belgrano 161-4, 476-9, 525w, 597w
(18.02.85) 733-826
Fieldhouse, Sir John 164

General Legal Council (12.02.85) 189-91

General Teaching Council 422w

Generic prescribing 152
Drugs 441w, (21.02.85) 1219-29

Genetic engineering
Viruses 161w

Geriatric patients
Hospital beds 278w
Northern Ireland 373-4w
Nursing homes 278w
Scotland 209-11w

Gibraltar 478w, 1021-2

Gifts & endowments
Universities 221w

Glasgow
Social security appeals 280w
Unemployment 210w

Glasgow District Council 577-8w

Glasgow University 141w

Glasshouse growers
Netherlands 260w, 464-5

Glengarnock Steelworks 615w

Glenrothes
Regional development grants 573w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 764
Questions
Business statement 1213
Limited list prescribing 384w

Goats milk 65-6w
Orders & regulations 65-6w
Production 66w

Godden, Stephen Anthony 240w
Police custody 240w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 71
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 127, 134, 139
Oral question time, point of order (13.02.85) 335
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 655
Questions
Drug crimes, Scotland 339-40, 524w
Kilroot Power Station 450w
Land use, Highlands & Islands Development Board 335
Skillcentres, Inverclyde 208-9w
Small claims 10w

Golding, Mr John
Debates etc
Re-Acquisition of Public Assets Bill, 1R (14.02.85) 492
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 955, 958, 959, 967, 970-2, 979, 984, 988-96, 1001, 1004, 1006-7

Goodlad, Mr Alastair, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Ministerial statements (11.02.85) 30-3
Questions
Coal, Central Electricity Generating Board 237-8w
Coal fired power stations, Pollution control 523-4w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 719
Electricity, Coal generation 352w
Electricity area boards, Finance 355w
Electricity consumption 353w
Electricity generation 718
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 718-9
Electricity generation, Oil consumption 353w
Electricity tariffs 2w, 464w
Government laboratories, Culham 1-2w
North Eastern Electricity Board, Electricity tariffs 238w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 353-4w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear fuels 353w
Nuclear power stations, Safety 355w
Nuclear safeguards 353w
Nuclear safeguards, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd 355-6w
Sizewell Inquiry 353w
Sulphur dioxide, Pollution control 524w

Goods vehicles
Axle weights 303-4w

Gorst, Mr John
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 178

Gosport Borough Council Bill 1984/85
2R* (14.02.85) 463

Gould, Mr Bryan
Questions
British Overseas Trade Board 408w
Exchange rates 559-60w
Export prices, Manufactured exports 508w
Industrial production 407-8w

Government Actuary 563-4w

Government assistance to industry 177-8w
Heywood 454w
Microelectronics industry 18w
Northern Ireland 270w, 376w
Short Brothers 269w
Small businesses 179w, 232-4w
Textile industry 454-5w

Government Communications Headquarters
Resignations 605w

Government contracts
Welsh Office 382w

Government departments
Nationalised industries 112w, 172w
Overtime 56-8w

Government grants
Agriculture (18.02.85) 827-34
Coal firing scheme 464w
Equal Opportunities Commission 93-4w
Farmers 3w
Hill farming 300w
Land drainage 259w
Wales 597w

Government grants to local authorities 334-5w
Buses 370w
Ealing 282-3w
Greater Manchester 406w
Housing insulation 311w
Public transport 370w
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council 330w

Government information services
Dept of Health & Social Security 386w

Government laboratories
Culham 1-2w

"Government Purchasing" 605w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 605w

Government securities
Pension funds 291w

Gow, Mr Ian, *Minister for Housing and Construction*
Questions
Building regulations, Handicapped 35w
Council house sales 412w
Housing courts 87w
Housing Defects Act 1984 411-2w
Landlord & tenant, Judgments 489w
Portable accommodation, Northern Ireland 173-4w
Prefabricated housing, Building repairs 485w
Prefabricated housing, Building societies 485w
Prefabricated housing, Local government expenditure 486-7w
Reema houses, Defective housing 85w
Ronan Point 409-10w
Water supply, EC law 312w

Gower, Sir Raymond
Debates etc
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 173
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 961, 963
Questions
AIDS, Notifiable diseases 71w
AIDS, Scotland 7w
AIDS, Wales 14
Blood, Wales 47w
Limited list prescribing 2

Graduates
Engineers 416w
Scientists 416w

Grammar schools 421w
Secondary education 129-31w

Grampian
Drug crimes 339

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 796-8
Questions
Civil Servants, Disclosure of information 726
Iran, Human rights 1027

Greater London
Acute beds 68-9w
Dial-a-ride 173w
Drugs & crime 341-2w
Hospital beds 68-9w
Local government expenditure 537w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 618-9w
Offices 622-3w
Public transport (12.02.85) 290-312, (19.02.85) 866-945 (20.02.85) 1081-113
Rent increases 86w
Safety belts 513w

Greater London Council 366w
Exhibitions 193w
Local government reform 623w
Local government staff 482w
Manpower 329-30w
Property transfer 487w
Transport subsidies (12.02.85) 290-312, 366w (19.02.85) 866-945, (20.02.85) 1081-113

Greater London Council (General Powers) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Greater Manchester
Educational finance 534w
Employment level 428-30w
Government grants to local authorities 406w
Public expenditure 406w
Radioactive waste disposal 623w
Redundancy 430w

Green pound 581-2w

Greenbelt 370w
West Midlands 482w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 41
Human embryo experiments, Medical research (15.02.85) 634-5
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 915-9
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1238
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 647
Questions
Business statement 485
Certification quality marks 16w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 538w
Electricity consumption 353w
Exceptional needs payments, Clothing 150w
Government grants to local authorities, Ealing 282-3w

Juries, Political affiliations 326-7w
Lebanon, Peace keeping operations 471w
National Theatre, Arts finance 16
Oxford University 221w
Oxford University, Student numbers 222w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 229w, 406w, 526w
Riding hats, Standards enforcement 17w
Universities, gifts & endowments 221w
University finance 846
VAT, Riding hats 557w
Voluntary schools, Construction 190w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 504-7, 587-8, 592-3, 602-3, 605
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 243-5
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 715
Hospital beds, Wales 518-20w
Pay beds, Wales 521-2w
Prime Minister domestic visits, York 228w
Private hospitals, Wales 519-22w
Railway freight transport 254w

Greiss test 14w, 342w

Griffiths Inquiry see NHS Management Inquiry

Griffiths, Mr Eldon
Questions
Bypasses, Tree planting 20w
Public sector employment, Propaganda 186w
Road & rail transport comparisons 173w
Spain, Extradition 11w, 29w
Sugar, Consumption 65w

Griffiths, Mr Peter
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1059-60

Grist, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 688
Questions
Smoking, Wales 4-5
Unemployment, Wales 9

Grocery trade 364w

Group of eight 402w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Questions
Limited list prescribing 277w

Guatemala
Arms trade 1021-2
Diplomatic relations 468w
Human rights 1017
Military aid 4w

Guillotine
Local government (11.02.85) 73-122

Guiness Company
Standing Order No 10 applications (18.02.85) 730

Gypsies 481-2w
Caravan sites 328-9w
EC action 407w
Hampstead Heath 10w
Local government expenditure 410w

Haemophilia
AIDS 446w, 498w

Hall Russell 629w

Hamilton, Mr James
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1237
Questions
Building industry, Scotland 322-3
Severe weather payments 160
Unemployment, Strathclyde 1194

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 635-6
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1203
Housing improvement 333w
Lead, Air pollution 535-6w
Lead free petrol 536w
Milk, Production quotas 255w
Opencast mining, Licensing 352w
Public expenditure, Infrastructure 1183-4
State earnings related pension scheme 395w
Student unions, Ultra vires payments 350w

Hamilton, Mr Willie W
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 58-60
Business statement (12.02.85) 178
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 817
Limited list prescribing, calling of Members (13.02.85) 326-7
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 345
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 670-2
Questions
Capital investment, Manufacturing industries 1185
Caribbean, Ministers visits abroad 472-3
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 352w, 717, 1203-4
Falkland Islands, Expenditure 526w
Limited list prescribing 150-1, 152w
Prescriptions, Scotland 208w
Regional development grants, Glenrothes 573w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1247
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 756, 803
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 81, 85, 96, 98, 102-4
Questions
Teachers appraisal 849

Hampstead Heath 10w
Gypsies 10w

Hancock, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 634
Questions
Blood, Factor VIII 446-7w
Haemophilia, AIDS 446w, 498w
Medical education, Cost per student 115w
Ministry of Defence, Security 506w
Naval bases, Portsmouth 506w
Teachers, Pay 416w
Unemployment benefits, Doctors 26w

Handicapped (19.02.85) 1009-16
Access to buildings 35w
Building regulations 35w
Lothian 356w

Handicapped children
Special education 223-5w

Handicapped students
Wales 225-6w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 871

Hannam, Mr John
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 351-4, 358, 367
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 32
Questions
Coal, Imports 719
National Theatre, Arts finance 15
VAT, Building alterations 1190

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 129, 139
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 977-8, 983-4, 992, 1000-2
Questions
Asbestos, South Yorkshire 41w
Educational finance, Rotherham Borough Council 118w
Farm incomes 474
Forestry, Scotland 330-1
Gas consumption, Future 98w
Heating allowances, Elderly 156
Natural gas 98w
Natural gas, Gas reserves 98w
Natural gas, Production costs 98w
Nuclear power stations, Safety 355w
Oil recovery 354w
Pesticides, Industrial health & safety 429w
Pesticides, Safety measures 430w, 435-6w
Pesticides, Training 430w
Rate limitation, Land reclamation 333w
Slums, Yorkshire & Humberside 332w
Smallholdings, Local authorities 469
Student loans 853
Teachers 417w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 411w

Harefield Hospital 77w

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Debates etc
St Oswalds School, Accrington (20.02.85) 1172-4
Questions
House of Commons galleries, Demonstrations 573w
National Heritage Memorial Fund 534-5w
Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, Burglary 513-4w

Haringey
Local government finance 19-21
Rate limitation 19-21

Harman, Ms Harriet
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 55, 72
Questions
Equal Opportunities Commission, Government grants 93-4w
Geriatric patients, Hospital beds 278w
Geriatric patients, Nursing homes 278w
Intelligence services, MI5 1194-5
Nursing homes, Private sector 278w
Residential care, Clothing 161-2w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 94w, 237w

Harrier aircraft 431w
Defence procurement 431w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 591

Harrogate Stray Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Questions
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 460w
Sudan, Foreign policy 472w

Harvey, Mr Robert
Questions
Sheep scab 256-7w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Questions
Peas, Agricultural production 470
Teachers, Computer training 423w
Teachers, Pay 844

Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael, *Attorney-General*
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive, Ministerial statements (12.02.85) 180-7
Questions
Administration of Justice Bill (HL) 1984/85 524w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 603w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Interviews 524w
Gypsies, Hampstead Heath 10w
Judges, Public appointments 228w
Juries, Political affiliations 326-7w

Legal aid 227-8w
Matrimonial & Family Proceedings Act 1984 327w
Official secrets 325w
Official secrets, Prosecutions 325-6w, 603w
Ponting, Clive, Prosecutions 327-8w
Ponting, Clive, Trials 603w
Prosecutions 326w
RAF Greenham Common, Legal aid 327w
Small claims 10w
Trial in camera 9-10w

Hawkins, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 437
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 198
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 982, 1001, 1003

Hay fever
Vaccination 386-7w

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1051
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 613
Questions
Taxation, Unemployment 563w

Hayhoe, Mr Barney, *Minister of State for the Treasury*
Questions
Administrative costs, Treasury 56w
Alcoholic drinks duties 562w
Betting & gaming duties, Newspaper press 565w
Budget 557w
Civil servants, Disclosure of information 726
Civil servants, Select Committees 509w
Civil service 726-7
Civil service, Decision taking 351w
Civil service, Ethnic minorities 197-8w
Civil service, Ethnic monitoring 198w
Civil service manpower 59w
Civil service recruitment 726-7
Civil service unions 725, 727-8
Customs officers, Dartmouth 556w
Customs officers, Manpower 289w
Customs officers, Scotland 292w, 308-9w, 404w
Customs & Excise, Drug seizures 726
Customs & Excise, Manpower 59w
Customs & Excise Investigation Division 308w
Drug seizures 59-60w
Drugs, Smuggling 59-60w
EC budget 558w
EC internal trade, Computer applications 307w
Employment opportunities, Pay 559w
HMSO 147w
Indirect taxation 570w
Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise Review of Enforcement Powers Committee 145w
Overtime, Civil service 56-8w
Sex monitoring, Civil service 728
Tax yields, Motor vehicles 147w, 202w
VAT, Books 7w, 308w, 557w
VAT, Building alterations 572w, 1190-1
VAT, Business premises 306w
VAT, Charities 1190-1
VAT, EC internal trade 291w
VAT, Footwear 557w
VAT, Licensed premises 562w
VAT, Newspaper press 557w, 1193
VAT, Riding hats 557w
VAT, Tax collection 200w
VAT, Theatres 147-8w
VAT registration, Administrative delays 493w
VAT repayment, Housing construction 401-2w
Women, Equal opportunities 139-40w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 345-6
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 953-5, 959
Questions
EC external relations 1030
Land drainage 467-8
Lebanon, Foreign policy 203-4w
Territorial Army, Security 315w

Hayward, Mr Rob
Debates etc
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 32
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1205

Hazardous materials (11.02.85) 123-41
Factories 133w

House of Commons Equal Opportunities Officer 140w

Head injuries 76-7w

Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1034
Questions
EC budget, UK repayments 1032-3
Cyprus 1019
Middle East, Arms trade 1026

Health hazards
Farmers 587-8w

Health service staff
AIDS 320w, 388w

Health services
Administrative costs 386w
Civil defence 149-50
Civil service manpower 386w
Homelessness 599w
Scotland 209w
Social class 586w
Women 167-8w

Hearing aids 442w

Heart Beat Wales 597w

Heart diseases
Armed forces 285w
Transplant surgery 77w

Heath Hospital 46w, 48-9w
Cardiff 3-4
Compensation 46w, 48-9w
Ministerial statements (12.02.85) 169-76

Heating
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 502w

Heating allowances 156, 157-8w, 279w, (13.02.85) 454-62, 854, 855
Elderly 156-7
Exceptional needs payments 76w, 159-60, 389-93w
Supplementary benefits 217w

Heddle, Mr John
Questions
Building regulations, Handicapped 35w
Council house sales 412w
Development land tax 147w, 1191-2
Domestic energy conservation 330w
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 563w
Money supply, Local government mortgages 433-4w
School attendance 423w
Truancy 852

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 738
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 184
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 346
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 497

Helicopters
Air force 50w

Henderson, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Teachers, Scotland (11.02.85) 146
Questions
Average earnings, Scotland 207w
Coal mining, Scotland 329-30
Educational administration 321
NHS, Expenditure 496w
NHS, Scotland 459w
Teachers, Scotland 336

Herion
Smuggling 289w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, *Secretary of State for Defence*
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 177
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 733-50, 751, 759, 763-4, 765, 771, 792, 810
Questions
Falkland Islands, Submarines 318w
Military bands, Road accidents 167-8
Ministry of Defence, Security 506w
Official secrets, Disclosure of information 431-2w
RAF Molesworth, Church buildings 433w
South Atlantic Campaign memorial 527w

Hexafluorosilic acid 446w, 587w
Drugs 446w, 587w

Heywood
Government assistance to industry 454w

Hickmet, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1265
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 753
Questions
British Steel Corporation, External financing limits 231w
Dispensing doctors 318-9w
Family doctors, prescription 447w
Family doctors, Winterton 72w
Local government expenditure 1187
Turkey, Overseas trade 1020

Hicks, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1236
Questions
A38, Road works 173w
Limited list prescribing 152w
Milk, Production quotas 475
VAT, Books 557w

Hicks, Margaret 30w
Compensation 30w

Higgins, Mr Terence
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 205
Questions
USA, Economic policy 854

High Energy Particle Physics Review Group 115-6w

High rise flats
Safety 409-10w

High technology 411w, 630w
Industrial development 411w
Support for innovation scheme 630w

Higher education 424w
Age participation rates 405w
Educational finance 532-3w
Student numbers 424w, 426w, 533w

Highlands of Scotland
Crofting 334

Highlands & Islands Development Board
Land use 335

Hill, Mr James
Questions
Customs officers, Manpower 289w
France, Passports 270w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 619w
Reema houses, Defective housing 85w
Taxation, Shipping 559w
Waste disposal, Seas & oceans 263w
Western European Union 471w

Hill farming
Government grants 300w

Hill livestock allowances 64w, 261-2w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Higher education, Student numbers 426w

Hirst, Mr Michael
Questions
Prime Minister domestic visits, West Balgrochan 525w

HMS Conqueror 235w, 287w, 525w
Log books 235w, 287w

HMS Fearless 529w

HMS Intrepid 529w

HMS Spartan 318w

HMS Splendid 318w

HMS Starling
Log books 51-2w

HMS Victory 506w

HMSO 147w

Hogg, Mr Douglas
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 182
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 498, 499, 502, 503, 553
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 697-8
Questions
Business statement 1215
Prosecutions, Yorkshire & Humberside 235w

Holidays
Prime Minister 346w
Urban programme 486w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Questions
Medical research, Cancer 350-1w

Hollis, Irene 81-2w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1050, 1053
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1236
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 987
Questions
Business statement 485, 1212-3
Urban programme, Finance 624w

"Home Defence & the Farmer" 106-7w, 111w

Home helps 214w
Costs 274-5w
Northern Ireland 372-4w, 503w
Research 274-5w
Training 214w

Home Office
Members correspondence 12w
Public corporations 510-2w
Sex monitoring 295-6w

Home road 487w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1154-8
Oral questions, Scottish Office (13.02.85) 341
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 184, 186
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 397
Questions
Agriculture, Civil defence 111w
Bureaux de change 178w
Civil defence, Departmental publications 111w
Common farm prices, EC budget 480w
Farm wardens 110-1w
"Home Defence & the Farmer" 111w
Interest rates 558w
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 325
Milk, Production quotas 472
Owen, Steven, Police custody 315w
Prescriptions, Scotland 208w
Smallholdings, Local authorities 469

Homelessness
Health services 599w
Wales 227-8w

Homeopathy 151

Homicide
Prisoners 96w

Honeywell Information Systems 348-9w

Hong Kong
Ferries 625w

Hordern, Mr Peter
Questions
Capital gains tax 63w
VAT, Business premises 306w

Horses
EC grants & loans 378w

Horticulture
EC accession 255w

Hospital admissions
Child patients 76-7w
Scotland 207w

Hospital ancillary staff 442w

Hospital bed occupancy rates 374w, 518-22w

Hospital beds
Geriatric patients 278w
Greater London 68-9w
Wales 518-20w

Hospital closures
Ear disorders (22.02.85) 1331
Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital 153-4
Scotland 313w
Wrightington Hospital 153

Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill 1984/85
2R & rem stages (22.02.85) 1371-86

Hospital consultants
Standing Order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 34

Hospital discharges 171-2w, 501w, 518-22w
Abortion 501w
Mental patients 171-2w

Hospital patients
Death 518-22w
Housing benefits 385w
Medical treatments 166w

Hospital staff
Crimes of violence 13-4w

Hospital waiting lists 280w
West Midlands 167w

Hospitals
Complaints (22.02.85) 1371-86
Costs 495w
Ophthalmic services 598w
Wales (12.02.85) 169-76

Hostels
Mental patients 171-2w
Prisoners release 13w

Hotel & catering industry 428w

House of Commons
Equal opportunities officers 140w

House of Commons accommodation 723

House of Commons debates
Orders & regulations 723
Speakers rulings & statements (18.02.85) 733

House of Commons galleries
Demonstrations 573w
Speakers rulings & statements (15.02.85) 641

House of Commons motions
Speakers rulings & statements (12.02.85) 260

House of Commons papers
Committee stage (14.02.85) 534

House of Commons procedure
Public bills (20.02.85) 1037-77

House of Commons questions
Disclosure of information 628w
Procedure Select Committee 597w
Speakers rulings & statements (12.02.85) 166, (18.02.85) 729

House of Commons select committees
Speakers rulings & statements (18.02.85) 798-9

House of Commons staff
Pay 250-3w
Trade union membership 253w

House of Commons times of sittings 360w

House purchase 486-7w

House renovation grants
Cunninghame 573-4w
Leicester City Council 331w
Scotland 133w

Housing
Cynon Valley 6
Planning permission 328w
Single people 328w
Wales 6-7

Housing Acts 341w
Local authorities 341w

Housing associations
Cumbria 174w
Scotland 206w

Housing benefits 275w
Administrative costs 275w
Hospital patients 385w
Local government staff 384-5w
Owner occupied housing 501w
Pensioners 74-5w
Social security benefits rules (13.02.85) 425-51
Young people 501w

Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 425-51

Housing construction
VAT repayment 401-2w

Housing courts 87w

Housing Defects Act 1984 85w, 411-2w

Housing improvement 333w

Housing insulation 330w
Government grants to local authorities 311w
North Devon District Council 283w

Housing investment programmes 175w

Housing starts 485-6w
Leicester City Council 411w
Wales 188w, 226w

Housing stock
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 617w

Housing subsidies
Cumbria 174w
Scotland 206w

Housing & handicapped
Wales 187w

Howarth, Mr Alan
Questions
General Teaching Council 422w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 843
VAT, Charities 1190

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1245, 1278, 1283-6
Business statement (19.02.85) 948
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 110
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 1005-6
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 352w, 1205
Limited list prescribing 152w
Potatoes, Production quotas 470
Student unions 222w
Taxation, Unemployment 557w, Corrigendum 640w

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Agricultural products, Exports 632-4w
Cereal substitutes, Imports 377-8w
Housing benefits, Local government staff 384-5w
Income tax 398-400w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 305-6w
Income tax, Tax yields 494w, 570w
National income 52-3w
National income, EC countries 54-5w
NHS, Security 446w
Public sector employment, Per capita costs 2-4w
Social security, Expenditure 562w
Tax yields, Income tax 288w

Howell, Mr Geraint
Questions
Agricultural research 260w
Potato Marketing Board 470
Welsh Plant Breeding Station 46w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Terrorism, Embassies 467-8w

HS748 aircraft 453w
Leeward Islands 453w

Huddersfield
Driving tests 367w

Hughes, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 179
Questions
Land drainage 468
Lupins, Agricultural production 470
Netherlands, Glasshouse growers 465

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1224
Questions
Exchange rates 559w
Namibia 466w
Oxford University 850
Private health insurance, Advertising 8w
Regional planning & development, Scotland 209w
Teachers, Scotland 322
Textile industry, Government assistance to industry 454-5w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Transport Bill, Money res (12.02.85) 267-8
Questions
EC budget, European Social Fund 492w
Housing, Wales 6-7
Limited list prescribing 3
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 491-2w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 149w
Teachers, Pay 842
Unemployment, Wales 13

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Exceptional needs payments, Children 154w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 946
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (12.02.85) 310
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 85
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1063
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1093-6, 1101, 1103-5, 1107
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 867
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 291, 297-300
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 567, 568, 574, 577, 592, 595-7
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 651
Questions
Chile, Human rights 469w
Sex discrimination, Local authorities 87w
Sex discrimination, Treaties 440w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 87w, 144w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985, UK delegations 440w
Urban programme, Holidays 486w

Human embryo experiments (12.02.85) 310, (13.02.85) 452, (14.02.85) 623, (15.02.85) 633-4, 634-5, 635-6, 637-702, (21.02.85) 1322
Medical research (15.02.85) 634-5
Public petitions (12.02.85) 310, (13.02.85) 452, (14.02.85) 623, (15.02.85) 633-4, 635-6, (21.02.85) 1322

Human rights
Chile 469w
Guatemala 1017
International conferences 93w
Iran 469w, 1026-7
Namibia 469w
Northern Ireland 555-6w
South Africa 469w
Sudan 204w
Turkey 469w, 1019-20
Uganda 203w
USSR 1022-4

Hume, Mr John
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1315-6
Questions
Body searches, Northern Ireland 539-41w
Farmers, Northern Ireland 618w
Power, Thomas 503-4w
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 542w

Hunt, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
Coal, Domestic energy consumption 187w
Coal, Imports 719-20
Coal firing scheme 354w
Coal firing scheme, Government grants 464w
Coal liquefaction 464-5w
Coal mining 720
Coal mining, Apprentices 2w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 721-2
Coal stocks 295w
Combined heat & power 186-7w
Combined heat & power, Expenditure 97-8w
Combined heat & power, Newcastle upon Tyne 238w
Insulation grants 722
Opencast mining, Licensing 352w
Severn barrage 1w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1352-5
Questions
EC internal trade 361w
EC internal trade, Computer applications 307w
EC internal trade, Non-tariff barriers 454w
Fish conservation, Scotland 240w
Industrial production 1189
Monetary compensatory amounts 456w
Netherlands, Agricultural subsidies 465
Salmon, Fees & charges 447w
School closures, Appeals 422-3w
Special education, Handicapped children 223-5w
Trout, Scotland 239w
VAT, EC internal trade 291w
Veterinary investigation centres 378-80w, 457w
Veterinary investigation centres, Finance 322-4w
Veterinary investigation centres, Manpower 323w

Hunterston A
Power stations 615w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, *Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Border security in Ireland 181w
Human rights, Northern Ireland 555-6w
Ministers domestic visits, Northern Ireland 180w
Sinn Fein, Northern Ireland government 617-8w

Hypothermia
Scotland 240-1w

IDC Company 382w

Immigrants 14w

Immigration appeals 461w
Translation services 91w

Immigration applications
Indian subcontinent 96w, 604w
Sierra Leone 143w

Imports 1183
Agricultural products 581w
Cereal substitutes 377-8w
Coal 26w, 719-20
New Zealand 261w
Petroleum 238-9w

Income
Pensioners 75w
Privatisation 564w

Income tax 52-3w, 398-400w, 434w
Administrative costs 202w
EC countries 54-5w
Employment opportunities 569-70w
Tax rates & bands 305-6w
Tax yields 288w, 308w, 494w, 570w

Income tax on investment incomes 402w

India
Political refugees 463w

Indian subcontinent
Immigration applications 96w, 604w

Indirect taxation 564w, 570w

Industrial accidents
Child workers 185-6w
Presses 245-6w

Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate 405-6w

Industrial building allowances 561w

Industrial development
Garnock valley 615w
High technology 411w
Northern Ireland 269w
Yorkshire & Humberside 363w

Industrial diseases benefits (20.02.85) 1078-80

Industrial disputes 711-4
Barking Hospital 442w
Civil servants 725, 727-8
Coal mining 204w, 235w, 254w, 295w, 329-30, 352-3w, 509w, 558w, 603w, 618w, 711-9, 721-2, 856-7, 1186, 1188, 1196-7, 1199-1207
Dept of Health & Social Security 169w
Exceptional needs payments 150-1w
Teachers 118w, 163-4, 222-3w, 420w, 843-5

Industrial health & safety (11.02.85) 123-41
Pesticides 429w

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council 601w

Industrial investment 565w
Manufacturing industries 365-6w

Industrial production 407-8w, 561w, 1189

Industrial training schemes 182-3w
Computech 301w
Young people 514-6w

Industry
Bank loans 362w
Sugar 257w

Inequalities in Health Between Social Classes Working Group 586w

Inflation 101w, 561-2w
Minimum lending rate 494w
Tax rates & bands 308w

Information
Pesticides 107w
Regional health authorities 218w
Wood preservatives 136w

Information technology 364-5w
Dept of Health & Social Security 385-6w

Infrastructure 1183
Capital investment 1184
Public expenditure 1183-4
Scotland 323

Injuries
Women 162w

Inland Revenue
Civil service manpower 606w
Power failures 402w

Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise Review of Enforcement Powers Committee 145w, 494w, 562w

Inner city areas (21.02.85) 1323-30
Urban programme 86w

Inner London Education Authority
Rate limitation 624w

Inquiries
Railway accidents 24w

Insecticides
Pest resistance 579w

Insulation
Exceptional needs payments 153w
Manufacturing industries 721
VAT 721

Insulation grants 311-2w, 722
Cunninghame 573-4w
Leicestershire 484-5w
Scotland 313w
Welwyn Hatfield District Council 484w

Insurance
EC countries 19w, 231-2w

Insurance (Fees) Bill 1984/85 (18.02.85) 732

Integrated farming 457w

Integrated Mediterranean programmes 481w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 481w

Intelligence services
MI5 1194-5

Intensive care units
East Dyfed Health Authority 11

Interception of Communications Bill 1984/85
1R (14.02.85) 492

Interception warrants 511-2w

Interest payments 507w
Debts 507w

Interest rates 558w, 1188-9

International assistance
Ethiopia 297-8w

International conferences
Human rights 93w

International cooperation
Terrorism 467w, 537w

International Fund for Agricultural Development 32w

International Youth Year 331-2

Interpretation Act 1978
Orders & regulations 333w

Intervention prices
Wheat 261w

Intervention stocks 255-6w
Cereals 435-6w

Interviews
Director of Public Prosecutions 524w

Inter-Action 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation 488w

Intimidation
Iran 461w

Inverclyde
Skillcentres 208-9w

Investment 566w

Investment income
Married people 292w

Investment income surcharge 148w

Ionizing radiation
Research 101w

IRA 857-8

Iran
Bahai sect 478-9w
Diplomatic service 271w
Human rights 469w, 1026-7
Intimidation 461w
Overseas students 421w
Overseas trade 362w, 1027

Iran-Iraq war
Merchant seamen 490w

Iraq
Armed forces training 506w
British embassies 271w
Diplomatic service 271w

Irish
Passports 89w

Irish Sea 140w

Iron & steel industry
Wales 8

Islay
Peat 615w

Isle of Man Steam Packet Company 231w, (15.02.85) 704-10

Isle of Wight
Prison staff 233w

Israeli
Arms embargoes 1025
Arms trade 1025

Italy
Scrap metal 362-3w, 629-30w

Jackson, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 638, 676-8
Questions
Farm incomes, Statistics 473-4
Local Government Boundary Commission for England, Didcot 174w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Business statement 486
Civil service, Ethnic minorities 197-8w
Civil service, Ethnic monitoring 198w
Commonwealth 478w
Educational finance, Leicestershire 425w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 296w
Sex monitoring, Civil service 728
Sex monitoring, Dept of Employment 249w
Sex monitoring, Dept of Energy 295w
Sex monitoring, Dept of Health & Social Security 387w
Sex monitoring, Dept of the Environment 309w
Sex monitoring, Dept of Trade & Industry 361w
Sex monitoring, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 301w
Sex monitoring, Home Office 295-6w
Sex monitoring, Northern Ireland Office 449w
Sex monitoring, Scottish Office 447-8w

Jellicoe Committee see Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976 Review

Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick, Secretary of State for the Environment
Questions
Administrative costs, Dept of the Environment 85w
Block grant 333-4w
Local government finance, Haringey 19-21
Local government reform 309-11w
Local government services, Privatisation 283-4w
Ministers domestic visits, Merseyside 41w
Orders & regulations, Interpretation Act 1978 333w
Rate limitation 334w
Sex discrimination, Local authorities 87w
Sex monitoring, Dept of the Environment 309w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 87w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 636
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 912-3, 918, 929, 931-2
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 1003
Questions
Church schools, Capital investment 414w
National Theatre, Arts finance 14-5

Jews
USSR 1023-4

Job centres 184w
Bideford 27w
Workington 184w

Job release scheme
Burnley 28w

Job security 417w
University teachers 417w

John, Mr Brynmor
Debates etc
Agricultural & Horticultural Cooperation Scheme 1985 (18.02.85) 829-31, 832
Questions
Advisory Committee on Pesticides 108w
Agricultural subsidies 467
Agriculture, Nature conservation 67-8w
Farm incomes 474
Pesticides 110w
Pesticides, Safety 108w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Pirate radio stations 362w

Johnston, Mr Russell
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (13.02.85) 452
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 551, 553, 555, 564, 566, 581-3
Questions
Iran, Overseas trade 1027
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 325
UN Relief & Works Agency 476w

Joint tenancies (13.02.85) 425-51

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 171-2
Questions
Flats 226-7w
Heath Hospital, Cardiff 4
Homelessness, Wales 227-8w
New College, Cardiff 97w
River Dee, Water pollution 7
Skillcentres, Wales 11
Unemployment, Wales 8

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Debates etc
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 174
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 960, 971-3, 1004

Questions
Council house sales, Wales 10
Heath Hospital, Cardiff 4
Heath Hospital, Compensation 46w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 205-6, 226-8
Questions
Audio recordings, Copyright 408w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael, *Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1151-4, 1155
Questions
Agricultural subsidies 637-8w
Agricultural subsidies, Expenditure 323-4w
Agriculture 579w
Agriculture, Environment protection 457w
Agriculture, Nature conservation 67-8w, 636w
Animal husbandry, Norfolk Broads 435w
Bananas 473
Caribbean, Ministers visits abroad 472-3
Cash limits, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 267w
Common farm prices 255-6w
Eggs Authority Review 636w
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund 582w
Farm capital grant scheme 257w
Goats milk, Orders & regulations 65-6w
Goats milk, Production 66w
Milk, Northern Ireland 471
Milk, Production 254w
Milk, Production quotas 254-5w, 258-9w, 379-81w, 457w, 470-2, 475, 578w
Netherlands, Agricultural subsidies 465
Netherlands, Glasshouse growers 464-5w
Privatisation, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 257w
Public corporations, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 112w
Soil Survey of England & Wales, Finance 259w
Veterinary investigation centres 378-80w, 457w
Veterinary investigation centres, Finance 322-4w
Veterinary investigation centres, Manpower 323w

Jordan
Prime Minister visits abroad 405w

Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith, *Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Administrative costs, Dept of Education & Science 5w
Antarctic, Research 601w
Education, Expenditure 418w
Education, Local government expenditure 422w
Educational finance 851-2
Educational finance, EC countries 532w
Educational finance, Greater Manchester 534w
Educational finance, Leicestershire 425w
Educational finance, Rotherham Borough Council 118w
Further education 121-2w
General Teaching Council 422w
Graduates, Scientists 416w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 413w, 423w
Privatisation, Dept of Education & Science 414w
Schools, Construction 190w
Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) on New Technologies 5w
Special education, Handicapped children 223-5w
Teachers 417w, 849
Teachers, Educational standards 417w, 425w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 118w, 420w, 843-5
Teachers, Pay 116-7w, 415-6w, 842-5, 848
Teachers appraisal 848-9
Truancy 852
University finance 6-7w, 122-6w

Journalists
Prime Minister 228w

Judges
Public appointments 228w

Judgments
Landlord & tenant 489w

Juries
Political affiliations 326-7w

Jury vetting
Scotland 336-7

Kampuchea 31w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 748, 807-14
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 372-4, 381-2, 387, 390, (14.02.85) 511-2, 514, 515-7, 536-8, 585, 603-4
Questions
Prosecutions 326w

"Keep warm this Winter" 240-1w

Keith Committee see Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise Review of Enforcement Powers Committee

Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 574, 579, 586, 593, 603
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 218-20, 253
Transport Bill, Money res (12.02.85) 273
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 642
Questions
Milk, Production 254w

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1227
Questions
Deer, Scotland 314-5w
Deer (Firearms Etc) (Scotland) Order 1984 8w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 75-6w
Health services, Scotland 209w
Housing benefits, Pensioners 74-5w
Limited list prescribing 152
Oil industry, Land drilling 354w
Pensioners, Income 75w
Whisky, Scotland 329

Kent
Coal mining 715

Kent University 141w

Kenya
Restraint equipment 178w

Kerr, Patrick 857-8

Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Questions
Business statement 1209

Ketoconazole
Drug side effects 79w

Key, Mr Robert
Questions
Civil service manpower 59w
Electricity area boards, Finance 355w
Electricity tariffs 2w
Overtime, Civil service 56-8w
Overtime, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 29w
Peas, Agricultural production 469
Rate support grant penalties, Road salting & gritting 334w
Road salting & gritting 334-5w
Sewage, Recycling 35w
Speed limits 23w
Temporary staff, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 30w

Key Housing Association 394w
Members correspondence 394w

Kidney machines 393-4w

Kidney patients 155w, 582-3w
Attendance allowance 582-3w
Medical treatments 155w

Kilfedder, Mr James
Questions
Flats, Northern Ireland 375w
Rented housing, Northern Ireland 375w

Kilroot Power Station 450w

Kilroy-Silk, Mr Robert
Questions
Prerogative of mercy 11w
Prisoners, Death 91-2w
Prisoners, Homicide 96w
Prisoners, Suicide 11w, 92-4w
Prisons, Ministers domestic visits 88w
Prisons, Young offenders 88-90w

Kings Bay 199w
Costs 199w

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 507
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 202
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1204
School population, Under-fives 420w

King, Rt Hon Tom, *Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Skillcentres, Ministerial statements (21.02.85) 1230-9
Questions
Cash limits, Dept of Employment 139w

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 177
Members, Unparliamentary expressions (12.02.85) 188
Questions
Business statement 481-2, 1208-9
Exchange rates 854-5
General Belgrano 161-3, 476-8
Taxation, Pensions 1197-8

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 425-8, 446
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1133, 1140-1
Questions
Beef premiums 259-60w
Forestry, Scotland 331
Limited list prescribing 441w
Lorry drivers, Driving licences 303w
Medical Research Council, Research finance 418-9w
Official Secrets Act 1911 475-6
Prescriptions, Rural areas 495-6w
Public sector borrowing requirement 561w
Salmon 458w
Salmon, Fishing catches 458w
Salmon, Scotland 458-9w
Sheep premiums 466-7
Supplementary Benefit Review 157-8
Teachers, Scotland 100w
Tourism 577w
Tourism, Scotland 333, 576-7w
Water supply, EC law 312w

Knights of St Columbanus 371w

Knight, Mr Greg
Questions
Birmingham General Hospital, Surgery 278-9w

Knight, Mrs Jill
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 633
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1223-4

Questions
Limited list prescribing 151
Surrogate mothers 155w

Knowles, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 247-9
Questions
National insurance benefits, Voluntary service overseas 215w

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 352w
Council house sales, Scotland 332
Council house sales, Wales 9
Economic growth 560w
European Communities 481w
Milk, Production quotas 259w
Rear seat belts 529w
Resettlement units 387w, 443-4w, 496w, 583w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 847

Labour costs
Productivity 434w

Lambie, Mr David
Questions
Scottish Special Housing Association, Rent increases 207w

Lamond, Mr James
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1051-2
Open questions (21.02.85) 1218
Questions
Business statement 1213-4
Cyprus 1018
European Security Conference 472-3w
Unemployment 1191

Lamont, Mr Norman, Minister of State for Trade and Industry
Questions
British Leyland 232w
British Leyland, Privatisation 232w
British Steel Corporation, External financing limits 231w
Hall Russell 629w
Textile industry, Government assistance to industry 454-5w

Lancashire 32-3w
Drug crimes 192-3w
Employment level by sector 184w
Redundancy 246-7w
Road construction 113w
Roads 114w
Vacancies 135w

Land acquisition
London Docklands Development Corporation 488w
M25 439w
St Stephens Parish Council 370w

Land drainage 467-8
Government grants 259w

Land drilling
Oil industry 354w

Land reclamation
Rate limitation 333w

Land use
Highlands & Islands Development Board 335

Landlord & tenant
Judgments 489w

Langley Road 487w

Larne
Sewage 43-4w

Lassa fever 161w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1034
Questions
Arms control treaties 855
Cereals, Intervention stocks 435-6w
European Security Conference 472-3w
Insulation grants, Leicestershire 484-5w
Iran, Diplomatic service 271w
Iraq, British embassies 271w
Iraq, Diplomatic service 271w
Israel, Arms embargoes 1025
Jordan, Prime Minister visits abroad 405w
Limited list prescribing 73w, 216-7w
Middle East, Overseas trade 362w
Minimum lending rate 560w
Mutual & balanced force reductions 440w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 12w
Peoples Europe Committee, UK delegations 103w
Postage stamps, EC action 103w
Syrian Arab Republic, British embassies 271w
Syrian Arab Republic, Deportation 15w, 30w, 477w
Syrian Arab Republic, Overseas trade 362w
Teachers, Pay 416w
Terrorism, International cooperation 537w

Law of the Sea
Treaties 359w

Law of the Sea Convention 359w

Law Society (12.02.85) 189-91

Lawler, Mr Geoff
Questions
Youth training scheme, Costs 489w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 956-60 961, 966, 975, 976, 981-2, 989, 995
Questions
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 425w
USSR, Human rights 1024

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
Building industry 402w
Capital investment, Manufacturing industries 1184-5
EC budget contributions 403w
EC Finance Council 291w
Industrial production 1189
Inland Revenue & Customs & Excise review of Enforcement Powers Committee 494w
Interest rates 558w
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 1189-90
Medium term financial strategy 1181-2
National insurance surcharge 1182
Public sector borrowing requirement 1182
"Relationship between Employment & Wages" 566w
Taxation, Unemployment 557w, Corrigendum 640w

Layfield Committee see Local Government Finance Inquiry

Lead
Air pollution 535-6w

Lead free petrol 536w

Lead pollution 86w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 209, 216-8, 253, 255

Lebanon 470-1w
Foreign policy 203-4w
Peace keeping operations 471w

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1292-8
Questions
Armed forces, Entertainers 285-6w
Armed forces, Heart diseases 285w
Armed forces, Nutrition 285w
Armed forces cadets, Training 529w
Armed forces civilians, Teachers 528-9w
Armed forces deployment, Pirate radio stations 285w
Armed forces recruitment 527w
Arms exports 628w
British Nuclear Fuels Ltd, Construction costs 431w
Defence expenditure, Weapons 527w
Defence land 315-7w
Defence research 141w
Harrier aircraft, Defence procurement 431w
HMS Fearless 529w
Hong Kong, Ferries 625w
Iraq, Armed forces training 506w
Military aircraft, Training aircraft 433w, 506w
Ministry of Defence, Cleaning services 627-8w
Ministry of Defence, Contract cleaning 627-8w
Ministry of Defence, Student grants 626w
NAAFI, Ascension Island 626w
Naval bases, Portsmouth 506w
Navy, Defence procurement 51w
Public corporations, Ministry of Defence 528w
RAF Brize Norton, Armed forces catering services 529w
RAF Molesworth 626w
Remotely piloted vehicles, Defence contracts 433w
Sri Lanka, Armed forces training 286w
Sri Lanka, Arms trade 142w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 140w
Territorial Army, Alert signs 431w
Territorial Army, Security 315w
Trident, Costs 625w
Trident, Defence procurement 505-6w
Warships, Shipbuilding 625-6w

Lee High Road 487w

Leeds City Council 510w
Pay 510w

Leeward Islands
HS748 aircraft 453w

Leeward Islands Air Transport 453w

Legal aid 227-8w
RAF Greenham Common 327w
Scotland 574w

Legal costs
Council house sales 536w

Leicester
Public order policing 234w

Leicester City Council 331w
House renovation grants 331w
Housing starts 411w

Leicestershire
Educational finance 425w
Insulation grants 484-5w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 40-5, 47
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 194
Questions
Inflation 561w
Picketing 618w
Picketing, Arrests 509w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 229w, 406w, 526w
Public expenditure, Wales 52w
Student unions 425w
Trade union elections, Secret ballot 136w
Wheat, Intervention prices 261w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Questions
Baby care units, Waiting lists 445w
Spain, EC accession 1029

Leisure facilities
Local government expenditure 333-4

Levene, Peter 52w, 186w, 198w
Conditions of employment 52w, 186w
Pensions 198w

Lewis, Sir Kenneth

Forestry Commission 210w
Forestry Commission, Felling licences 131w
Forestry Commission, Pesticides 357-60w
Forests, Pesticides 576w
Forests, Speyside 575-6w, 615-6w
Health services, Scotland 209w
Hospital admissions, Scotland 207w
Hospital closures, Scotland 313w
Hypothermia, Scotland 240-1w
Leisure facilities, Local government expenditure 333-4
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 208w, 323-6, 356-7w
NHS, Scotland 459w
Prescriptions, Scotland 208w
Private health insurance, Advertising 8w
Residential care, Lothian 356w
Road signs, Scotland 334
Salmon, Scotland 8w, 312-3w, 357w, 459w
Salmon, Solway Firth 213w
Sheep premiums 242-3w
Tourism 577w
Tourism, Scotland 333, 576-7w
Tourist industry, Scotland 334
Tree felling, Licensing 243w, 313w, 617w
Trees, Acid rain 575w
Trout, Scotland 239w

McKelvey, Mr William
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1273, 1276
RAF Molesworth, Standing Order No 10 applications (13.02.85) 348
Questions
Matrimonial property, Scotland 337
Social security, Expenditure 562w
Teachers, Pay 206w

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1225
Questions
Elderly, Scotland 205w
Geriatric patients, Scotland 209-11w
Small businesses 178-9w
Small businesses, Government assistance to industry 179w, 232-4w
Small businesses, Scotland 211-2w, 577w
Unemployment, Glasgow 210w
Unemployment benefits 497-8w
Unemployment benefits, Northern Ireland 503w
Warrant sales, Scotland 205w

Maclean, Mr David
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1238
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 239-42
Questions
Milk, Outgoers scheme 437w
Milk, Production quotas 472

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Agricultural & Horticultural Cooperation Scheme 1985 (18.02.85) 834
Oral question time point of order (13.02.85) 335 (20.02.85) 1034
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 184-5
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1318
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 351, 377-8
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 32
Questions
Crofting, Highlands of Scotland 334
European Convention on Human Rights 93w
European Council, Voting methods 1028
Farm incomes 260w
Fluoridation, Scotland 448w
Heating allowances 157-8w
Salmon, Scotland 8w, 357w
Social security, Sex discrimination 27w
Unemployment, Scotland 323

McNair-Wilson, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill, 2R & rem stages (22.02.85) 1371-6, 1386
Questions
Housing starts 485-6w
Kidney patients, Medical treatments 155w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial investment 365-6w
Teachers appraisal 848

McNair-Wilson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 714
Kidney patients, Attendance allowance 582-3w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1251-8, 1290-2, 1294
Questions
Military bands, Road accidents 167-8
Motor vehicle theft, Northern Ireland 105-6w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 41-2w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 44-5w, 100w, 104w, 179-80w
Prime Minister visits abroad 300w
Prison population, Northern Ireland 376-8w
Prisoners on remand, Northern Ireland 372w
Prosecutions, Northern Ireland 42w, 370-1w
Remand in custody, Northern Ireland 104-5w, 270w, 371-2w, 538-9w
Remotely piloted vehicles, Defence contracts 142w, 433w
Security, Northern Ireland 45w

McQuarrie, Mr Albert
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 26
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 645, 663, 667, 671, 680
Questions
Beef premiums 242w
Common farm prices, Scotland 241w
Drug crimes, Scotland 338
Farm capital grant scheme, Scotland 242w
Housing associations, Scotland 206w
Limited list prescribing 384w
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 326, 356-7w
Milk, Production quotas 254w
Severe weather payments 160, 280w
Sheep premiums 242-3w
Summertime, EC action 236w

McTaggart, Mr Bob
Questions
Asbestos, Scotland 574w
Asbestos stripping, Scotland 574-5w
Customs officers, Scotland 292w, 308-9w, 404w
Customs & Excise Investigation Division 308w
Drug abuse, Scotland 236-8w, 241w, 243-4w
Drug squads, Scotland 241w
EC grants & loans, Strathclyde 243w, 577-8w
Housing subsidies, Scotland 206w
Social security appeals, Glasgow 280w

McWilliam, Mr John
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1298
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 106

Madden, Mr Max
Questions
European Social Fund, Textile industry 28-9w
European Social Fund, Young people 28w
Housing Defects Act 1984 411-2w
Limited list prescribing 151
Official secrets, Disclosure of information 431-2w
Official secrets, Prosecutions 326w
Ponting, Clive, Police interrogation 463w
Ponting, Clive, Prosecutions 327-8w
Prime Minister, Journalists 228w
Prime Minister visits abroad 346w
RAF Greenham Common, Legal aid 327w
Regional aid, Yorkshire & Humberside 408w
South Africa, Trials 466w
Teachers, Pay 848
Thornton View Hospital, Bradford 151w
Tourist industry, EC grants & loans 408-9w

Madel, Mr David
Questions
Afghanistan 477-8w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1201-2
Higher education 424w
Teachers, Pay 842

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Questions
Border security in Ireland 181-2w
Brazil, Trade fairs 465w
British Telecom, Northern Ireland 5w
Farmers, Northern Ireland 182w
Iran, Bahai sect 479w
Remedial education, Northern Ireland 504-5w
Security, Northern Ireland 3-4w

Magistrates 32-3w

Magistrates courts
Administrative delays 342-3w
Devizes 621w

Magis, James 94-5w

Maintenance 327w

Malone, Mr Gerald
Questions
Drug crimes, Grampian 339
Employment opportunities, Scotland 328-9
Hall Russell 629w
Infrastructure, Scotland 323
Iraq, Armed forces training 506w
Law of the Sea, Treaties 359w
North Sea oil 722
Oil revenues, North sea oil 1192-3
Public expenditure 606-16w

Managers
Local government social services 389w
NHS 72w, 585w

Managing agents 183w

Manchester Opera Festival 605w
Arts finance 605w

Manchester & Salford Methodist Mission 393w

Manpower Services Commission (21.02.85) 1230-9

Manual workers
Pay 492-3w

Manufactured exports
Export prices 508w

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 1189-90
Overseas trade 564w

Manufactured imports 15-6w
Data banks 629w

Manufacturing industries
Capital investment 1184-5
Industrial investment 365-6w
Insulation 721
Scotland 205-6w, 209w
Yorkshire & Humberside 349w

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc
Reform of the House of Lords Bill, 1R (14.02.85) 492
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 355-6, 358, 368-9, 372, 416, (14.02.85) 502, 530, 547
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 962, 964, 983, 994, 996, 998-1000, 1002, 1008
Questions
Ascension Island, Police 537-8w
Ascension Island, Wild cats 537w
Commonwealth 476w
Immigrants 14w
NAAFI, Ascension Island 626w
Official cars, Parking offences 103-4w
RAF Brize Norton, Armed forces catering services 529w
River Dee, Water pollution 7
Road accidents, Wales 49w

Road safety barriers 25-6w
Road safety barriers, Scotland 8-9w
Road safety barriers, Wales 48w
Roads, Wales 49w
Ruabon bypass, Lighting 48w
St Helena, Milk 534w

Maritime fraud (12.02.85) 314-22

Marketing
Food 256w

Marland, Mr Paul
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1166

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1036
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 980-1, 990, 994, 1000, 1004
Questions
Beef premiums 458w
Business statement 1212
Coal, Imports 720
EC budget, UK contributions 571-2w
EC budget contributions 571w
HMS Fearless 529w
Limited list prescribing 152w
Married personal allowance 558w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 473w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 229w, 525-6w
School leaving certificates 126-9w
Secondary education, Grammar schools 129-31w
Student grants 852-3
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 1021

Married people
Investment income 292w
Supplementary benefits 71w

Married personal allowance 290w, 558w
Child benefit 292w

Marshall, Mr David
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 236-9
Questions
Airports, Scotland 366w
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 205-6w
National Road Maintenance Condition Survey 114w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Auchenshuggle 229w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Parkhead 525w
Road construction, Local authorities 253w
Roads 114w

Marshall, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1288-9
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1345-8, 1350, 1364-5
Questions
Roads, Ports 366w

Mary Rose 506w

Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 715-6

Mason, Josephine 81-2w

Maternity hospitals 159w

Maternity services 500-1w

Maternity Services Advisory Committee 500-1w

Mates, Mr Michael
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 771, 781, 791-4
Posting, Clive (12.02.85) 184
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 594
Questions
Detention centres 196-7w

Mathematics education 414w

Matrimonial Homes & Property Act 1981 337

Matrimonial property
Scotland 337

Matrimonial & Family Proceedings Act 1984 327w

Maude, Mr Francis
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1202
VAT, Tax collection 200w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 635
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1224-5
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 344
Questions
AIDS 498-500w
Business statement 482-3
Customs & Excise, Drug seizures 726
Educational standards 841
Family doctors, Prescriptions 168w
Prescriptions, Costs 501-2w

Maxton, Mr John
Questions
Ambulance services, Strathclyde 132w
Educational finance, Scotland 132-4w
Leisure facilities, Local government expenditure 333-4
Namibia 466-7w
Public expenditure, Scotland 208w
Taxation, Unemployment 1185
Teachers, Scotland 336

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 803-4
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 449
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 346-7
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 951, 953

Maynard, Miss Joan
Questions
Greiss test 14w, 342w
Kampuchea 31w
Milk, Production quotas 471
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 149w

McQuarrie, IM 14w
Criminal injuries compensation 14w

MCV80 286-7w
Defence contracts 286-7w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Hospital consultants, Standing Order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 34
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1220-1
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 686-90
Questions
Health services, Social class 586w
Limited list prescribing 152-3
Local government social services, Managers 389w
NHS finance 155-6
Personal income 63w
Severe weather payments 157, 389w
Unemployed, Death 397w

Meadowcroft, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1222-3
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1149
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 660, 661-3
United Kingdom Atomic energy Authority (11.02.85) 33
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 956, 960-2, 977, 978
Questions
Association of Community Health Councils, Finance 388-9w
Business statement 1212
Child care 396w
Civil defence, Health services 149
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1206
Dept of Health & Social Security, Statistics 82-4w
East West relations 469w
Family doctors, Prescriptions 584w
Family doctors, Proprietary drugs 83-4w
Food, Composition labelling 260-1w
Food, Nutrition labelling 458-9w
Guatemala, Arms trade 1021-2
Iran, Overseas students 421w
Leeds City Council, Pay 510w
Limited list prescribing 73w
National Theatre, Arts finance 15
NHS, Administrative costs 586w
NHS administration, Public appointments 160-1
NHS finance, Nurses 155
Nursing homes, Licensing 74w
Nursing homes, supplementary benefits 74w
Power stations, Demolition 517w
Prime Minister official engagements 525-6w
Regional health authorities, Information 218w
Severe weather payments 76w
Tax burden, Single people 558w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 144w, 167-8w
University finance 846-7
VAT, Building alterations 1191
Women, Equal opportunities 139-40w

Heat
Export rebates 262-3w
Northern Ireland 262-3w

Medical certificates
Family doctors 81w

Medical education
Cost per student 115w
Student numbers 115w

Medical research 120w
AIDS 279w
Cancer 350-1w
Common cold 350-1w
Diseases 161w
Human embryo experiments (15.02.85) 634-5
Mental illness 119-20w
Nervous system disorders 120w
Schizophrenia 120w
Test tube babies (15.02.85) 637-702

Medical Research Council
Finance 221w
Research finance 418-9w

Medical students
Student grants 415w, 420w

Medical treatments
Alcoholism 497w
Hospital patients 166w
Kidney patients 155w

Medium term financial strategy 1181-2

Mellor, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Maritime fraud (12.02.85) 314-20
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 361-7, 370-1, 378-81, 382, 384, 398-401, 409-12, 416 (14.02.85) 510-3, 519, 520, 521, 522-3, 525-7, 530-1, 532, 533, 534, 537, 539-40, 541-5, 575, 578-81, 591-4, 601, 604, 614, 621, 624-5
Questions
Crimes of violence, Hospital staff 13-4w
Drug abuse, Doctors 620-1w
Drug abuse, Prescriptions 620w
Drug abuse, Scotland 236-8w
Drug crimes, Lancashire 192-3w
Drugs Branch Inspectorate 620w
Drugs & crime, Greater London 341-2w
European Assembly candidates, Nationality 619-20w
European Convention on Human Rights 93w
Licensing laws, Scotland 233w
Local authorities, Public Health Acts 341w
Lowdham Grange youth custody centre 14w

Lowdham Grange youth custody centre, Funerals 236w
Magistrates courts, Administrative delays 342-3w
Magistrates courts, Devizes 621w
McQuarrie, IM, Criminal injuries compensation 14w
Parking offences, Diplomatic service 193-5w
Prerogative of mercy 11w
Prison staff, Isle of Wight 233w
Prisoners, Death 91-2w
Prisoners, Homicide 96w
Prisoners, Suicide 11w, 92-4w
Prisoners release, Hostels 13w
Prisons, Construction 10w
Prisons, Ministers domestic visits 88w
Prisons, Young offenders 88-90w
Probation, Wales 11w
Reconviction rates 461-2w
Safety belts, Greater London 513w
Seals, North Sea 267-8w
Spain, Extradition 11w, 233-4w
Styal Prison, Prison staff 196w
Styal Prison, Young offenders 196w
Suicide, Remand centres 233w
Summertime, EC action 236w
Winson Green Prison, Prisoners on remand 14w
Witnesses, Evidence 342w

Members conduct
Speakers rulings & statements (13.02.85) 347, (14.02.85) 477, (18.02.85) 817, (19.02.85) 916, 917, 1003, 1004

Members correspondence
Department of Health & Social Security 445w
Home Office 12w
Key Housing Association 394w

Members facilities
Communication 724
Parliamentary papers 724-5

Members interventions (14.02.85) 573, 614, 615
Speakers rulings & statements (11.02.85) 146, (12.02.85) 201 224, 255, (13.02.85) 458, (18.02.85) 748, 781 818, (19.02.85) 914, 963, 1005, (20.02.85) 1049 1055

Members speeches
Speakers rulings & statements (11.02.85) 45, 104 (12.02.85) 192, (15.02.85) 637, 660, (18.02.85) 733, 781-2, 796, (19.02.85) 918, (21.02.85) 1242, 1258, 1275, 1312, 1319

Members suspension
Speakers rulings & statements (21.02.85) 1216-7

Mental Health Act 1983 151w

Mental health community care 495-6w

Mental Health Foundation 168w
Upper Waiting Hall 168w

Mental health services 445w

Mental illness
Medical research 119-20w

Mental patients
Consent to medical treatment 187-8w
Hospital discharges 171-2w
Hostels 171-2w
Wales 225w

Mentally handicapped 445w
Scotland 207w

Mentally ill 495-6w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Questions
Ambulance services 162w
British Safety Council 16w
Family doctors 72w
NHS, Expenditure 214-5w
Social security abuse, Exceptional needs payments 78-9w

Merchant seamen
Iran-Iraq war 490w

Merit awards 69w

Merseyside
Factory closures 300-1w
Ministers domestic visits 41w
Nurses 137w

Methyl isocyanate 136-7w

Methyl isothiocyanate 136-7w, 266-7w

Metropolitan counties
Local government expenditure 536-8w

Metropolitan Police
Costs 237w
Manpower 462-3w
Public order policing 295w
St Lucia 235w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Questions
European Council, Voting methods 1028
Iron & steel industry, Wales 8
Local government expenditure, Wales 5

Microelectronics industry
Government assistance to industry 18w

Mid Glamorgan
Unemployment 10

Mid Wales Development Board
Finance 5-6

Middle East 475w
Arms trade 858, 1024-6
Overseas trade 362w
Peace negotiations 473w, 475-6w
Terrorism 467w

Middleton
Supplementary benefits 445w

Mikardo, Mr Ian
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 747, 794-6, 800
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1038-41, 1053, 1055, 1060, 1064
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1092-3, 1097
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 641-2, 682
Questions
Lebanon 470-1w
Members facilities: Communication 724
Middle East, Arms trade 1025
Taxation, Pensions 560w

Military aid
Guatemala 4w

Military aircraft 431w
Training aircraft 433w, 506w

Military bands
Road accidents 167-8

Military exercises
Civil defence 344w
US National Guard 317w

Military Lands Act 1892 626w

Military vehicles 433w
Defence procurement 286-7w

Milk
Northern Ireland 471
Outgoers scheme 437w
Price increases 3w
Production 254w
Production quotas 254-5w, 258-9w, 379-81w, 457w, 470-2, 475, 578-9w, (20.02.85) 1151-71
St Helena 534w
Wales 46-7w

Milk & milk products
Animal feed 580w

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1232
Questions
House renovation grants, Scotland 133w
Key Housing Association, Members correspondence 394w

Miller, Dr M S
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 44, 49, 54, 56, 57, 60, 71
Severe weather payments (13.02.85) 459, 461
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 33
Questions
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 326

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Derelict land, West Midlands 535w
Greenbelt, West Midlands 482w
High technology, Industrial development 411w
Structure plans 411w
Vacant land, West Midlands 410w

Mills, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1158-9
Questions
Cash limits, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 267w
Employment opportunities, South West region 27w
Food consumption 463-4
Job centres, Bideford 27w
Unemployment, South West region 26-7w

Minimum lending rate 560w
Inflation 494w

Minister for Youth (13.02.85) 349-50

Ministerial policy advisers
European Communities 359w

Ministerial policy advisors
Fergusson, Adam 30w

Ministerial speeches
Speakers rulings & statements (18.02.85) 751

Ministerial statements
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 169-76
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1219-29
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 180-7
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1230-9
Sleipner field (11.02.85) 23-9
Speakers rulings & statements (11.02.85) 25, 39, (12.02.85) 174, 185, (21.02.85) 1222, 1226, 1228, 1232, 1239
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 30-3

Ministers correspondence 222-3w
Costs 254w

Ministers domestic visits
Liverpool 28w
Merseyside 41w
Northern Ireland 180w
Prisons 88w
Scotland 573w

Ministers visits abroad
Caribbean 259w, 472-3
Sri Lanka 468w
Turkey 1019

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Cash limits 267w
Privatisation 257w
Public corporations 112w

Ministry of Defence 431-2w
Cleaning services 627-8w
Contract cleaning 627-8w
Dismissal 1197
Public corporations 528w
Security 506w
Student grants 626w

Ministry of Defence Police
Arrests 621w

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 620w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc

Trustees Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1121-3, 1131-2
Questions
Agricultural production, EC countries 582w
Agricultural products, EC external trade 581w
Agricultural products, Imports 581w
Animal feed 65w
Broadbent, Ewen, Radio programmes 407w
Civil servants 526w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Interviews 524w
Economic models 56w
Employment level, Pay 201-2w
Employment opportunities, Pay 565-6w, 569w
European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund 582w
Exchange rates 101w, 569w
Exchange rates, Economic models 55-6w
Exchange rates, European currency unit 570w
Farmers, Government grants 3w
Fisheries, EC countries 261w
Green pound 581-2w
Hill farming, Government grants 300w
Hill livestock allowances 64w, 261-2w
Horses, EC grants & loans 378w
Inflation 101w
Manual workers, Pay 492-3w
Manufactured imports 15-6w
Milk, Price increases 3w
Milk, Production quotas 578-9w
Milk & milk products, Animal feed 580w
Minimum lending rate 560w
Minimum lending rate, Inflation 494w
Motor industry, Pay 183w
Official secrets, Prosecutions 603w
Pay, Employment 493w
Ponting, Clive, Trials 603w
Profits, Pay 568w
Sheep meat, Exports 581w

Mitchell, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Port of Liverpool (15.02.85) 707-10
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 211, 253-60
Questions
British Railways Board, Communication 438w
Bus services 437-8w
Bus services, Privatisation 491w
Bus services subsidies 20-1w
Bus substitution services 302-3w
Buses White Paper 21-2w
Coal, Imports 26w
Iran-Iraq war, Merchant seamen 490w
Lighthouses, Contracts 26w
National Bus Company, Subsidies 369-70w
Railway accidents, Inquiries 24w
Railway accidents, Rugby 24-5w
Railway accidents, Transport of hazardous materials 20w
Railway freight transport 254w
Tanker ships, Coastal areas 369w
USSR, Shipping 303w

MI5
Intelligence services 1194-5

"MI5s Official Secrets" (21.02.85) 1240-1
Standing Order No 10 applications (21.02.85) 1240-1

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 26
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1307-10
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 364, 376-7 (14.02.85) 554

Monetary compensatory amounts 456w

Money supply
Local government mortgages 433-4w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1249
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1139-40
Questions
Beef premiums 465-6
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 324-5
Town & country planning, Scotland 207w
Trespass, Scotland 338

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Questions
Middle East, Terrorism 467w
Olympic Games 1195-6

Moore, Mr John, *Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Black economy 561w
Capital gains tax 63w
Child benefit 148w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 558w, 1186, 1188
Corporation tax, Accounting 291w
Development land tax 147w
Direct taxation 564w
Economic growth 1187
European monetary system 1188-9
Exchange rates, Oil revenues 290w, 307w
Family income 62w, 403w
Income tax 398-400w, 434w
Income tax, Administrative costs 202w
Income tax, Employment opportunities 569-70w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 305-6w
Income tax, Tax yields 308w, 494w, 570w
Income tax on investment incomes 402w
Industrial building allowances 561w
Industrial production 561w
Inland Revenue, Civil service manpower 606w
Inland Revenue, Power failures 402w
Interest rates 1188-9
Investment income, Married people 292w
Investment income surcharge 148w
Married personal allowance 558w
Married personal allowance, Child benefit 292w
Mortgage relief 559w, 572w
National insurance, Employers contributions 1185
National insurance surcharge 401w
Oil prices 200w
Oil revenues, North sea oil 1192-3
Personal income 63w
Personal tax allowances 289-90w
Personal taxation 307-8w, 434w
Personal taxation, OECD countries 200-1w
Power industry, Privatisation 1189
Privatisation, Income 564w
Share option scheme 564w
Single personal allowance 290w
Small businesses 1188
Tax burden, Single people 558w
Tax officers, Resignations 401w
Tax rates & bands 61w
Tax rates & bands, Inflation 308w
Tax thresholds 145-6w, 1185-6
Tax thresholds, Benefits in kind 567w
Tax yields 60-1w, 63-4w
Tax yields, Fringe benefits 571w
Tax yields, Income tax 288w
Tax yields, Low pay 63w
Taxation 288-9w, 572w
Taxation, Appeals 289w
Taxation, Business expenses 306-7w
Taxation, Child benefit 404w
Taxation, Pensions 560w
Taxation, Shipping 559w
Taxation, Unemployment 563w, 1185-6
Tobacco duties 1188
Unemployment, Autumn Statement 563-4w
Wages councils 1188

Moore Lane Bus Station 370w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Questions
Educational finance, Greater Manchester 534w
Employment level, Greater Manchester 428-30w
Government grants to local authorities, Greater Manchester 406w
House of Commons questions, Disclosure of information 628w
House of Commons questions, Procedure Select Committee 597w
Public expenditure, Greater Manchester 406w
Redundancy, Greater Manchester 430w
VAT, Charities 1190

Morris, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (11.02.85) 22, (12.02.85) 180-1, 186-7
Ponting, Clive, Standing order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 38
Questions
Official secrets, Prosecutions 326w

Morris, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 25
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 33
Questions
Dentists, Prescriptions 277w
Drugs, Prescriptions 278w
Electricity generation 718
Limited list prescribing 276-7w, 319w, 383w, 441w, 583w
Limited list prescribing, Drugs 583w
Prescriptions, EC countries 382w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 421w

Morrison, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 43-4

Morrison, Mr Peter, *Minister of State for Employment*
Questions
Community industry scheme, West Cumbria 135-6w
Community programme, Cumbria 185w
Community programme, Training 515w
Community programme, Women 515w
Computech, Industrial training schemes 301w
Employment schemes 182-3w
Employment schemes, Costs 248-9w
Industrial training schemes, Young people 514-6w
Job centres 184w
Job centres, Bideford 27w
Job centres, Workington 184w
Lorry drivers, Training 134w
Ministers domestic visits, Liverpool 28w
Retail trade, Training 134w
School leaving, Sunderland 137w
School leaving, Take-up of employment 347-8w
Skillcentres 428w
Technical & vocational education initiative 189w
Youth training scheme 29w, 183w, 249-50w, 347w
Youth training scheme, Allerdale 185w
Youth training scheme, Costs 489w
Youth training scheme, Cumbria 183w
Youth training scheme, Further education 516w
Youth unemployment 348w

Mortgage defaulters 332w, 448w

Mortgage relief 559w, 572w
Scotland 206w

Mortgages
Supplementary benefits 158w

Motor industry
Pay 183w, 516w

Motor insurance
EC action 18-9w

Motor vehicle theft
Northern Ireland 105-6w

Motor vehicles
Tax yields 147w, 202w

Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 1985 (19.02.85) 859

Motorways 369w, 439w
Lighting 113w
North West region 114w
Ports 366w

Moynihan, Mr Colin
Debates etc
Boxing (22.02.85) 1392-5
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 922, 928, 929, 931
Questions
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 205w

Mudd, Mr David
Questions
Road freight transport 23-4w
Road traffic 23
Tax yields, Motor vehicles 147w

"Multicentre Study of Post Neonatal Mortality" 155w

Multiple occupation
Fire escapes 235w, 296w
Fires 236w

Multiple registration (14.02.85) 493-622

Murphy, Mr Christopher
Questions
British Empire, Museums & galleries 32w
Drug industry, Profits 585w
Insulation grants, Welwyn Hatfield District Council 484w
Petroleum exploration licences, Northern Ireland 105w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Essendon 405w
Prime Minister domestic visits, North Mymms 229w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Welwyn Garden City 525w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Wheathampstead 100w

Museums & galleries
British Empire 32w

Museums & Galleries Commission 102w
Public appointments 102w

Mutual & balanced force reductions 440w, 475w

M1 370w

M4 226w
Road works 226w

M11 439w

M20 438w
Expenditure 438w

M25 12w, 24w, 370w, 439w
Land acquisition 439w
Road accidents 12w, 24w

M62 113w

NAAFI
Ascension Island 626w

Namibia 466-7w
Human rights 469w

National Association of Probation Officers 70w

National Association of Teachers in Further & Higher Education 415w

National Bank of New Zealand Limited Bill 1984/85
2R* (12.02.85) 149

National Blood Transfusion Service 446-7w

National Bus Company
Privatisation (12.02.85) 282-9
Subsidies 369-70w

National Coal Board 352w

National Farmers Union 264w

National Farmers Union of Scotland 241w

National Freight Company
Sheffield 515w

National Heritage Memorial Fund 534-5w

National House Building Council 485w

National income 52-3w, 493w
EC countries 54-5w

National information collection system on waiting times 342-3w

National insurance
Employers contributions 1185

National insurance benefits 72w
Voluntary service overseas 215w

National insurance contributions 75w

National Insurance Fund 75w

National insurance surcharge 401w, 1182

National Road Maintenance Condition Survey 114w

"National Road Maintenance Condition Survey, 1984" 114w

National security 163, 476

National Staff Committee for Nurses & Midwives 584w

National Theatre 14
Arts finance 14-6, 450w

National Union of Mineworkers 1199-200

National Union of Teachers 116w

Nationalised industries
External financing limits 1187
Government departments 112w, 172w

Nationalised Industries Legislation Consultation Paper 61-2w

Nationality
European Assembly candidates 619-20w

NATO
Chemical weapons 141-2w
Cruise missiles 50w
Nuclear weapons 50-1w
Nuclear weapons policy 140-1w

Natural Environment Research Council 117w
Corporate plans 222w

Natural gas (11.02.85) 23-9, 98w
Gas reserves 98w
Production costs 98w

Nature conservation 369w
Agriculture 67-8w, 636w
Scotland 330-1

Naval bases
Portsmouth 506w

Navy
Defence procurement 51w

Neighbourhood watch schemes 619w
Greater London 618-9w

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 946-7
Local Government Bill, Allocation to time motion (11.02.85) 76, 83, 97, 108-10
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1066
Oral question time point of order (14.02.85) 479-80
Questions
AIDS, Screening 600w
Business statement 487
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-2, 1203
Medical students, Student grants 415w
Social security reviews 157-8
Sri Lanka, Armed forces training 286w
Sri Lanka, Arms trade 142w, 285w
Sri Lanka, Ministers visits abroad 468w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 844

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Questions
Middle East, Peace negotiations 475-6w

Nervous system disorders
Medical research 120w

Netherlands
Agricultural subsidies 465
Glasshouse growers 260w, 464-5

New College
Cardiff 97w

New College, Cardiff 97w

New Cross Hospital 280w
Wolverhampton 280w

New Parliamentary building 723

New York 370w

New Zealand
Imports 261w

Newark
Coal mining 412-3w
Petroleum exploration 412-3w

Newcastle upon Tyne
Combined heat & power 238w

Newspaper press
Betting & gaming duties 565w
VAT 308w, 557w, 1193

Newton, Mr Tony, *Minister of State for Social Security*
Debates etc
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 443-50
Wheelchairs (19.02.85) 1011-6
Questions
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 152-3w
Exceptional needs payments, Industrial disputes 150-1w
Hearing aids 442w
Heating allowances 156
Heating allowances, Elderly 156-7
Kidney patients, Attendance allowance 582-3w
National insurance benefits, Voluntary service overseas 215w
Prescribed industrial diseases 601w
Severe weather payments 157
Social security benefits, Overpayments 71w
Specialist claims control units 82w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 70w, 149w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 276w
Wheelchairs, Prescriptions 160w

Newton Committee see Supplementary Benefit Review

NHS 153w
Accounting 598w
Administrative costs 586w
Banks 216w
Construction 159-60w
Energy conservation 394-5w
Expenditure 214-5w, 496w
Managers 72w, 585w
Privatisation 281-2w, 319-20w
Scotland 459w
Security 446w

NHS administration
Public appointments 160-1, 497w

NHS charges 167w

NHS complaints (22.02.85) 1371-86

NHS finance 155-6
East Anglia 584-5w
Elderly 155-6w
Nurses 155
Regional health authorities 155w
Teaching hospitals 169-71w

NHS Management Inquiry 497w

Nicaragua 1196
Diplomatic relations 468w
Official visits 229-30w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 42, 58, 60-2
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (21.02.85) 1322
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 643, 681-2

Questions
Business statement 1210
Christmas bonus 158
Iran, Bahai sect 478-9w
Limited list prescribing 1193-4
Youth training scheme, Further education 516w

Nicholson, Mr James
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 564
Questions
Beef premiums 259-60w
Beef & veal, Northern Ireland 43w
Dairy farming, Northern Ireland 43w, 105w
Sheep premiums 466

Nimrod aircraft (21.02.85) 1242-98

Non-tariff barriers
EC action 361w
EC internal trade 454w

Norfolk Broads 435w
Animal husbandry 435w

Norris, Mr Steve
Questions
Teachers, Industrial disputes 222-3w

North Committee see Road Traffic Law Review Committee

North Devon District Council 283w
Housing insulation 283w

North Devon link road 530w

North East Regional Emergency Committee 35-6w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority 160-1w, 598w

North Eastern Electricity Board 238w
Electricity tariffs 238w

North Mymms
Prime Minister domestic visits 229w

North Sea
Seals 267-8w

North Sea oil 722
Oil revenues 1192-3

North West region
Emergency committee 175w
Locations of industry 230-1w
Motorways 114w
Regional aid 178w

North West Region Emergency Committee 175w

Northern Ireland
Beef & veal 43w
Body searches 539-41w
British Telecom 5w
Bus services 505w
Civil servants background 449w
Civil service recruitment 180w
Coal fired power stations 450w
Dairy farming 43w, 105w
Dental students 270w
Employment opportunities 376w
Fair Employment Agency 371w
Farmers 182w, 618w
Flats 375w
Geriatric patients 373-4w
Government assistance to industry 270w, 376w
Home helps 372-4w, 503w
Human rights 555-6w
Industrial development 269w
Limited list prescribing 181w, 268w, 345w
Meat 262-3w
Milk 471
Ministers domestic visits 180w
Motor vehicle theft 105-6w
Old people homes 374-6w
Orlit houses 618w
Oxygen 503w, 539w
Petroleum exploration licences 105w
Plastic bullets 41-2w
Police informers 44-5w, 100w, 104-5w, 179-80w
Portable accommodation 173-4w, 539w
Prescription 180-1w, 268w
Primary education 504-5w
Prison population 376-8w
Prison staff 542w
Prisoners on remand 104w, 372w, 503-4w
Prosecutions 42w, 370-1w
Remand in custody 104-5w, 270w, 371-2w, 538-9w
Remedial education 504-5w
Rented housing 375w
Road accidents 44w
School transport 502w
Security 3-4w, 45w
Small businesses 449-50w
Teachers 542-6w, 546-55w
Terrorism 450w, 556w, 856-8
Unemployment benefits 503w

Northern Ireland government
Sinn Fein 617-8w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Heating 502w
Housing stock 617w
Rent arrears 502w
Rents 617w

Northern Ireland Office
Sex monitoring 449w

Northern Ireland (Termination of Jurisdiction) Bill 1984/85 2R order read (15.02.85) 703, (22.02.85) 1394

Northern region
Capital investment 572-3w

Nostell Priory 202-3w

Not guilty pleas 42w

Notifiable diseases
AIDS 14, 71w

Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 12-3, 149-50w, 205w, 353-4w, 413w, 423w, 619w
Wales 12
Welsh Office 12-3

Nuclear fuels
Nuclear power stations 353w

Nuclear non proliferation treaty 604-5w
Trident 478w

Nuclear power
Electricity generation 718-9
South Africa 142w
Technology transfer 604w

Nuclear power stations (11.02.85) 30-3
Nuclear fuels 353w
Radioactive wastes 353w
Safety 355w

Nuclear reactors
Parliamentary questions 299w

Nuclear safeguards 353w
British Nuclear Fuels Ltd 355-6w
Plutonium 359-60w
Sellafield 439-40w

Nuclear safety 355w

Nuclear test ban 287w, 473w

Nuclear war
Civil defence 353-4w
Farm buildings 264w

Nuclear weapons
NATO 50-1w

Nuclear weapons policy
NATO 140-1w

Nuclear weapons tests 142w, 853
Death rate 198w

Nuclear winter
Crops 264w

Nujoma, Sam 465w

Numeracy 419w

Nurse practitioners 598-9w

Nursery schools 298-9w, 418w

Nurses
Back pain 74w
Merseyside 137w
NHS finance 155
Unemployment 137w

Nursing homes
Elderly 153w
Geriatric patients 278w
Licensing 74w
Private sector 278w
Supplementary benefits 74w

Nutrition
Armed forces 285w

Nutrition labelling
Food 458-9w

Nutrition & health 257w

Oakes, Rt Hon. Gordon
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 199, 228-30, 254

Objects in lieu of tax
Art works 31w

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
Heating allowances 855
Relationship between Employment & Wages 566w

OECD countries
Personal taxation 200-1w
Productivity 631-2w

Office of Arts & Libraries
Administrative costs 202w

Offices
Greater London 622-3w

Official cars
Parking offences 103-4w

Official secrets 161, 325w, (18.02.85) 733-826
Civil servants 325-6w
Disclosure of information 327-8w, 346-7w, 431-2w
Prosecutions 325-6w, 345w, 603w
Scotland 336-7

Official Secrets Act 1911 (11.02.85) 38, (12.02.85) 180-7, 230w, 325w, 326w, 327-8w, 345w, 346-7w, 475-6

Official secrets acts 603w

Official visits
Nicaragua 229-30w

Oil consumption
Electricity generation 353w

Oil industry
Land drilling 354w
Scotland 328-9

Oil prices 200w
British National Oil Corporation 413w

Oil recovery 354w

Oil revenues
Exchange rates 290w, 307w
North sea oil 1192-3

Old peoples homes
Northern Ireland 374-6w
Private sector 153w

Olympic Games 1195-6

O'Neill, Mr Martin J
Questions
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 208w, 326

Onslow, Mr Cranley
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 766-9
Questions
Official secrets 161
Religious education, Surrey 350w

Open questions
Speakers rulings & statements (21.02.85) 1218

Open University
Expenditure 421w

Opencast mining
Licensing 352w

Ophthalmic services
Hospitals 598w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1343, 1356-8
Questions
European currency unit 492w
Milk, Production quotas 254-5w, 471-2
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 619w

Optical fibres 177-8w

Oral questions
Speakers rulings & statements (13.02.85) 335, 342, (14.02.85) 480

Orders & regulations
Goats milk 65-6w
House of Commons debates 723
Interpretation Act 1978 333w
Pesticides 107w
Speakers rulings & statements (19.02.85) 859

Orkney
Rent control 460w

Orlit houses 618w
Northern Ireland 618w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 24
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 717-8, 1200-1

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Maritime fraud (12.02.85) 311-4

Outgoers scheme 259w, 437w, 470-1
Dairy farming 259w
Milk 437w

Overpayments 71w
Social security benefits 71w

Overseas aid
Belize 4w
Ethiopia 603-4w

Overseas divorces 327w

Overseas students
Iran 421w

Overseas trade
Iran 362w, 1027
Manufactured goods 564w
Middle East 362w
Syrian Arab Republic 362w
Turkey 1020
UK membership of EC 360-1w
USSR 631w

Overseas voters (13.02.85) 351-424

Overtime
Civil service 56-8w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 29w
Government departments 56-8w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 178
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 759, 819
Ponting, Clive (11.02.85) 22
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1201
General Belgrano 164, 478-9

Owen, Steven 315w
Police custody 315w

Own resourses 204w, 299w, 403-4w, 480w, 558w
EC budget 204w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 480w

Owner occupied housing
Housing benefits 501w

Oxford University 221-2w, 846-7, 849-50
Student numbers 222w

Oxfordshire
Church schools 298w

Oxfordshire County Council 298w

Oxygen
Northern Ireland 503w, 539w

Oxygen concentrators 503w

Oxygen cylinders 503w

Public appointments
Police Complaints Authority 464w

Pacific Islands 474w

Page, Sir John
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1192
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1301
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 196

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (14.02.85) 623

Paints 175w
Sea pollution 175w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 382, 388
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 669-70
Questions
Milk, Northern Ireland 471

Pakistan
Political refugees 463w

Palestine Liberation Organisation 12w

Papworth Hospital 77w

Paraquat
West Germany 636w

Park, Mr George
Questions
European Council, Voting methods 1027-8

Parkhead
Prime Minister domestic visits 525w

Parking offences
Diplomatic service 193-5w
Official cars 103-4w

Parliamentary constituencies 621-2w

Parliamentary papers
Members facilities 724-5

Parliamentary questions
Nuclear reactors 299w

Parole 514w

Parris, Mr Matthew
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 421, (14.02.85) 497-500, 515
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 233-6, 254
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 963-4
Questions
Arms control treaties, Chemical weapons 475w
Labour costs, Productivity 434w
Productivity, OECD countries 631-2w

Parry, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 948
Guinness Company, Standing Order No 10 applications (18.02.85) 730
Liverpool (21.02.85) 1326-7, 1328
Port of Liverpool (15.02.85) 706-7
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1304, 1313
Questions
AIDS, Health service staff 320w, 388w
AIDS, Medical research 279w
Alcoholic drinks duties 562w
British Nuclear Fuels Ltd, Construction costs 431w
Bus services 437-8w
Civil service unions 725
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-4
El Salvador, Foreign policy 204w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 297w
Fire escapes, Multiple occupation 235w
Fires, Multiple occupation 236w
Isle of Man Steam Packet Company 231w
Liverpool Health Authority, Privatisation 166w
Mental patients, Hostels 171-2w
Ministers domestic visits, Liverpool 28w
Ministers domestic visits, Merseyside 41w
Nurses, Merseyside 137w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 229w
School meals 455w
Sierra Leone, British embassies 142-3w
Sierra Leone, Immigration applications 143w
Teachers, Pay 117w
Territorial Army, Alert signs 431w
Uganda, Human rights 203w

Part-time employment 348w

Passport Office 725

Passports
Computer applications 725
France 270w
Irish 89w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 242-3
Questions
Dublin Summit 481w

Patten, Mr Chris, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Bus services, Northern Ireland 505w
Flats, Northern Ireland 375w
Geriatric patients, Northern Ireland 373-4w
Home helps, Northern Ireland 372-4w, 503w
Limited list prescribing, Northern Ireland 181w, 268w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Rent arrears 502w
Old peoples homes, Northern Ireland 374-6w
Oxygen, Northern Ireland 503w
Prescriptions, Northern Ireland 180-1w, 268w
Rented housing, Northern Ireland 375w
Road accidents, Northern Ireland 44w
School transport, Northern Ireland 502w
Sewage, Larne 43-4w
Unemployment benefits, Northern Ireland 503w

Patten, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security*
Debates etc
Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill, 2R & rem stages (22.02.85) 1376, 1380, 1382-6
Oral question time intervention (12.02.85) 152
Questions
Acute beds, Greater London 68-9w
Alcoholism, Medical treatments 497w
Ambulance services 162w
Ambulance services, Finance 80w
Birmingham General Hospital, Surgery 278-9w
Chatterton Hey, Drug abuse 393w
Child care 396w
Child patients, Hospital admissions 76-7w
Child workers, West Yorkshire 217w
Children, Poisoning 162-6w
Civil defence, Health services 149-50
Community care, Brent 500w
Cot deaths 155w

Cruelty to children 77w
Cruelty to children, West Midlands 77w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Statistics 82-4w
Diseases, Medical research 161w
Drug abuse 599-600w
Drugs, Hexafluorosilic acid 446w, 587w
Geriatric patients, Hospital beds 278w
Geriatric patients, Nursing homes 278w
Heart diseases, Transplant surgery 77w
Home helps 214w
Home helps, Costs 274-5w
Home helps, Training 214w
Hospital closures, Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital 153-4
Hospital closures, Wrightington Hospital 153
Hospital patients, Medical treatments 166w
Hospital waiting lists 280w
Hospital waiting lists, West Midlands 167w
Hospitals, Costs 495w
Kidney machines 393-4w
Kidney patients, Medical treatments 155w
Local government social services, Managers 389w
Local government social services, Rate support grants 153-4w
Maternity hospitals 159w
Maternity services 500-1w
Mental Health Foundation, Upper Waiting Hall 168w
Mental patients, Hostels 171-2w
Mentally ill 495-6w
New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton 280w
NHS, Construction 159-60w
NHS, Energy conservation 394-5w
NHS finance, Elderly 155-6w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 598w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 149-50w
Nursing homes, Elderly 153w
Nursing homes, Licensing 74w
Nursing homes, Private sector 278w
Pendlebury Hospital, Cystic fibrosis 159w
Post-neonatal mortality, Departmental publications 69w
Prestwich Hospital, Drug abuse 159-60w
Regional health authorities, Information 218w
Residential care, Clothing 161-2w
Supra-regional Services Advisory Group 80w
Thornton View Hospital, Bradford 151w
Tranquillisers, Drug abuse 77-8w
Transplant Advisory Panel 80w
Transplant surgery 154w
Unemployed, Death 397w
Viruses, Genetic engineering 161w
Women, Injuries 162w

Pattie, Mr Geoffrey, *Minister of State for Information Technology*
Questions
Audio recordings, Copyright 408w

Pavitt, Mr Laurie
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1226
Questions
Business statement 487, 1213
Community care, Brent 500w
Dental students 280-1w
Dental students, Northern Ireland 270w
Dental students, Scotland 244w
Dental students, Student numbers 397-8w
Government information services, Dept of Health & Social Security 386w
Hay fever, Vaccination 386-7w
Health services, Administrative costs 386w
Health services, Civil service manpower 386w
Hearing aids 442w
Information officers, Dept of Health & Social Security 385-6w
Metropolitan Police, Public order policing 295w
National Staff Committee for Nurses & Midwives 584w
Prescriptions 382w
Rate limitation, Brent 309w
Social security reviews, Budget March 1985 158-9
Vaccination, Prices 442w

Pawsey, Mr J F
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 636
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 690-1
Questions
Burnham Committee 116w
Burnham Committee, Professional Association of Teachers 116-7w
Goats milk, Orders & regulations 65-6w
Goats milk, Production 66w
Railway accidents, Inquiries 24w
Railway accidents, Rugby 24-5w
Severn barrage 1w
Teachers, Pay 116w

Pay beds
Wales 521-2w

Pay mehods
Police 510w

Peace keeping operations
Lebanon 471w

Peace negotiations
Central America 470w
Middle East 473w, 475-6w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Administration of Justice Bill (HL) 1984 85 524w
Legal aid 227-8w
Manufactured imports, Data banks 629w
Science & Technology, Select Committee (HL) on New Technologies 5w
Tax officers Resignations 401w
VAT repayment, Housing construction 401-2w
Witnesses, Evidence 342w

Peas
Agricultural production 469-470

Peat
Islay 615w

Pendlebury Hospital 159w
Cystic fibrosis 159w

Pendry, Mr. Tom
Debates etc
Boxing (22.02.85) 1395-6

Penhaligon, Mr David
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 135-6
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1165
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 552, 590-1
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1233
Questions
Privatisation, Income 564w
Unemployment 248w

Pension funds
Government securities 291w

Pensioner price index 216w

Pensioners
Housing benefits 74-5w
Income 75w

Pensioners Right to Fuel & Communications Bill 1984/85
2R order read (22.02.85) 1394

Pensions
Levene, Peter 198w
Taxation 560w, 1197-8

Peoples Europe Committee 103w
UK delegations 103w

Per capita costs
Public expenditure 52w
Public sector employment 2-4w

Personal income 63w

Personal tax allowances 289-90w

Personal taxation 307-8w, 434w
OECD countries 200-1w

Pest resistance 580w
Insecticides 579w
Weedkillers 580w

Pesticide residues
Food 588w
Food imports 635-6w

Pesticides 108w, 110w, 265-6w, 517w, 633-4w
Alachlor 636w
Codes of practice 508-9w
Departmental publications 634-5w
Environment protection 107w
Fenitrothion 579w
Forestry Commission 357-60w
Forests 576w
Future 108w
Industrial health & safety 429w
Information 107w
Orders & regulations 107w
Safety 108w, 579w, 633-4w
Safety measures 430w, 435-6w
School attendance 117-8w
Sites of special scientific interest 536w
Training 430w
USA 108w
Warble fly 587-8w

Pesticides safety precautions scheme 266-7w, 633-4w

Petroleum
Exports 238-9w
Imports 238-9w
Production 239w

Petroleum Exploration 354w
Newark 412-3w

Petroleum exploration licences
Northern Ireland 105w

Petroleum production 722

Peyton Committee see Eggs Authority Review

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 73w

Pharmacists
Limited list prescribing 152

Philharmonic Hall
Liverpool 245w

Phoenix vehicles 433w

Physics Curriculum 6w

Picketing 618w
Arrests 509w

Pike, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Transport Bill, Money res (12:02.85) 274-5
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1123, 1148-9
Questions
Business statement 489-90
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1204-5
Drug crimes, Lancashire 192-3w
Electricity, Coal generation 352w
Emergency committees, North West region 175w
Employment level by sector, Lancashire 184w
Enterprise allowance scheme 185w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 199w
Factories, Hazardous materials 133w
Housing investment programmes 175w
Indian subcontinent, Immigration applications 604w
Inland Revenue, Power failures 402w
Job release scheme, Burnely 28w
Limited list prescribing 152w
Local government expenditure, Block grant 33-5w
Magistrates 32-3w
Motorways, North West region 114w
M62 113w
Nuclear test ban 473w
Prime Minister official engagements 406w

Redundancy, Burnley 246w
Redundancy, Lancashire 246-7w
Road construction, Lancashire 113w
Roads, Lancashire 114w
Sleipner field 187w
Suicide, Remand centres 233w
Teachers, Pay 416w
Trident, Costs 287w
Unemployment, Burnley 135w
Urban programme, Inner city areas 86w
Vacancies, Lancashire 135w
VAT, Books 308w

Pirate radio stations 362w
Armed forces deployment 285w

Planning inquiries
West Chellaston 411w

Planning permission
Chain stores 331w
Housing 328w

Plastic bullets
Northern Ireland 41-2w

Plutonium
Nuclear safeguards 359-60w
Production 299w, 406-7w

Plymouth Marine Events Base Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Poaching
Scotland 338

Points of order
Speakers rulings & statements (12.02.85) 165, 167, (13.02.85) 347, (14.02.85) 479, 480, (18.02.85) 819, (19.02.85) 918, (20.02.85) 1034, 1035, 1036

Poisoning
Children 162-6w
Wood preservatives 136w

Polaris submarines
Radiation hazards 628-9w

Police
Ascension Island 537-8w
Exhibitions 193w
Local government finance 13w
Local government reform 510w
Pay methods 510w

Police cautions 342w, 426-7w

Police Complaints Authority 464w
Public appointments 464w

Police custody 620w
Devizes 621w
Godden, Stephen Anthony 240w
Owen, Steven 315w

Police informers
Northern Ireland 44-5w, 100w, 104-5w, 179-80w

Police interrogation
Ponting, Clive 463w

Police powers (21.02.85) 1299-320
Ports 509w

Political affiliations 326-7w
Juries 326-7w

Political refugees
India 463w
Pakistan 463w

Polling stations
Wales 567w

Pollution control
Coal fired power stations 523-4w
Sulphur dioxide 524w

Polytechnics
Student numbers 425-6w
Wales 48w

Ponting, Clive (11.02.85) 38, 161-3, (12.02.85) 180-7, 230w, 327-8w, 346-7w, 407w, 431-2w, 463w, 476-8, 524w, 603w (18.02.85) 733-826
Ministerial statements (12.02.85) 180-7
Police interrogation 463w
Prosecutions 161-3, 327-8w, 346-7, 432w
Standing order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 38
Trials 603w

Port of Liverpool (15.02.85) 704-10

Portable accommodation 173-4w, 539w
Northern Ireland 173-4w, 539w

Ports
Liverpool (15.02.85) 704-10
Motorways 366w
Police powers 509w
Roads 366w
Security 509w

Portsmouth
Naval bases 506w

Portugal
EC accession 479w, 1028-30

Postage stamps
EC action 103w

Postal services
USSR 474w

Post-neonatal mortality
Departmental publications 69w

Potato Marketing Board 470

Potato Marketing Scheme 1955 (18.02.85) 834

Potatoes
Production quotas 470

Potatoes (Assured Markets) Orders 1985 (18.02.85) 834

Potatoes (Protection of Guarantees) Order 1985 (18.02.85) 834

Poverty 68w
EC action 481w

Powell, Rt Hon J Enoch
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1041-2, 1060
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 367, 374-5, 384-6, 391-2, (14.02.85) 523, 540, 543-5
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 637-41, 671, 679
Questions
Meat, Export rebates 262-3w
School transport, Northern Ireland 502w

Powell, Mr Ray
Questions
Unemployment, Wales 13

Powell, Mr William
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1332-43, 1346, 1368-70
Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill, 2R & rem stages (22.02.85) 1381-2
Human embro experiments, Public petitions (14.02.85) 623
RAF Molesworth, Public petitions (14.02.85) 623-4
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 369-70, 375-6, 386-7, 395-6, 403, 408, 413-4 (14.02.85) 496, 522, 558, 563-5, 608
Questions
Afghanistan, Refugees 470w,
Capital investment 566w
Council house sales 335-41w
Parliamentary constituencies 621-2w

Power failures
Inland Revenue 402w

Power industry
External financing limits 98w
Privatisation 1189

Power stations
Demolition 517w
Hunterston A 615w

Power, Thomas 503-4w

Powley, Mr John
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1342
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 86, 90-3, 96-7
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 716

Prefabricated housing
Building repairs 485w
Building societies 485w
Local government expenditure 486-7w

Prerogative of mercy 11w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 123-6, 130, 137
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1230-1

Prescribed industrial diseases 601w

Prescriptions 150-1, 382w, 583w
Costs 501-2w
Dentists 277w
Doctors 79w
Drug abuse 620w
Drugs 1-3, 73w, 150, 151-2w, 216-7w, 277-8w, 319w, 383-4w, 405w, 460w, 583w
EC countries 382w
Family doctors 168w, 447w, 583-4w
Northern Ireland 180-1w
Rural areas 495-6w
Scotland 208w
Wales 597w
Wheelchairs 160w

Press conferences 111w

Presses
Industrial accidents 245-6w

Prestwich Hospital 159-60w
Drug abuse 159-60w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976 Review 509w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (21.02.85) 1299-320

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1299-320

Price, Sir David
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1227
Questions
Art works, Objects in lieu of tax 31w
Limited list prescribing 277w
Prefabricated housing, Building repairs 485w
Prefabricated housing, Building societies 485w
Social Security reviews 159w

Price increases
Milk 3w

Prices
Vaccination 442w

Primary education
Cost per pupil 421w, 533w
Northern Ireland 504-5w
Under-fives 190-2w

Prime Minister
Holidays 346w
Journalists 228w

Prime Minister domestic visits
Auchenshuggle 229w
Basildon 229w
Dartmouth 525w
Essendon 405w
North Mymms 229w
Parkhead 525w
Welwyn Garden City 525w
West Balgrochan 525w
Wheathampstead 100w
York 228w

Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 229w, 406w, 525-6w

Prime Minister visits abroad 300w, 346w
Jordan 405w
USA 854-5

Prison population
Northern Ireland 376-8w

Prison staff
Isle of Wight 233w
Northern Ireland 542w
Styal Prison 196w

Prisoners
Death 91-2w
Homicide 96w
Saudi Arabia 477w
Suicide 11w, 92-4w

Prisoners of war
Far East 158w

Prisoners on remand
Northern Ireland 104w, 372w, 503-4w
Winson Green Prison 14w

Prisoners release
Hostels 13w

Prisons
Construction 10w
Ministers domestic visits 88w
Young offenders 88-90w

Private education
Wales 49w

Private health insurance
Advertising 8w

Private hospitals
Wales 519-22w

Private members motions (13.02.85) 347, (20.02.85) 1036
Abortion (11.02.85) 40-72

Private notice questions
Speakers rulings & statements (11.02.85) 19, 21

Private rented housing 489w

Private rulings
Speakers rulings & statements (11.02.85) 18

Private sector
Nursing homes 278w
Old peoples homes 153w

Privatisation
British Airways 405w
British Leyland 232w
British shipbuilders 629w
Bus services (12.02.85) 192-266, 491w
Dept of Education & Science 414-5w
Income 564w
Liverpool Health Authority 166w
Local government services 283-4w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 257w
National Bus Company (12.02.85) 282-9
NHS 281-2w, 319-20w
Power industry 1189
Public libraries 31w
Trustee savings banks (20.02.85) 1114-50

Probation
Wales 11w

Probation & aftercare 13w

Procedure Select Committee
House of Commons questions 597w

Proctor, Mr K Harvey
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1058-9, 1070
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 347
Questions
Administrative costs, Dept of Education & Science 5w
Administrative costs, Dept of Energy 354w
Administrative costs, Dept of Health & Social Security 214w
Administrative costs, Dept of the Environment 85w
Administrative costs, Dept of Transport 19-20w
Administrative costs, Office of Arts & Libraries 202w
Administrative costs, Treasury 56w
Arts sponsorship, Taxation 17
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-3
Mental Health Act 1983 151w
Police, Exhibitions 193w
Reconviction rates 461-2w
Teachers, Pay 416w

Procurators fiscal 524-5

Procurement
Dept of Energy 352w

Production costs
Natural gas 98w

Production quotas
Milk 254-5w, 258-9w, 379-81w, 470-2, 457w, 475, 578-9w, (20.02.85) 1151-71
Potatoes 470

Productivity
Labour costs 434w
OECD countries 631-2w

Professional Association of Teachers 116-7w
Burnham Committee 116-7w

Propaganda
Public sector employment 186w

Property development 147w

Property transfer
Greater London Council 487w
Local government reform 536w

Proprietary drugs
Family doctors 83-4w

Prosecutions 326w
Attorney-General (11.02.85) 38, (12.02.85) 180-7
Cruise missile sites 327w
Northern Ireland 42w, 370-1w
Official secrets 325-6w, 345w, 603w
Ponting, Clive 161-3, 327-8w, 346-7w, 432w
Scotland 204w
Yorkshire & Humberside 235w

Protection of National Energy Resources (Coal) Bill 1984/85 (Proposed)
Motion to introduce negatived (19.02.85) 860-5

Public appointments
Defence procurement 52w, 198w
Judges 228w
Museums & Galleries Commission 102w
NHS administration 160-1, 497w
Regional health authorities 69w
Swindon Health Authority 441-2w
Welsh Office 48w

Public bills
House of Commons procedure (20.02.85) 1037-77
Speakers rulings & statements (20.02.85) 1114

Public corporations
Dept of Employment 517-8w
Dept of Health & Social Security 172w
Dept of Trade & Industry 630-1w
Dept of Transport 530-2w
Home Office 510-2w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 112w
Ministry of Defence 528w

Public expenditure 560w, 606-16w, 1186-7, 1192
Greater Manchester 406w
Infrastructure 1183-4
Per capital costs 52w
Retirement pensions 395-6w
Scotland 208w, 448w
Wales 52w

"Public Expenditure White Paper" 321, 418-9w, 422-4w, 851-2

Public health acts 341w
Local authorities 341w

Public libraries
Finance 17
Privatisation 31w

Public order policing
Fees & charges 509w
Leicester 234w
Metropolitan Police 295w

Public petitions
British Tinnitus Association (22.02.85) 1331
Bus services (13.02.85) 452-3
Human embryo experiments (12.02.85) 310, (13.02.85) 452, (14.02.85) 623, (15.02.85) 633-4, 635-6, (21.02.85) 1322
RAF Molesworth (14.02.85) 623-4
Torture (21.02.85) 1321

Public relations
Dept of Health & Social Security 385-6w

Public sector borrowing requirement 561w, 1182
Local government mortgages 433-4w

Public sector employment
Per capita costs 2-4w
Propaganda 186w

Public sector housing
Empty housing 309w

Public transport
Government grants to local authorities 370w
Greater London (12.02.85) 290-312, (19.02.85) 866-945, (20.02.85) 1081-113

Publicity
Crime prevention 234w

Pupil-teacher ratios 852

P11D forms 567w

Racial harassment 295w

Radiation hazards
Polaris submarines 628-9w

Radice, Mr Giles
Questions
Teachers 849
Teachers, Industrial disputes 843-4
Teachers, Pay 845
University finance 6-7w

Radio frequencies 366w

Radio programmes
Broadbent, Ewen 407w

Radio Society of Great Britain 305w

Radioactive waste disposal 312w
Bedfordshire 329-30w
Elstow 410w
Greater Manchester 623w

Radioactive wastes
Nuclear power stations 353w

RAF Brize Norton 529w
Armed forces catering services 529w

RAF Greenham Common 327w
Legal aid 327w

RAF Molesworth (13.02.85) 348, 433w, (14.02.85) 623-4, 626w
Church buildings 433w
Public petitions (14.02.85) 623-4
Standing Order No 10 applications (13.02.85) 348

Raffan, Mr Keith
Questions
Cash limits, Welsh Office 188-9w
Limited list prescribing 1-2
River Dee, Water pollution 7

Railway accidents
Disclosure of information 24w
Inquiries 24w
Rugby 24-5w
Severn tunnel 530w
Transport of hazardous materials 20w

Railway freight transport 254w

***Raison, Rt Hon Timothy,** Minister of State for Overseas Development*
Questions
Africa, World Bank 32w, 341w
EC aid 32w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 99w, 296-7w
Ethiopia, International assistance 297-8w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 32w

Ramirez, Sergio 229-30w

Rampton Committee see Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups Committee of Inquiry

Rampton Hospital 81-2w
Theft 81-2w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1286-8
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1119, 1132
Questions
Military aircraft, Training aircraft 506w

Rapier missiles
Costs 199w

Rate arrears 502w

Rate limitation 284w, 334w, 489w
Brent 309w
Haringey 19-21, 335w
Inner London Education Authority 624w
Land reclamation 333w

Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order 1985
Business statement (19.02.85) 946-8

Rate rebates
Costs 103w

Rate support grant penalties 334w
Road salting & gritting 334w

Rate support grants
Local government social services 153-4w
West Lothian 447w

Rateable value
Domestic rates 36w

Rates & rating
Local government revenue 102-4w

Rating revaluations 36w

Rear seat belts 529w

Reconviction rates 461-2w

Recruitment
Civil defence 229w
Teachers 381w

Recycling
Sewage 35w

Redbridge Health Authority 442w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1234
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1202
Derelict land, Yorkshire & Humberside 332-3w
EC Foreign Affairs Council, EC budget 479w
Fisheries, Yorkshire & Humberside 349w

Redundancy
Burnley 246w
Greater Manchester 430w
Lancashire 246-7w
Workington 247w

Reema houses 85w
Defective housing 85w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 776-82
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 32
Questions
Spain, Airports 1022

***Rees, Rt Hon Peter,** Chief Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Capital investment 566w
Capital investment, Infrastructure 1184
Capital investment, Northern region 572-3w
Capital investment, Sewers 1184
Debts 563w
Development land tax 1191-2
Economic growth 558w, 560w
Economic models 56w
Economic policy 294w
Economic situation 565w, 568w
Employment level, Pay 201-2w
Employment opportunities, Pay 565-6w, 569w
Exchange rates, Economic models 55-6w
Factory closures, Rowntree Mackintosh 1192
Gas supply industry, Financial targets 564-5w
Imports 1183
Industrial investment 565w
Inflation 561w
Investment 566w
Labour costs, Productivity 434w
Local government expenditure 1187
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 563w
Manual workers, Pay 492-3w
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 564w
Minimum lending rate, Inflation 494w
Money supply, Local government mortgages 433-4w
National income 493w
National income, EC countries 54-5w
Nationalised industries, External financing limits 1187
Nationalised Industries Legislation Consultation Paper 61-2w
Pay, Employment 493w
Polling stations, Wales 567w
Profits, Pay 568w
Public expenditure 560w, 606-16w, 1186-7, 1192
Public expenditure, Infrastructure 1183-4
Public expenditure, Wales 52w
Public sector borrowing requirement 561w
Relationship between Employment & Wages 565w
Social security, Expenditure 562w
Sterling 1183
Teachers, Pay 1192
Unemployment 563w, 1191
Unemployment, Costs 606w

Reform of the House of Lords Bill 1984/85
1R (14.02.85) 492

Refugees
Afghanistan 470w
Ethiopia 346w

Refuse disposal
Costs 623w

Regional aid
North West region 178w
Scotland 616-7w
Wales 8-9
Yorkshire & Humberside 408w

Regional development grants
Glenrothes 573w
Wales 381w

Regional fire advisers 343-5w, 358w
Civil defence 343-5w, 358w

Regional health authorities
Contracts for services 281-2w
Information 218w
NHS finance 155w
Public appointments 69w

Regional planning & development
Scotland 209w

Regional selective assistance 50w

Reg(EEC)565/80 262-3w

Rehabilitation centres 446w

"Relationship between Employment & Wages" 565-6w

Religious discrimination
USSR 1022-3

Religious education
Surrey 350w

Remand centres
Suicide 233w

Remand in custody
Northern Ireland 104-5w, 270w, 371-2w, 538-9w

Remedial education
Northern Ireland 504-5w

Remotely piloted vehicles 142w, 433w
Defence contracts 142w, 433w

Rent Act 1977 489w

Rent arrears
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 502w

Rent control
Orkney 460w
Shetland 460w

Rent increases
Greater London 86w
Scottish Special Housing Association 207w

Rent officers 86-7w, 460
Departmental publications 86-7w

Rent rebates
Local government staff 384-5w

Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 375w

Rented housing
Northern Ireland 375w

***Renton, Mr Tim** Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Afghanistan 477-8w
Afghanistan, Refugees 470w
Ascension Island, Police 537-8w
Ascension Island, Wild cats 537w
Brazil, Trade fairs 465w
Central America 473w
Chile, Exports 439w
Chile, Human rights 469w
Commonwealth 476w, 478w
Cyprus 203w, 476w
Diplomatic service, Costs 479w
El Salvador, Armed forces training 302w
El Salvador, Foreign policy 204w
Ethiopia, Overseas aid 603-4w
European Communities, Civil service manpower 273-4w
Falkland Islands, Territorial waters 475w
France, Passports 270w
Gibraltar 478w, 1021-2
Government purchasing, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 605w
Guatemala, Arms trade 1021-2
Guatemala, Diplomatic relations 468w
Guatemala, Human rights 1017
Hicks, Margaret, Compensation 30w
Indian subcontinent, Immigration applications 604w
Nicaragua, Diplomatic relations 468w
Overtime, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 29w
Pacific Islands 474w
Sex discrimination, Treaties 440w
Sex monitoring, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 301w
Sierra Leone, British embassies 142-3w
Sierra Leone, Immigration applications 143w
Spain, Airports 1022
Spain, Extradition 29w
Sir Lanka, Ministers visits abroad 468w
St Helena, Milk 534w
Syrian Arab Republic, British embassies 271w
Temporary staff, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 30w
Terrorism, International cooperation 467w, 537w
Turkey, Human rights 469w

UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 143-4w, 1020-1
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985, UK delegations 440w
UN declaration on decolonisation, Anniversaries 302w
UN Economic Commission for Africa, Conference centres 301-2w
United Nations, Expenditure 302w

Rents
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 617w

Repairs & maintenance
Severn bridge 491-2w
Telephones 17-8w

Representation of the People Bill 1984/85
Com (13.02.85) 351-424, (14.02.85) 493-622

Research
Acid rain 175w, 575w
Antarctic 601w
Ash dieback 575w
Fusion reactors 1-2w
Home helps 274-5w
Ionizing radiation 101w
University teachers 189w

Research finance
Medical Research Council 418-9w

Resettlement units 387w, 443-4w, 496w, 583w

Residential care
Clothing 161-2w
Lothian 356w
Supplementary benefits 387-8w

Resignations
Government Communications Headquarters 605w
Tax officers 401w

Respiratory diseases
Coal mining (20.02.85) 1078-80

Restraint equipment
Kenya 178w

Retail trade 364w
Training 134w

Retirement pensions 216w
Public expenditure 395-6w

"Review of Home Improvement Policy Consultation Paper" 333w

Re-Acquisition of Public Assets Bill 1984/85
1R (14.02.85) 492

Re-chem 244w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1368
Questions
House of Commons staff, Trade union membership 253w

Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Questions
Corporation tax, Accounting 291w
Economic situation 568w
Employment schemes, Costs 248-9w
Free school meals, Costs 102w
Housing benefits 275w
Housing benefits, Administrative costs 275w
Income tax, Administrative costs 202w
Rate rebates, Costs 103w
Rates & rating, Local government revenue 102-4w
Student grants, Costs 102w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 216w
Tax thresholds 145w

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 62-6
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 641-5, 665
Questions
Abortion, Administrative delays 156w
Abortion, Young people 156-8w
Birth rate, Young people 168-70w
Nursery schools 418w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Equal opportunities 138-9w
UN Decade for Women 1976-85 137-8w, 143-4w, 1020-1
Youth training scheme, Equal opportunities 138w

Riding hats 17w, 557w
Standards enforcement 17w
VAT 557w

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1045-8, 1071
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1083-4, 1088, 1096-8, 1106
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 866-71, 875, 885, 904, 935, 938-42
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 192-9, 204
Transport Bill, Money res (12.02.85) 275-6
Transport Bill, Ways & means res (12.02.85) 282-4
Questions
Administrative costs, Dept of Transport 19-20w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 114w
Greater London Council 366w
London Regional Transport, Finance 366w
Ministers correspondence, Costs 254w
Public corporations, Dept of Transport 530-2w
Railway accidents, Severn tunnel 530w

Rifkind, Mr Malcolm, Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
British embassies 470w
Common farm prices, EC budget 480w
Dublin Summit 481w
East West relations 469w, 471w
Easter Europe, Foreign policy 473-4w
EC budget 605w, 1031-2
EC budget, UK repayments 1032-3
EC budget contributions, VAT 480w
EC external relations 1030
EC Foreign Affairs Council 538w
EC Foreign Affairs Council, EC budget 479w
EC Foreign Affairs Council, Integrated Mediterranean programmes 481w
EC Foreign Affairs Council, Own resources 480w
EC internal trade 1030-1
Ethiopia 472w
European Communities 480-1w
European Communities, Finance 480w
European Council, Voting methods 1027-8
European Security Conference 29w, 271-3w
Fergusson, Adam 359w
Fergusson, Adam, Ministerial policy advisers 30w
Fontainebleau Summit 480w, 1033
Government Communications Headquarters, Resignations 605w
Law of the Sea, Treaties 359w
Namibia 466-7w
Namibia, Human rights 469w
Nujoma, Sam 465w
Poverty, EC action 481w
South Africa, Constitutions 474w
South Africa, Criminal proceedings 465-6w
South Africa, Foreign policy 465-6w
South Africa, Trials 466w
Spain, EC accession 479w, 1028-30
Terrorism, Embassies 467-8w
USSR, Human rights 1022-4
USSR, Jews 1023-4
USSR, Postal services 474w
USSR, Religious discrimination 1022-3
Yugoslavia 477w

Right to buy 335-41w
Scotland 206w

Risley, Glyn 445w

River Dee
Water pollution 7

River pollution
Scotland 331
Wales 7

River Tweed 459w

Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre 446w

Riverside Studios 31w

Road accidents
Military bands 167-8
M25 12w, 24w
Northern Ireland 44w
Wales 49w

Road construction
Bitumens 438w
Expenditure 113w
Lancashire 113w
Local authorities 253w

Road freight transport 23-4w

Road safety barriers 25-6w
Chelmsford bypass 491w
Scotland 8-9w
Wales 48w

Road salting & gritting 334-5w, 491w
Rate support grant penalties 334w

Road signs
Scotland 334

Road traffic 23
A642 369w
Bypasses 253-4w

Road Traffic Law Review Committee 303w

Road works
A38 173w
A55 45-6w
A303 628w
Expenditure 20w
M4 226w

Road & rail transport comparisons 173w

Roads 114w
Lancashire 114w
Ports 366w
Wales 49w

"Roads White Paper" 114w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Debates etc
House of Commons questions, Table Office (18.02.85) 729
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 77, 86, 110-2
Questions
Building industry 402w
County Hall 723
Educational finance 851-2
Mortgage relief 559w
Supplementary benefits, Mortgages 158w

Roberts, Mr Wyn, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
AIDS, Wales 14
Blood, Wales 47w
Compulsorily detained mental patients, Wales 225w
Consent to medical treatment, Wales 187-8w
Council house sales, Wales 9-10
Council housing, Wales 226w, 427w
Drugs, Prescriptions 3
Flats 226-7w
Heart Beat Wales 597w
Heath Hospital, Compensation 48-9w
Homelessness, Wales 227-8w
Hospital beds, Wales 518-20w
Housing, Cynon Valley 6
Housing, Wales 6-7
Housing starts, Wales 188w, 226w
Housing & handicapped, Wales 187w
Intensive care units, East Dyfed Health Authority 11
Limited list prescribing 1-3, 597w

Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 77, 81

Lewis, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Trade Union & Employment Acts (Repeal) Bill, 1R (18.02.85) 732
Questions
Spain, EC accession 479w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Education, Local government expenditure 422w
Family doctors, Medical certificates 81w
Heating allowances 854
Hospital closures, Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital 154
Lorries, Spray suppression 367-9w
Lorry drivers, Training 134w
Prestwich Hospital, Drug abuse 159-60w
Saudi Arabia, Prisoners 477w

Libyan Arab Republic 470w

Licensed premises
VAT 562w

Licensing
Amateur radio 305w
Drugs 441w, 599-600w
Nursing homes 74w
Opencast mining 352w
Telephones 17-8w
Tree felling 243w, 313w, 617w

Licensing laws
Scotland 233w

Lighthouses
Contracts 26w

Lighting
Chelmsford bypass 491w
Motorways 113w
Ruabon bypass 48w

Lilley, Mr Peter
Questions
Soil Survey of England & Wales, Finance 407w

Limited list prescribing 1-3, 73w, 83-4w, 150-3, 180-1w, 208w, 216-7w, 268w, 276-7w, 318-9w, 323-4, 345w, 356-7w, 383-4w, 405w, 441w, 460w, 495-6w, 501-2w, 583-4w, 597w, 1193-4, (21.02.85) 1219-29
Drugs 583w
Ministerial statements (21.02.85) 1219-29
Northern Ireland 181w, 268w, 345w
Pharmacists 152
Scotland 208w, 323-6, 356-7w, 460w

Lincoln City Council Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Literacy 419w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Control of Industry Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 137
Questions
Special education, Expenditure 423w

Liverpool
Church schools 422w
Croxteth Hall 245w
Factory closures (18.02.85) 730
Ministers domestic visits 28w
Philharmonic Hall 245w
Ports (15.02.85) 704-10
Speke Hall 245w
Unemployment (21.02.85) 1323-30

Liverpool Eight Law Centre 143w

Liverpool Health Authority 166w
Privatisation 166w

Liverpool Philharmonic Hall 245w

Livestock
Wars 265w

Lloyds Bank (Merger) Bill 1984/85
2R* (12.02.85) 149

Lloyd, Mr Ian
Questions
Optical fibres 177-8w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 84, 100, 107
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1318, 1319
Questions
Diplomatic service, Costs 479w
Employment opportunities, Pay 559w
Grammar schools 421w
Guatemala, Diplomatic relations 468w
Hospital closures, Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital 154
Pendlebury Hospital, Cystic fibrosis 159w

Loans
Farmers 618w

Local authorities
Civil defence 95w
Housing Acts 341w
Public Health Acts 341w
Road construction 253w
Sex discrimination 87w
Smallholdings 468-9

Local democracy (19.02.85) 866-945

Local education authorities
Sex discrimination 119w

Local enterprise development unit 376w, 449-50w

Local government
Guillotine (11.02.85) 73-122

Local Government Act 1966 80w, 510w

Local Government Bill 1984/85
Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 73-122

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Didcot 174w

Local government expenditure 38w, 334w, 1187
Arts finance 450-2w
Block grant 33-5w
Capital investment 5, 563w
Education 422w
Greater London 537w
Gypsies 410w
Leisure facilities 333-4
Metropolitan counties 536-8w
Prefabricated housing 486-7w
Wales 5

Local government finance 489w, 577w
Haringey 19-21
Police 13w

Local Government Finance Inquiry 335w

Local government mortgages 332w
Money supply 433-4w
Public sector borrowing requirement 433-4w
Scotland 448w

Local Government Practices & Procedure Inquiry 311w

Local government reform 37-42w, 176w, 309-11w
Greater London Council 623w
Police 510w
Property transfer 536w

Local government revenue
Rates & rating 102-4w
Wales 6

Local government services
Fees & charges 335w
Fire services 13w
Privatisation 283-4w

Local government social services
Managers 389w
Rate support grants 153-4w

Local government staff
Greater London Council 482w
Housing benefits 384-5w
Rent rebates 384-5w

Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 37-40w, 309-11w, 487w

Location of industry
North West region 230-1w

Lodging allowances 306-7w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Emphysema (Compensation of coalminers) Bill, 1R (20.02.85) 1078-80
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 716
Coal mining, Yorkshire & Humberside 349w
Ethiopia 472w
European Economic Community 203w
Unemployment, Yorkshire & Humberside 349-50w

Log books 51-2w, 235w, 287w
HMS Conqueror 235w, 287w
HMS Starling 51-2w

London docklands
Airports 331-2w
Compulsory purchase 488w

London Docklands Development Corporation
Compulsory purchase 624w
Corporate plans 488w
Inter-Action 488w
Land acquisition 488w

London Orchestral Concert Board 31w

London Regional Passenger Transport Committee 21-2w

London Regional Transport (12.02.85) 290-312, 366w (19.02.85) 866-945, (20.02.85) 1081-113
Finance 366w

London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill 1984/85
2R (19.02.85) 366w, 866-945
Business motions (19.02.85) 1008, (20.02.85) 1037-77, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1081-113

London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 290-312

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine 161w

Long stay patients 278w

Lord, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 633
Questions
NHS finance, East Anglia 584-5w

Lorries
Spray suppression 367-9w

Lorry drivers
Driving licences 303w
Training 134w

Lothian
Community care 356w
Handicapped 356w
Residential care 356w

Lothian Health Board 313w

Low pay
Tax yields 63w

Lowdham Grange youth custody centre 14w, 236w
Funerals 236w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1036
Port of Liverpool (15.02.85) 704-6, 709
Questions

British Gas Corporation 148-9w
Coal, Imports 719
McQuarrie, IM, Criminal injuries compensation 14w
Medical students, Student grants 415w
Ministry of Defence, Dismissal 1197
Waite, Terry 468w

Luce, Mr Richard, *Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Arms control treaties 467w, 474-5w
Arms control treaties, Chemical weapons 475w
Cyprus 1018-9
EC budget, Own resources 204w
European Economic Community 203w
European Security Conference 472-3w
Iran, Bahai sect 478-9w
Iran, Diplomatic service 271w
Iran, Human rights 469w, 1026-7
Iran, Overseas trade 1027
Iraq, British embassies 271w
Iraq, Diplomatic service 271w
Israel, Arms embargoes 1025
Israel, Arms trade 1025
Kampuchea 31w
Lebanon 470-1w
Lebanon, Foreign policy 203-4w
Lebanon, Peace keeping operations 471w
Libyan Arab Republic 470w
Middle East 475w
Middle East, Arms trade 1024-6
Middle East, Peace negotiations 473w, 475-6w
Middle East, Terrorism 467w
Mutual & balanced force reductions 440w, 475w
Nuclear non proliferation treaty 604-5w
Nuclear power, Technology transfer 604w
Nuclear safeguards, Sellafield 439-40w
Nuclear test ban 473w
Nuclear weapons tests 142w
Plutonium, Nuclear safeguards 359-60w
Saudi Arabia, Prisoners 477w
South Africa, Nuclear power 142w
Sudan, Foreign policy 472w
Sudan, Human rights 204w
Syrian Arab Republic, Deportation 30-1w, 477w
Trident, Nuclear non proliferation treaty 478w
Turkey, Human rights 1019-20
Turkey, Ministers visits abroad 1019
Turkey, Overseas trade 1020
Uganda, Human rights 203w
UN Relief & Works Agency 476w
UN World Disarmament Campaign 604w
USA, Strategic defence initiative 477w
USSR, Satellite killers 472w
Waite, Terry 468w
Western European Union 471w

Lumns Lane 623w

Lupins
Agricultural production 470

Lyell, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Agricultural & Horticultural Cooperation Scheme 1985 (18.02.85) 831-2
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1340, 1348-52, 1368
Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill, 2R & rem stages (22.02.85) 1376-8
Questions
Housing benefits, Hospital patients 385w
Presses, Industrial accidents 245-6w
Public sector housing, Empty housing 309w
Radioactive waste disposal 312w
Steroid drugs 69w

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1226
Questions
National insurance, Employers contributions 1185
NHS, Energy conservation 394-5w
Severe weather payments 157

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Questions
Bonnybridge Denny Morbidity Review 244w
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 324
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 209w
Severe disablement allowance 159w
Sugar, Industry 257w

McCusker, Mr Harold
Questions
Sinn Fein, Northern Ireland government 617-8w

McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Debates etc
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1114-7, 1129-30, 1133, 1146
Questions
Capital investment, Infrastructure 1184
Civil Servants, Disclosure of information 726
Family income 403w
Information technology 364-5w
Investment income surcharge 148w
Mortgage relief 572w
National insurance contributions 75w
Personal taxation 434w
Semiconductor devices 365w
Tax rates & bands 61w
Tax rates & bands, Inflation 308w
Tax thresholds 145-6w
Tax yields 60-1w

Macfarlane, Mr Neil, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Boxing (22.02.85) 1396-400
Questions
Aluminium, Water supply 588-9w
Archaeology, City of Westminster 36w
Caravan Sites Act 1968 625w
Derelict land, West Midlands 535w
Derelict land, Yorkshire & Humberside 332-3w
Greenbelt, West Midlands 482w
Gypsies 481-2w
Gypsies, Caravan sites 328-9w
High technology, Industrial development 411w
Local government expenditure, Gypsies 410w
London docklands, Airports 331-2w
National Heritage Memorial Fund 534-5w
Offices, Greater London 622-3w
Planning inquiries, West Chellaston 411w
Planning permission, Chain stores 331w
Planning permission, Housing 328w
Radioactive waste disposal, Elstow 410w
Sewage, Recycling 35w
Structure plans 411w
Structure plans, Bedfordshire 329-30w
Vacant land, West Midlands 410w
Water authorities, Finance 483-4w
Water authorities, Financial targets 482-4w
Water charges 329w
Water supply, Bottled water 486w

MacGregor, Mr John, *Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food*
Debates etc
Agricultural & Horticultural Cooperation Scheme 1985 (18.02.85) 827-9, 832-4
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1167-71
Questions
Agricultural land, Forestry 320-1w
Agricultural production, EC countries 582w
Agricultural products, EC external trade 581w
Agricultural products, Exports 632-4w
Agricultural products, Imports 581w
Agricultural subsidies 256w, 467
Animal feed 65w
Beef premiums 259-60w, 458w, 465-7
"Broadleaves in Britain" 321-2w
Cattle 260w
Cereal substitutes, Imports 377-8w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 435-6w
Cereals, Weedkillers 580w
Common farm prices 66-8w
EC external trade, Eastern Europe 436w
Farm incomes 260w, 474
Farm incomes, Statistics 473-4
Fisheries, EC countries 261w
Fishing quotas 632w
Food, Marketing 256w
Food, Nutrition labelling 458-9w
Food, Pesticide residues 588w
Food, Production 263-4w
Food imports 263w
Food imports, Pesticide residues 635-6w
Green pound 581-2w
Hill livestock allowances 64w, 261-2w
Horses, EC grants & loans 378w
Insecticides, Pest resistance 579w
Intervention stocks 255-6w
Lupins, Agricultural production 470
Meat, Export rebates 262-3w
Milk, Outgoers scheme 437w
Milk, Production quotas 470, 578-9w
Milk & milk products, Animal feed 580w
Monetary compensatory amounts 456w
New Zealand, Imports 261w
Paraquat, West Germany 636w
Peas, Agricultural production 469-70
Pesticides 633-4w
Pesticides, Alachlor 636w
Pesticides, Departmental publications 634-5w
Pesticides, Fenitrothion 579w
Pesticides, Safety 579w, 633-4w
Pesticides, Warble fly 587-8w
Potato Marketing Board 470
Potatoes, Production quotas 470
Salmon 458w
Salmon, Fishing catches 458w
Salmon, Scotland 458w
Salmon, Solway Firth 265w
Sheep meat, Exports 581w
Sheep meat, Self-sufficiency 475
Sheep premiums 466-7
Sugar, Consumption 65w
Sugar, Industry 257w
Waste disposal, Seas & oceans 263w
Weedkillers, Pest resistance 580w
Wheat, Intervention prices 261w

McGuire, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 955, 968-71, 1002, 1003-5, 1006
Questions
House of Commons staff, Pay 250-3w

McKay, Mr Allen
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1202
Iran-Iraq war, Merchant seamen 490w
USSR, Jews 1023

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Questions
Cash limits, Dept of Energy 413w
Dept of Employment, Computers in government departments 348-9w
Fish conservation, Scotland 240w
Inflation 561w
IRA 857-8
Lebanon 471w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 845

MacKay, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Acid rain, Research 575w
AIDS, Scotland 7w
Ambulance services, Strathclyde 132w
Ash dieback, Research 575w
Beef premiums 242w
"Broadleaves in Britain" 313-4w, 357w
Common farm prices, Scotland 241w
Community care, Lothian 356w
Deer, Scotland 314-5w
Deer (Firearms Etc) (Scotland) Order 1984 8w
Dental charges, Scotland 340
Dental students, Scotland 244w
Drug abuse, Scotland 243-4w
Farm capital grant scheme, Scotland 242w
Fish conservation, Scotland 240w
Fluoridation, Scotland 448w
Forest protection 314w
Forestry 240w
Forestry, Scotland 330-1

Ponting, Clive, Police interrogation 463w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 427w
Prosecutions, Yorkshire & Humberside 235w
Public order policing, Fees & charges 509w
Public order policing, Leicester 234w
Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, Burglary 513-4w
St Lucia, Metropolitan Police 235w
Television licences 93w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 237w
United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation 343-4w

Sheep meat
Exports 581w
Self-sufficiency 475

Sheep premiums 242-3w, 259-60w, 465-7

Sheep scab 256-7w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Student grants 626w
TRRL Laboratory Report 439w

Sheffield
National Freight Company 515w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 742
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1116
Questions
Civil service 726-7
National Theatre, Arts finance 15-6
Nationalised industries, External financing limits 1187

Shellfish
Tributyl tin 175w

Shenley Hospital 500w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 196, 201, 222-4, 256
Questions
Bus services, Wales 47w
Bus services subsidies 20-1w
Buses, Scotland 7-8w
Hospital closures, Wrightington Hospital 153
Sheep meat, Self-sufficiency 475

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Road Traffic Law Review Committee 303w

Shetland
Rent control 460w

Shipbuilding
Warships 625-6w

Shipping
Fraud (12.02.85) 314-22
Taxation 559w
USSR 303w

Shipping safety 490w

Shoggs Head School 351w
School closures 351w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 946
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 79-83
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1044-5, 1046

Short Brothers 268-9w
Government assistance to industry 269w
Manpower 268-9w
Profits 269w

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 55, 61, 62
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 646, 649-51, 658, 659, 665
Questions
Community programme, Training 515w
Community programme, Women 515w
Computech, Industrial training schemes 301w
Employment level 348w
Income tax, Employment opportunities 569-70w
Local government social services, Rate support grants 153-4w
Wages councils 516w

Short, Mrs Renee
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 43, 45-8, 52, 70
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1227
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 645, 674-6
Questions
Acute beds, Greater London 68-9w
Adult education, Unemployed 191w
Agricultural subsidies 637-8w
Agriculture, Nature conservation 636w
AIDS, Death 71w
Arts, finance, Local government expenditure 450-2w
Business statement 1210-1
Chatterton Hey, Drug abuse 393w
Child patients, Hospital admissions 76-7w
Coal, Imports 26w
Coal closure areas, Employment opportunities 99w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 603w
Corporal punishment, Scotland 9w
Crimes of violence, Hospital staff 13-4w
Cruelty to children 77w
Cruelty to children, West Midlands 77w
Curriculum, Sex discrimination 119w
Drug abuse 599-600w
Drug abuse, Doctors 620-1w
Drug abuse, Prescriptions 620w
Drugs Branch Inspectorate 620w
Education, West Indians 602w
Education & industry 118-9w
Educational health services, Dental services 117w
Educational standards, Ethnic minorities 602w
Heart diseases, Transplant surgery 77w
Hospital patients, Medical treatments 166w
Hospital waiting lists, West Midlands 167w
Inland Revenue, Civil service manpower 606w
Ketoconazole, Drug side effects 79w
Lead pollution 86w
Limited list prescribing 383-4w
Magistrates courts, Administrative delays 342-3w
Microelectronics industry, Government assistance to industry 18w
Ministry of Defence, Contract cleaning 627w
New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton 280w
NHS charges 167w
Police cautions 342w
Post-neonatal mortality, Departmental publications 69w
Primary education, Under-fives 190-2w
Prisoners release, Hostels 13w
Prisons, Construction 10w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 69w
School closures 6w
Social security benefits, Overpayments 71w
Social security recipients, West Midlands 218-20w
Special education, Computers in schools 119w
Staff-student ratios, West Midlands 192w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 70w
Teacher exchanges 117-8w
Teacher training, School discipline 192w
Teachers, Scotland 616w
Teachers, Secondary education 603w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 100-1w, 119w
Universities, Cost per student 6w
Universities, Women 119w
USSR, Shipping 303w
VAT, Theatres 147-8w
Venereal diseases, Young people 77w

Sierra Leone
British embassies 142-3w
Immigration applications 143w

Silvester, Mr Fred
Questions
Income tax on investment incomes 402w
Investment income, Married people 292w
Married personal allowance, Child benefit 292w
NHS finance, Elderly 155-6w

Single people
Housing 328w
Tax burden 558w

Single personal allowance 290w

Sinn Fein 617-8w
Northern Ireland government 617-8w

Sites of special scientific interest
Pesticides 536w

Sixth form education 533w

Sizewell Inquiry 353w

Skeet, Mr T H H
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 28
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (11.02.85) 33
Questions
Bitumens, Road construction 438w
Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate 405-6w
Radioactive waste disposal, Elstow 410w
Structure plans, Bedfordshire 329-30w

Skillcentres 428w
Inverclyde 208-9w
Ministerial statements (21.02.85) 1230-9
Scotland 322-3
Wales 11

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 746
Housing Benefits Amendment (No 4) Regulations 1984 (13.02.85) 436-8
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1040, 1060-5, 1068, 1069
Oral question time intervention (20.02.85) Not in bound volume
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1034-5
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 180
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 343-4
Private notice question point of order (12.02.85) 167
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 584
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 989, 990, 994, 995, 1007
Questions
Business statement 484, 1216-7
Coal, Central Electricity Generating Board 237-8w
Coal, Domestic energy consumption 187w
Coal firing scheme 354w
Coal mining, Apprentices 2w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 717, 1196-7, 1206-7
Coal stocks 295w
Combined heat & power 187w
Combined heat & power, Expenditure 97-8w
Debts 563w
District heating 85w
Electricity tariffs 1w
Energy consumption 238w
National Coal Board 352w
Parliamentary papers, Members facilities 725
Poverty, EC action 481w

Sleipner field (11.02.85) 23-9, 187w, 523w
Ministerial statements (11.02.85) 23-9

Slums
Yorkshire & Humberside 332w

Small Business Bill 1984/85
2R order read (22.02.85) 1394

Small businesses 178-9w, 1188
Government assistance to industry 179w, 232-4w
Northern Ireland 449-50w
Scotland 211-2w, 577w

Small claims 10w

Smallholdings
Local authorities 468-9

Smart, Ernest Trevor 393w
Social security appeals 393w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 179
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 784-6
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1043-4
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 182
Ponting, Clive, Standing order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 38-9
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Pirate radio stations 285w
Environment Select Committee on Wildlife & Countryside Act 258w
Guatemala, Human rights 1017
Housing benefits, Owner occupied housing 501w

Smith, Mr Cyril
Debates etc
Employment of Young People Bill, 1R (13.02.85) 349-50

Smith, Sir Dudley
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1225
Questions
Business statement 1211
£5 notes 493w
Limited list prescribing 151-2, 277w, 383-4w

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Share option scheme 564w

Smoking
Wales 4-5

Smuggling
Drugs 59-60w
Heroin 289w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc
Limited list prescribing (21.02.85) 1223, 1228-9
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 404, (14.02.85) 566, 568, 572
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 668-9
Questions
Dispensing doctors, Costs 79w
Doctors, Prescriptions 79w
Limited list prescribing, Northern Ireland 181w
Oxygen, Northern Ireland 503w, 539w
Prescriptions, Northern Ireland 180-1w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 856

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 1005
Questions
Greater London Council 366w
London Regional Transport, Finance 366w

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Questions
East west relations 471w
Forestry, Scotland 331
House of Commons, Equal opportunities officers 140w
Power industry, Privatisation 1189
Salmon, Scotland 312-3w
Salmon, Solway Firth 186w, 213w, 265w
Smoking, Wales 5

Social class
Health services 586w

Social security
Civil service manpower 386w
Expenditure 562w
Sex discrimination 27w

Social security abuse
Exceptional needs payments 78-9w

Social security appeals
Glasgow 280w
Smart, Ernest Trevor 393w

Social security benefits
Overpayments 71w
Young people 275w

Social security benefits rules
Housing benefits (13.02.85) 425-51

Social security recipients
Supplementary benefits 216w
West Midlands 218-20w

Social security reviews 157-9
Budget March 1985 158-9

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children 513-4w
Burglary 513-4w

Software piracy (22.02.85) 1332-70

Soil Survey of England & Wales 259w, 407w
Finance 259w, 407w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 87
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1301-7, 1308
Questions
Alcoholism, Medical treatments 497w
Civil service unions 727-8
Consumer protection, Secondhand cars 361w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Greater London 618-9w
Policy, Pay methods 510w
Police powers, Ports 509w

Solicitors
Complaints (12.02.85) 189-91

Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure) Bill 1984/85 1R (12.02.85) 189-91

Solitary confinement 14w

Solway Firth 186w, 213w
Salmon 186w, 213w, 265w

South Africa 304w
Church Commissioners 453w
Constitutions 474w
Criminal proceedings 465-6w
Foreign policy 465-6w
Human rights 469w
Nuclear power 142w
Trials 466w

South Atlantic Campaign memorial 527w

South West region
Employment opportunities 27w
Unemployment 26-7w

South Yorkshire
Asbestos 41w

Southampton
Citizens band radio 366w

Southern Education & Library Board 504-5w

Spain
Airports 1022
EC accession 479w, 1028-30
Extradition 11w, 29w, 233-4w
Foreign policy 1021-2

Speaker and his deputies, *For rulings and statements see separate heading Speakers rulings & statements*
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (12.02.85) 192, (18.02.85) 733, (19.02.85) 949, 962, (20.02.85) 1145
Orders & regulations motions (18.02.85) 834
Private bills, 2R order read (21.02.85) 1181
Private Members Bills, 2R order read (15.02.85) 703, (22.02.85) 1391
Procedure (11.02.85) 4, 21, 104, (12.02.85) 162, 164, 170, 178, 179, 180, 187, (13.02.85) 326, 346, (14.02.85) 479, 486, (18.02.85) 717, 730, 732, 742, 754, 756, 757, 758, 817, 818, 819, (19.02.85) 916, 941, 948, 949, 1008, (20.02.85) 1030, 1035, 1036, 1040, 1133, 1146, (21.02.85) 1194
Standing Order No 10 applications, Clive Ponting (11.02.85) 38
Standing Order No 10 applications, Coal mining (11.02.85) 37, (14.02.85) 491-2
Standing Order No 10 applications, Guiness Company (18.02.85) 730
Standing Order No 10 applications, Hospital consultants (11.02.85) 34-5
Standing Order No 10 applications, MI5s Official Secrets (21.02.85) 1240
Standing Order No 10 applications, RAF Molesworth (13.02.85) 348
Standing Order No 10 applications, Severe weather payments (18.02.85) 732

Speakers rulings & statements
Adjournment debates (13.02.85) 458
Business motions (20.02.85) 1069
Business questions (21.02.85) 1216
Calling of Members (13.02.85) 327, (20.02.85) 1036, (21.02.85) 1216
Disclosure of information (11.02.85) 18
House of Commons debates (18.02.85) 733
House of Commons galleries (15.02.85) 641
House of Commons motions (12.02.85) 260
House of Commons questions (12.02.85) 166, (18.02.85) 729
House of Commons select committees (18.02.85) 798-9
Members conduct (13.02.85) 347, (14.02.85) 477, (18.02.85) 817, (19.02.85) 916, 917, 1003, 1004
Members interventions (11.02.85) 146, (12.02.85) 201, 224, 255 (13.02.85) 458, (18.02.85) 748, 781, 818, (19.02.85) 914, 963, 1005, (20.02.85) 1049, 1055

Members speeches (11.02.85) 45, 104, (12.02.85) 192, (15.02.85) 637, 660, (18.02.85) 733, 781-2, 796, (19.02.85) 918, (21.02.85) 1242, 1258, 1275, 1312, 1319
Members suspension (21.02.85) 1216-7
Ministerial speeches (18.02.85) 751
Ministerial statements (11.02.85) 25, 39, (12.02.85) 174, 185, (21.02.85) 1222, 1226, 1228, 1232, 1239
Open questions (21.02.85) 1218
Oral questions (13.02.85) 335, 342, (14.02.85) 480
Orders & regulations (19.02.85) 859
Points of order (12.02.85) 165, 167, (13.02.85) 347, (14.02.85) 479, 480, (18.02.85) 819, (19.02.85) 918, (20.02.85) 1034, 1035, 1036
Private notice questions (11.02.85) 19, 21
Private rulings (11.02.85) 18
Public bills (20.02.85) 1114
Scope of debate (13.02.85) 437, (19.02.85) 954, 955, 959, 964, 969, 989, 992, 1001, 1003, 1005, (20.02.85) 1038, 1042, 1043, 1045-69, passim
Second reading (19.02.85) 914
Standing Order No 10 applications (11.02.85) 22
Supplementary questions (13.02.85) 335
Table Office (18.02.85) 729
Ten minute rule bills (19.02.85) 862
Unparliamentary expressions (12.02.85) 188, (13.02.85) 345, 346, (14.02.85) 483, (19.02.85) 1003, (21.02.85) 1212, 1216-7

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
Business statement (12.02.85) 178

General Belgrano (18.02.85) 748-9, 765, 804-6
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 79
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1037-8, 1058-9, 1063, 1074
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1081, 1096, 1105-7, 1108
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 874, 895-9
London Regional Transport (Levy) Order 1985 (12.02.85) 300-1
Questions
Offices, Greater London 622-3w
Official secrets, Prosecutions 345w
Ronan Point 409-10w
Youth Options Menu 120-1w

Special development orders 410w

Special education
Computers in schools 119w
Expenditure 423w
Handicapped children 223-5w
Teacher training 850-1

Specialist claims control units 82w

Speed, Mr Keith
Questions
M20, Expenditure 438w
Work permits, Catering 428w

Speed limits 23w

Speke Hall 245w
Liverpool 245w

Speller, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 26
Questions
Energy Efficiency Office 720-1
Housing insulation, North Devon District Council 283w
Milk, Production quotas 578w
North Devon link road 530w

Spencer, Mr Derek
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 716
Prescribed industrial diseases 601w

Speyside
Forests 575w, 576w, 615-6w

Spicer, Mr Michael, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Air transport (14.02.85) 629-32
Questions
Airports, Scotland 366w
A38, Road works 173w
A303, Road works 628w
Civil Aviation Authority, Crop spraying 438w
Emery Air Freight 370w
North Devon link road 530w

Sports Fields & Recreational Facilities Bill 1984/85
2R order read (15.02.85) 703

Spray suppression 367-9w
Lorries 367-9w

Sri Lanka
Armed forces training 286w
Arms trade 142w, 285w
Ministers visits abroad 468w

St Georges Hospital, Tooting 161w

St Helena
Milk 534w

St John-Stevas, Rt Hon Norman
Debates etc
Human embryo experiments, Public petitions (15.02.85) 633-4
Ponting, Clive (11.02.85) 22, (12.02.85) 181
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 645-9
Questions
Chelmsford bypass, Lighting 491w
Chelmsford bypass, Road safety barriers 491w
National Theatre, Arts finance 15

St Lucia
Metropolitan Police 235w

St Oswalds School, Accrington (20.02.85) 1172-80

St Stephens Parish Council 370w
Land acquisition 370w

Staffordshire
School closures 534w

Staff-student ratios
West Midlands 192w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Debates etc
Members, Unparliamentary expressions (12.02.85) 188
Ponting, Clive, Prosecution (13.02.85) 343
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 606-7, 609-10, 614
Taxis, Design (18.02.85) 835-7
Questions
Godden, Stephen Anthony, Police custody 240w

Standards enforcement
Riding hats 17w

Standards Quality & International Competitiveness White Paper 16w

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 555-6w

Standing Charges (Abolition) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (15.02.85) 703

Standing Medical Advisory Committee 383w

Standing order No 10 applications
Coal mining (11.02.85) 36, (14.02.85) 491
Guinness Company (18.02.85) 730
Hospital consultants (11.02.85) 34
"MI5s Official Secrets" (21.02.85) 1240-1
Ponting, Clive (11.02.85) 38
RAF Molesworth (13.02.85) 348
Severe weather payments (18.02.85) 731-2
Speakers rulings & statements (11.02.85) 22

Stanley, Rt Hon John, *Minister of State for the Armed Forces*
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1242-51, 1256
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 814-20
Questions
Chemical weapons 527w
Defence 141w
Exercise Brave Defender 51w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 51w, 199w
Falkland Islands, Expenditure 526w
HMS Conqueror, Log books 287w
NATO, Chemical weapons 141-2w
NATO, Cruise missiles 50w
NATO, Nuclear weapons 50-1w
NATO, Nuclear weapons policy 140-1w
Trident missiles 199w
US National Guard, Military exercises 317w
USA, Armed forces training 317w, 432-3w
USA, Strategic defence initiative 50w
USSR, Defence expenditure 527w

Stanley, John 230w

State earnings related pensions scheme 395w

Stateless persons
Statistics 195-6w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 50, 57
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 762-6
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 181-2
Debates etc
Business statement 482
Nicaragua, Diplomatic relations 468w
Prosecutions, Ponting, Clive 163
Unemployment, Scotland 330

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Air transport (14.02.85) 629
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 201, 256
Transport Bill, Money res (12.02.85) 268-9, 272
Questions
Customs officers, Dartmouth 556w
Customs & Excise, Manpower 59w
Cycling, Conferences 492w
Drug seizures 59-60w
Drugs, Smuggling 59-60w
Milk, Production quotas 255w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Dartmouth 525w
Tributyl tin, Shellfish 175w

Sterling 1183

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 589, 598-602
Questions
Betting & gaming duties, Newspaper press 565w
Civil defence, Health services 149-50
Public expenditure 1186-7
Teacher training, Special education 851
Teachers, Industrial disputes 420w
Youth Training Scheme 853

Steroid drugs 69w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Questions
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 149w

Stevens, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 83-8

Stewart, Mr Allan, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Teachers, Scotland (11.02.85) 144-8
Questions
Average earnings, Scotland 207w
British Leyland, Bathgate 205w
Coal mining, Scotland 329-30
Corporal punishment, Scotland 9w
Crofters Commission 335
Crofting, Highlands of Scotland 334
EC grants & loans, Strathclyde 243w, 577-8w
Educational finance, Scotland 132-4w
Electricity consumption, Scotland 213w
Electricity generation, Scotland 212w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 328-9
International Youth Year 331-2
Land use, Highlands & Islands Development Board 335
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 205-6w, 209w
Power stations, Hunterston A 615w
Regional aid, Scotland 616-7w
Regional development grants, Glenrothes 573w
Regional planning & development, Scotland 209w
School transport, Scotland 131-2w
Skillcentres, Inverclyde 208-9w
Teachers, Scotland 616w
Unemployment, Scotland 210w, 329-30
Whisky, Scotland 329

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc
Protection of National Energy Resources, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (19.02.85) 862-3
Questions
Beef premiums 466
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1200
Youth training scheme 249-50w

Stewart, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc
Abortion (11.02.85) 59
Oral questions, Scottish Office (13.02.85) 341
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 220-1

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 672-3
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 967
Questions
Acid rain, Research 175w
Blind, Scotland 239w
Capital investment, Sewers 1184
Limited list prescribing 151
Mentally handicapped, Scotland 207w
Trees 210w
Trees, Weather 176w

Stewart, Mr Ian *Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1123-6, 1132-4, 1141-3, 1145, 1149
Questions
Banks, Advertising 566-7w
EC budget, 53-4w, 403-4w, 492w
EC budget, European Social Fund 492w
EC budget, UK contributions 571-2w
EC budget, UK repayments 148w, 400-1w
EC budget contributions 571w
European Communities, Expenditure 54w
European currency unit 492w
European monetary system 290w, 561w
Exchange rates 559-60w, 569w
Exchange rates, European currency unit 570w
£5 notes 493w
Government securities, Pension funds 291w
Inflation 561-2w
Minimum lending rate 560w
National income 52-3w
Trade competitiveness 53w

Stoke on Trent 534w

Stokes, Mr John
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 186
Questions
Business statement 484
Civil service recruitment 727
Oxford University 847

Stott, Mr Roger
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1084-5, 1088-90, 1098
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, 2R (19.02.85) 877, 913, 932-8
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 234, 249-53, 254
Questions
Higher education, Student numbers 424w

Stradling Thomas, Mr John, *Minister of State for Wales*
Questions
A55, Road works 45-6w
Bus services, Wales 47w
Handicapped students, Wales 225-6w
M4, Road works 226w
New College, Cardiff 97w
Polytechnics, Wales 48w
Private education, Wales 49w
Road accidents, Wales 49w
Road safety barriers, Wales 48w
Roads, Wales 49w
Ruabon bypass, Lighting 48w
Teachers, Recruitment 381w
Tourism, Wales 96-7w, 188w, 225w

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 802-3
Teachers, Scotland (11.02.85) 142-4, 145
Questions
Arms control treaties 474w
Beef premiums 466
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-4
Common farm prices 256w
Crops, Nuclear winter 264w
Emergency committees, Scotland 212w
Farm buildings, Nuclear war 264w
Food, Production 263-4w
Food imports 263w
Food stocks, Wars 265w
Food supply, Wars 264-5w
Hospital closures, Scotland 313w
Industrial investment 565w
Kings Bay, Costs 199w
Livestock, Wars 265w
Natural Environment Research Council 117w
RAF Molesworth 626w
RAF Molesworth, Church buildings 433w
Rapier missiles, Costs 199w
Teachers, Scotland 206w, 321-2
Trident, Costs 199w
Trident missiles 199w

Strategic defence initiative 50w, 475w, 477w
USA 50w, 475w, 477w

Strathclyde
Ambulance services 132w
EC grants & loans 243w, 577-8w
Unemployment 1194

Strathclyde Regional Council 577-8w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 77, 78, 107
Rate limitation, Orders & regulations (19.02.85) 859
Questions
Block grant 488-9w
Orders & regulations, Interpretation Act 1978 333w
University teachers, Job security 417w

Streatham Park Cemetery Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Street lighting 48w

Structure plans 411w
Bedfordshire 329-30w

Student grants 852-3
Costs 102w
Earnings rules 421w
Medical students 415w, 420w
Ministry of Defence 626w

Student loans 852-3

Student numbers 415w
Adult education 426w
Dental students 397-8w
Engineering education 532w
Higher education 424w, 426w, 533w
Medical education 115w
Oxford University 222w
Polytechnics 425-6w
Teacher training 456w

Student unions 115w, 222w, 425w
Ultra vires payments 350w

Students
Supplementary benefits 151w

Styal prison 196w
Prison staff 196w
Young offenders 196w

Submarines
Falkland Islands 318w
Fishing vessels 140w

Subsidies
National Bus Company 369-70w

Sudan
Food aid 346w
Food aid from EC 346w
Foreign policy 472w
Human rights 204w

Sugar
Consumption 65w
Industry 257w

Suicide
Prisoners 11w, 92-4w
Remand centres 233w

Sulphur dioxide 175w, 524w
Pollution control 524w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Hospital closures, Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital 154
University finance 413-4w

Summertime
EC action 236w

Sunday trading 1195

Sunderland
School leaving 137w

Supplementary Benefit Review 157-8

Supplementary benefits 443-4w
Board & lodging charges 70-1w, 149w
Exceptional needs payments 150-1w, 153-4w, 157w
Heating allowances 217w
Married people 71w
Middleton 445w
Mortgages 158w
Nursing homes 74w
Residential care 387-8w
Social security recipients 216w
Students 151w
Workington 276w
Young people 276w

Supplementary benefits capital limits 151w

Supplementary questions
Speakers rulings & statements (13.02.85) 335

Support for innovation scheme 363w, 630w
High technology 630w
Yorkshire & Humberside 630w

Supra-regional Services Advisory Group 80w

Surgery
Birmingham General Hospital 278-9w

Surrey
Religious education 350w

Surrogate mothers 155w

Surveillance
Scotland 616w
Television programmes (21.02.85) 1240-1

Sutton
Educational maintenance allowance 126w

SW Milburn & Partners 49w, (12.02.85) 169-76
Welsh Office 49w

Swann Committee see Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups Committee of Inquiry

Swansea
Unemployment 12

Swindon Health Authority 441-2w
Public appointments 441-2w

Syrian Arab Republic
British embassies 271w
Deportation 12w, 14-5w, 30-1w, 477w
Overseas trade 362w

Table Office
Speakers rulings & statements (18.02.85) 729

Tanker havens 369w

Tanker ships
Coastal areas 369w

Tax burden 307-8w
Single people 558w

Tax collection
VAT 200w

Tax evasion 561w

Tax officers
Resignations 401w

Tax rates & bands 61w, 145-6w
Income tax 305-6w
Inflation 308w

Tax thresholds 145-6w, 1185-6
Benefits in kind 567w

Tax yields 60-1w, 63-4w
Fringe benefits 571w

Income tax 288w, 308w, 494w, 570w
Low pay 63w
Motor vehicles 147w, 202w

Taxation 288-9w, 572w
Appeals 289w
Arts sponsorship 17
Business expenses 306-7w
Child benefit 404w
Pensions 560w, 1197-8
Shipping 559w
Unemployment 557w, Corrigendum 640w, 563w, 1185-6

Taxis
Design (18.02.85) 835-40

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 566
Questions
Civil servants background, Northern Ireland 449w
EC budget contributions 403w
Enterprise zones, Employment opportunities 174w
European Assembly candidates, Nationality 619-20w
Fair Employment Agency, Northern Ireland 371w
Limited list prescribing, Northern Ireland 345w
Milk, Production quotas 472
Ministers domestic visits, Northern Ireland 180w
Ministers domestic visits, Scotland 573w
Orlit houses, Northern Ireland 618w

Taylor, Mr John Mark
Questions
Capital investment, Manufacturing industries 1185
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1204
Teachers, Educational standards 417w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1151, 1160-1, 1166, 1169
Questions
Business statement 1211-2
Common farm prices 255w
EC budget 299w, 558w, 605w
EC external trade, Eastern Europe 436w
European Security Conference 29w
Extradition 463w
Insurance, EC countries 19w, 231-2w
Motor insurance, EC action 18-9w
Prefabricated housing, Local government expenditure 486-7w
Sudan, Food aid 346w
Sudan, Food aid from EC 346w
Teachers, Pay 844
Water supply, Bottled water 486w

Teacher exchanges 117-8w

Teacher training
Cost per student 455w
School discipline 192w
Special education 850-1
Student numbers 456w

Teachers 5w, 417w, 849
Armed forces civilians 528-9w
Computer training 423w
Educational standards 417w, 425w
Industrial disputes 118w, 163-4, 222-3w, 420w, 843-5
Northern Ireland 542-6w, 546-55w
Pay 116-7w, (11.02.85) 142-8, 206w, 321-2, 335-6, 415-6w, 842-3, 844, 845, 848, 1192
Recruitment 381w
School meals 189w
Scotland 100w, (11.02.85) 142-8, 206w, 321-2, 335-6, 616w
Secondary education 603w
Wales 381w

Teachers appraisal 841-2, 848-9

Teachers (Independent Pay Review) (Scotland) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (22.02.85) 1390

Teaching hospitals
NHS finance 169-71w

Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1303, 1304

Technical & vocational education initiative 138-9w, 189w
Equal opportunities 138-9w

Technology transfer
Nuclear power 604w

Telephones
Licensing 17-8w
Repairs & maintenance 17-8w

Television licences 93w

Television programmes
Surveillance (21.02.85) 1240-1

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1196

Temporary short time working compensation scheme 184-5w

Temporary staff
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 30w

Ten minute rule bills
Speakers rulings & statements (19.02.85) 862

Territorial Army
Alert signs 431w
Security 315w

Territorial waters
Falkland Islands 475w

Terrorism 427w, (21.02.85) 1299-320
Embassies 467-8w
International cooperation 467w, 537w
Middle East 467w
Northern Ireland 450w, 556w, 856-8

Test tube babies
Medical research (15.02.85) 637-702

Testing
Explosives 342w

Textile industry
European Social Fund 28-9w
Government assistance to industry 454-5w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, *Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury & Minister for the Civil Service*
Questions
Arms control treaties 855
Belize, Overseas aid 4w
British Airways, Privatisation 405w
British Telecom, Northern Ireland 5w
Broadbent, Ewen, Radio programmes 407w
Civil defence, Recruitment 229w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 856-7
EC budget 299w
Exchange rates 101w, 854-6
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 4w
Farmers, Government grants 3w
Free school meals, Costs 102w
General Belgrano 161-4, 476-9
General Belgrano, Fieldhouse, Sir John 164
Government grants to local authorities, Greater Manchester 406w
Guatemala, Military aid 4w
Gypsies, EC action 407w
Heating allowances 854-5
Higher education, Age participation rates 405w
Hill farming, Government grants 300w
Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate 405-6w
Inflation 101w
Ionizing radiation, Research 101w
IRA 857-8
Jordan, Prime Minister visits abroad 405w
Leeward Islands, HS748 aircraft 453w
Levene, Peter, Conditions of employment 186w
Limited list prescribing 405w
Limited list prescribing, Northern Ireland 345w
Middle East, Arms trade 858
Milk, Price increases 3w
Museums & Galleries Commission, Public appointments 102w
National security 476
Nicaragua, Offical visits 229-30w
Nuclear reactors, Parliamentary questions 299w
Nuclear weapons tests 853
Official cars, Parking offences 103-4w
Official secrets 161
Official secrets, Disclosure of information 346-7w
Official secrets, Prosecutions 345w
Official Secrets Act 1911 230w, 475-6
Peoples Europe Committee, UK delegations 103w
Plutonium, Production 299w, 406-7w
Postage stamps, EC action 103w
Prime Minister, Journalists 228w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Auchenshuggle 229w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Basildon 229w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Essendon 405w
Prime Minister domestic visits, North Mymms 229w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Wheathampstead 100w
Prime Minister domestic visits, York 228w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 229w, 406w
Prime Minister visits abroad 300w, 346w
Prosecutions, Ponting, Clive 161, 163
Public expenditure, Greater Manchester 406w
Public sector employment, Per capita costs 2-4w
Public sector employment, Propaganda 186w
Rate rebates, Costs 103w
Rates & rating, Local government revenue 102-4w
Salmon, Solway Firth 186w
Security, Northern Ireland 3-4w
Soil Survey of England & Wales, Finance 407w
Stanley, John 230w
Student grants, Costs 102w
Sudan, Food aid 346w
Sudan, Industrial disputes 163-4
Teachers, Scotland 100w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 856
Trident 164
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 100-1w
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984-85 856
Unemployment 856
USA, Economic policy 854
World War II, Anniversaries 230w
Youth Training Scheme 853

The Guardian 19-20

Theatres
VAT 147-8w

Theft
Rampton Hospital 81-2w

Thomas, Mr D E
Questions
Civil defence, Emergency control centres 95-6w
Civil defence, Local authorities 95w
Civil defence, Military exercises 344w
Emergency control centres, Wales 513w
Exercise Brave Defender 14w, 51w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 4w, 46w, 86w, 114w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85, Wales 513w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85, Welsh Office 518w
Nuclear safeguards 353w
Nuclear safeguards, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd 355-6w

Nuclear safeguards, Sellafield 439-40w
Oil prices 200w
Plutonium, Nuclear safeguards 359-60w
Power stations, Hunterston A 615w
United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation 343-4w

Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 183

Thomas, Dr Roger
Questions
Intensive care units, East Dyfed Health Authority 11
Limited list prescribing 2-3

Thompson, Mr Jack
Questions
South Africa, Criminal proceedings 465-6w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Civil defence, Recruitment 229w
Teachers, Pay 843

Thorne, Mr Stan
Questions
Adult education, Student numbers 426w
Mentally handicapped 445w
Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre 446w

Thornton View Hospital 151w
Bradford 151w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1237
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 646, 688
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1188
Defence expenditure, Weapons 527w
Dept of Energy, Procurement 352w
Government purchasing, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 605w
Human rights, Northern Ireland 556w
Moore Lane Bus Station 370w
Privatisation, Dept of Education & Science 414-5w
Privatisation, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 257w
Public expenditure 560w
Public transport, Government grants to local authorities 370w
Tax thresholds, Benefits in kind 567w

Tinn, Mr James
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 27

Tobacco duties 562w, 1188

Tornado aircraft (21.02.85) 1242-98

Torney, Mr Thomas
Questions
Netherlands, Glasshouse growers 260w, 464

Torture
Public petitions (21.02.85) 1321

Tourism 577w
Scotland 333, 576-7w
Wales 96-7w, 188w, 225w

Tourist industry
EC grants & loans 363w, 408-9w
Scotland 334

Town & country planning
Scotland 207w

Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972 328w

Townend, Mr John
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1186
Seals, North Sea 267-8w
Social security reviews 159

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Cyprus 1018
Middle East, Arms trade 1025
USSR, Satellite killers 472w

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 650, 675, 684
Questions
EC budget 403-4w
London docklands, Airports 331-2w

Trade competitiveness 53w

Trade fairs
Brazil 465w

Trade marks 361w

Trade Marks (Amendment) Act 1984 361w

Trade Union Act 1984 136w

Trade union elections
Secret ballot 136w

Trade union membership
House of Commons staff 253w

Trade Union & Employment Acts (Repeal) Bill 1984/85
1R (18.02.85) 732
2R order read (22.02.85) 1391

Trading funds (11.02.85) 30-3

Training
Armed forces cadets 529w
Civil defence 619w
Community programme 515w
Equal opportunities 138w
Home helps 214w
Lorry drivers 134w
Pesticides 430w
Retail trade 134w

Training aircraft 433w, 506w, (21.02.85) 1242-98
Military aircraft 433w, 506w

Training allowances 248-9w

Training for skills programme 514-6w

Tranquillisers
Drug abuse 77-8w

Translation services 91w
Immigration appeals 91w

Transnational Institute 470w

Transplant Advisory Panel 80w

Transplant surgery 154w
Heart diseases 77w

Transport Act 1982 524-5

Transport Bill 1984/85
2R (12.02.85) 192-266, 302-3w, 505w
Money res (12.02.85) 269-81
Ways & means res (12.02.85) 282-9

Transport of hazardous materials
Railway accidents 20w

"Transport Select Committee on Road Safety" 303w

Transport subsidies
Greater London Council (12.02.85) 290-312, 366w (19.02.85) 866-945, (20.02.85) 1081-113

Transport users consultative committees 22w

Transport & Road Research Laboratory 439w, 530-2w
Fees & charges 530-2w

Treasury
Administrative costs 56w

"Treasury Working Paper, 2" 55-6w, 201-2w

Treaties
Law of the Sea 359w
Sex discrimination 440w

Tree diseases 210w

Tree felling
Licensing 243w, 313w, 617w

Tree planting
Bypasses 20w

Trees 210w
Acid rain 575w
Weather 176w

Trespass
Scotland 338

Trial in camera 9-10w

Trials
Ponting, Clive 603w
South Africa 466w

Tributyl tin 250w
Shellfish 175w

Trident 164
Costs 199w, 287w, 625w
Defence procurement 505-6w
Expenditure 430-1w
Nuclear non proliferation treaty 478w

Trident missiles 199w

Trippier, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc
Taxis, Design (18.02.85) 837-41
Questions
Coal closure areas, Employment opportunities 99w
European Regional Development Fund 99w
Government assistance to industry, Heywood 454w
Industrial development, Yorkshire & Humberside 363w
Location of industry, North West region 230-1w
Pesticides, Codes of practice 508-9w
Regional aid, North West region 178w
Regional aid, Yorkshire & Humberside 408w
Small businesses 178-9w
Small businesses, Government assistance to industry 179w, 232-4w
Tourist industry, EC grants & loans 408-9w

Trout
Scotland 239w

"TRRL Laboratory Report" 439w

Truancy 852

Trust funds 586w

Trustee savings banks
Privatisation (20.02.85) 1114-50

Trustee Savings Banks Bill 1984/85
Rem stages (20.02.85) 1114-50

Turkey
Human rights 469w, 1019-20
Ministers visits abroad 1019
Overseas trade 1020

TV Eye (11.02.85) 34

12 hour rule 151w

20:20 Vision (21.02.85) 1240-1

21 hour rule 151w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 106-8
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 513
Questions
Agriculture, Environment protection 258w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 152w
Exports 507w
Motorways, Lighting 113w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse, Wales 12
Polytechnics, Student numbers 425-6w
Standards Quality & International Competitiveness White Paper 16w

Uganda
Human rights 203w

Ultra vires payments 350w
Student unions 350w

UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 87w, 94w, 100-1w, 119w, 137-40w, 143-4w, 167-8w, 237w, 281-2w, 396w, 1020-1
UK delegations 440w

UN declaration on decolonisation 302w
Anniversaries 302w

UN Economic Commission for Africa
Conference centres 301-2w

UN Relief & Works Agency 476w

UN World Disarmament Campaign 604w

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85
2R (15.02.85) 637-702, 856

Under-fives
Primary education 190-2w
School population 420w

Under-fives initiative 523w
Wales 523w

Unemployed
Adult education 191w
Death 397w

Unemployment 248w, 348w, 563w, 856, 1191, 1195
Autumn Statement 563-4w
Burnley 135w
Clwyd 8
Costs 606w
Cumbria 135-6w
Glasgow 210w
Liverpool (21.02.85) 1323-30
Mid Glamorgan 10
Nurses 137w
Scotland 210w, 323, 329-30
South West region 26-7w
Strathclyde 1194
Swansea 12
Taxation 557w, Corrigendum 563w, 640w, 1185-6
Wales 8-9, 11, 13
Yorkshire & Humberside 349-50w

Unemployment benefits 497-8w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 441w
Doctors 26w
Earnings rules 149-50w
Northern Ireland 503w
Seasonal workers 387w, 600-2w
Wales 150w

Unified vocational preparation 514-6w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Ministerial statements (11.02.85) 30-3

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service 91w

United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation 343-4w

United Nations
Expenditure 302w

Universities
Cost per student 6w
Gifts & endowments 221w
Women 119w

University College Hospital (22.02.85) 1331

University finance 6-7w, 122-6w, 413-4w, 417w, 420w, 846-7

University Grants Committee 122-6w, 420-1w

University Hospital of Wales 3-4, 46w, 48-9w

University teachers
Job security 417w
Research 189w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speakers rulings & statements (12.02.85) 188, (13.02.85) 345, 346, (14.02.85) 483, (19.02.85) 1003, (21.02.85) 1212, 1216-7

Upper Waiting Hall 489w
British Standards Institution 16w
Mental Health Foundation 168w

Urban development grants 49-50w

Urban programme
Finance 624w
Holidays 486w
Inner city areas 86w

US bases 1019

US National Guard 317w
Military exercises 317w

USA
Armed forces training 317w, 432-3w
Economic policy 854-6
Pesticides 108w
Prime Minister visits abroad 854-5
Strategic defence initiative 50w, 475w, 477w

USSR
Defence expenditure 527w
EC external trade 436w
Human rights 1022-4
Jews 1023-4
Overseas trade 631w
Postal services 474w
Religious discrimination 1022-3
Satellite killers 472w
Shipping 303w

Vacancies
Lancashire 135w

Vacant land
West Midlands 410w

Vaccination
Hay fever 386-7w
Prices 442w

van Straubenzee, Sir William
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 711-4
Gibraltar 478w
South Africa, Church Commissioners 453w
Student unions 425w

VAT
Books 7w, 308w, 557w
Building alterations 572w, 1190-1
Business premises 306w
Charities 1190-1
Concert halls 147-8w
EC budget contributions 480w
EC internal trade 291w
Footwear 557w
Insulation 721
Licensed premises 562w
Newspaper press 308w, 557w, 1193
Riding hats 557w
Tax collection 200w
Theatres 147-8w

VAT registration
Administrative delays 493w

VAT repayment
Housing construction 401-2w

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 660-1

Venereal diseases
Young people 77w

Venice declaration 473w

Veterinary drugs 436w

Veterinary investigation centres 322-4w, 378-80w, 457w
Finance 322-4w
Manpower 323w

Vibration white finger 601w

Video recordings
Copyright 408w

Viruses
Genetic engineering 161w

Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children 223-5w

Voluntary schools
Construction 190w

Voluntary Service Overseas
National insurance benefits 215w

Vote Office 724

Voting methods
European Council 1027-8

VX gas 141-2w

Waddington, Mr David, *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1299-301, 1304, 1317-8
Questions
Equal Opportunities Commission, Government grants 93-4w
Fire services, Local government services 13w
Immigrants 14w
Immigration appeals 461w
Immigration appeals, Translation services 91w
India, Political refugees 463w
Indian subcontinent, Immigration applications 96w
Irish, Passports 89w
Leeds City Council, Pay 510w
Members correspondence, Home Office 12w
Police, Local government finance 13w
Stateless persons, Statistics 195-6w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 94w

Wages councils 516w, 1188

Wainwright, Mr Richard
Questions
Driving tests, Administrative delays 437w
Driving tests, Costs 367w
Driving tests, Huddersfield 367w
Driving tests, Waiting lists 367w
European monetary system 1188-9
Exchange rates 559w
Income tax 434w
Judges, Public appointments 228w
National insurance surcharge 401w, 1182

Waite, Terry 468w

Waiting lists
Baby care units 445w
Driving tests 367w

Waldegrave, Mr William, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Liverpool (21.02.85) 1327-30
Questions
Acid rain, Research 175w
Administrative costs, Office of Arts & Libraries 202w
Arts works, Objects in lieu of tax 31w
Arts finance 16
Arts finance, Arts Council 450w
Arts finance, Local government expenditure 450-2w
Arts sponsorship, Taxation 17
Block grant 488-9w
British Empire, Museums & galleries 32w
Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy, Exhibitions 489w
Concessionary television licences, Costs 622w
Croxteth Hall, Liverpool 245w
Emergency committees, North West region 175w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 35w, 86w
Government grants to local authorities, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council 330w
Inner London Education Authority, Rate limitation 624w
Lead, Air pollution 535-6w
Lead free petrol 536w
Lead pollution 86w
Local Government Boundary Commission for England, Didcot 174w
Local government expenditure, Block grant 33-5w
Local government expenditure, Greater London 537w

Local government expenditure, Metropolitan counties 536-8w
Local government services, Fees & charges 335w
Manchester Opera Festival, Arts finance 605w
National Theatre, Arts finance 14-6
North East Regional Emergency Committee 35-6w
Nostell Priory 202-3w
Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool 245w
Public libraries, Finance 17
Public libraries, Privatisation 31w
Radioactive waste disposal 312w
Radioactive waste disposal, Greater Manchester 623w
Rate limitation 284w, 489w
Rate limitation, Haringey 335w
Rate limitation, Land reclamation 333w
Rate support grant penalties, Road salting & gritting 334w
Rateable value, Domestic rates 36w
Rating revaluations 36w
Refuse disposal, Costs 623w
Riverside Studios 31w
Road salting & gritting 334-5w
Sites of special scientific interest, Pesticides 536w
Speke Hall, Liverpool 245w
Trees, Weather 176w
Tributyl tin, Shellfish 175w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 281-2w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 411w

Walden, Mr George
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 184
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 223

Wales
AIDS 14
Antismoking campaign 4-5
Assisted areas 45w
Blood 47w
Bus services 47w
Civil defence 13
Compulsorily detained mental patients 225w
Consent to medical treatment 187-8w
Council house sales 9-10
Council housing 226w, 427w
Drug industry 2
Emergency control centres 513w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 513w
Farm capital grant scheme 97w
Government grants 597w
Handicapped students 225-6w
Homelessness 227-8w
Hospital beds 518-20w
Hospitals (12.02.85) 169-76
Housing 6-7
Housing starts 188w, 226w
Housing & handicapped 187w
Iron & steel industry 8
Local government expenditure 5
Local government revenue 6
Mental patients 225w
Milk 46-7w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 12
Pay beds 521-2
Polling stations 567w
Polytechnics 48w
Prescriptions 597w
Private education 49w
Private hospitals 519-22w
Probation 11w
Public expenditure 52w
Regional aid 8-9
Regional development grants 381w
River pollution 7
Road accidents 49w
Road safety barriers 48w
Roads 49w
Skillcentres 11
Smoking 4-5
Teachers 381w
Tourism 96-7w, 188w, 225w
Under-fives initiative 523w
Unemployment 8-9, 11, 13
Unemployment benefits 150w

Wales Tourist Board 96-7w, 188w

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1276
Questions
Tobacco duties 1188

Walker, Rt Hon Peter, *Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Sleipner field, Ministerial statements (11.02.85) 23-9
Questions
Administrative costs, Dept of Energy 354w
Cash limits, Dept of Energy 413w
Coal mining 711-4
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 352w, 711-8, 1199-1207
Coal mining, Kent 715
Department of Energy, Procurement 352w
Electricity tariffs 1w
Energy Efficiency Office 720-1
Insulation, Manufacturing industries 721
Insulation, VAT 721
National Coal Board 352w
Sex monitoring, Department of Energy 295w

Wall, Sir Patrick
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1245, 1253, 1263-5
Questions
Mental Health Foundation, Upper Waiting Hall 168w

Wallace, Mr James
Questions
Rent control, Shetland 460w

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 406-7, 411, 414-5
Questions
Industrial building allowances 561w

Walters, Mr Dennis
Questions
A303, Road works 628w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 473w

Waltham Forest Health Authority 160-1w

Warble fly
Pesticides 587-8w

Ward, Mr John
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Com & rem stages (20.02.85) 1107
Questions
Sunday trading 1195
Teachers, Industrial disputes 163-4

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc
Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (11.02.85) 133
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1237
Questions
Assisted areas, Wales 45w
Business statement 1215
Children, Poisoning 162-6w
Drug side effects 215-6w
Heart Beat Wales 597w
Members correspondence, Home Office 12w
M4, Road works 226w
Polling stations, Wales 567w
Polytechnics, Wales 48w
Public appointments, Welsh Office 48w
Railway accidents, Transport of hazardous materials 20w
Regional development grants, Wales 381w
Risely, Glyn 445w
School transport, Scotland 131-2w
Sri Lanka, Ministers visits abroad 468w
Teachers, Recruitment 381w
Telephones, Licensing 17-8w
Tourism, Wales 96-7w, 188w, 225w

Wardle, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1163-4

Wareing, Robert N
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.85) 947
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1234
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 194
Questions
Croxteth Hall, Liverpool 245w
Dalyell, Tam, Disclosure of information 629w
Direct taxation 564w
Fire escapes, Multiple occupation 296w
Heating allowances 157w, 279w
Hospital waiting lists 280w
Kidney machines 393-4w
National Bus Company, Subsidies 369-70w
Nicaragua, Official visits 229-30w
Official secrets, Disclosure of information 346-7w
Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool 245w
Speke Hall, Liverpool 245w
Yugoslavia 477w

Warrant sales 205w
Scotland 205w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 183
Questions
Business statement 483
Government laboratories, Culham 1-2w
High Energy Particle Physics Review Group 115-6w
University teachers, Research 189w

Wars
Food stocks 265w
Food supply 264-5w
Livestock 265w

Warsaw Pact 469w

Warships
Shipbuilding 625-6w

Waste disposal
Seas & oceans 263w

Water authorities
Finance 483-4w
Financial targets 482-4w

Water authorities (Meetings) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (22.02.85) 1394

Water charges 329w
Welsh Water Authority 453w

Water pollution
River Dee 7

Water supply
Aluminium 588-9w
Bottled water 486w
EC law 312w
Fluoridation (19.02.85) 949-1008

Water (Fluoridation) Bill 1984/85
Rep (19.02.85) 949-1008

Watson, Mr John
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1153
Questions
Milk, Production quotas 457w

Weapons
Defence expenditure 527w

Weather
Trees 176w

Weedkillers
Cereals 580w
Pest resistance 580w

Weetch, Mr Ken
Questions
Animal husbandry, Norfolk Broads 435w
South Africa, Constitutions 474w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 769

Wells, Sir John
Questions
Coal mining, Kent 715

Fertilisers, EC action 457w
Homeopathy 151

Welsh Health Technical Services Organisation 46w, 48-9w (12.02.85) 169-76

Welsh Office
Cash limits 188-9w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 518w
Government contracts 382w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 12-3
Public appointments 48w
SW Milburn & partners 49w

Welsh Office circular WHN(83) 31 187-8w

Welsh Plant Breeding Station 46w

Welsh Water Authority 188w, 453w
Finance 188w
Water charges 453w

Welwyn Garden City
Prime Minister domestic visits 525w

Welwyn Hatfield District Council 484w
Insulation grants 484w

West Balgrochan
Prime Minister domestic visits 525w

West Chellaston 411w
Planning inquiries 411w

West Cumbria 135-6w
Community industry scheme 135-6w

West Germany
Air force 167-8
Balance of trade 569w
Paraquat 636w

West Indians
Education 602w

West Lothian
Rate support grants 447w

West Lothian District Council 447w

West Midlands
Cruelty to children 77w
Derelict land 535w
Greenbelt 482w
Hospital waiting lists 167w
Social security recipients 218-20w
Staff-student ratios 192w
Vacant land 410w

West Yorkshire
Child workers 217w

Western Education & Library Board 504-5w

Western European Union 471w

Wheat
Intervention prices 261w

Wheathampstead
Prime Minister domestic visits 100w

Wheelchairs (19.02.85) 1009-16
Prescriptions 160w

Wheeler, Mr John
Questions
Parole 514w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 464w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 296w, 427w, 464w

Whisky
Scotland 329

Whitney, Mr Ray, *Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security*
Debates etc
Severe weather payments (13.02.85) 458-62
Questions
British Gas Corporation 148-9w
Child benefit 587w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 75-6w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Unemployment benefits 441w
Exceptional needs payments, Beds 157w
Exceptional needs payments, Children 154w
Exceptional needs payments, Clothing 150w
Exceptional needs payments, Insulation 153w
Family doctors, Medical certificates 81w
Far East, Prisoners of war 158w
Heating allowances 157-8w, 279w
Housing benefits 275w
Housing benefits, Administrative costs 275w
Housing benefits, Hospital patients 385w
Housing benefits, Local government staff 384-5w
Housing benefits, Owner occupied housing 501w
Housing benefits, Pensioners 74-5w
Housing benefits, Young people 501w
Key Housing Association, Members correspondence 394w
National insurance benefits 72w
National insurance contributions 75w
Nursing homes, Supplementary benefits 74w
Pensioners, Income 75w
Poverty 68w
Resettlement units 387w, 443-4w, 496w, 583w
Retirement pensions 216w
Retirement pensions, Public expenditure 395-6w
Risely, Glyn 445w
Severe disablement allowance 159w
Severe weather payments 76w, 159-60, 217w, 280w, 389-93w
Smart, Ernest Trevor, Social security appeals 393w
Social security abuse, Exceptional needs payments 78-9w
Social security appeals, Glasgow 280w
Social security benefits, Young people 275w
Social security recipients, West Midlands 218-20w
Social Security reviews 159w
State earnings related pensions scheme 395w
Supplementary benefits 443-4w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 70-1w, 149w
Supplementary benefits, Married people 71w
Supplementary benefits, Middleton 445w
Supplementary benefits, Mortgages 158w
Supplementary benefits, Residential care 387-8w
Supplementary benefits, Social Security recipients 216w
Supplementary benefits, Students 151w
Supplementary benefits, Workington 276w
Supplementary benefits capital limits 151w
Unemployment benefits 497-8w
Unemployment benefits, Earnings rules 149-50w
Unemployment benefits, Seasonal workers 387w, 600-2w
Unemployment benefits, Wales 150w

Widdicombe Committee see Local Government Practices & Procedures Inquiry

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1258-61, 1285
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 1003

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 359-60, (14.02.85) 500-2, 504, 513, 569, 588-9, 594-5
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 639, 648
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 965-6, 979
Questions
Chemical weapons 527w
Citizens band radio, Church services 16-7w
Compulsorily detained mental patients, Wales 225w
Consent to medical treatment, Wales 187-8w
Farm capital grant schemes, Wales 97w
Handicapped students, Wales 225-6w
HMSO 147w
Housing & handicapped, Wales 187w
IDC Company 382w
Limited list prescribing 151-2w, 405w, 597w
Milk, Wales 46-7w
Probation, Wales 11w
Refuse disposal, Costs 623w
Science & technology research 419w
Single personal allowance 290w
Social security benefits, Young people 275w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 140w
SW Milburn & partners, Welsh Office 49w
Unemployment benefits, Seasonal workers 387w, 600-2w
Unemployment benefits, Wales 150w
VAT, Building alterations 572w
Water authorities, Finance 483-4w
Water authorities, Financial targets 482-4w
Water charges 329w
Water charges, Welsh Water Authority 453w

Wild cats 537w
Ascension Island 537w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 258w, 411w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1243, 1245, 1250, 1259, 1271-3, 1278, 1286
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 770, 782-4
Questions
Cyprus 1018
Middle East, Arms trade 1025-6

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc
Heath Hospital (12.02.85) 176
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1046, 1048-9, 1069-72, 1073, 1074
Speaker, Members correspondence (11.02.85) 18
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 985-6
Questions
British Telecom, Shares 176w
Heath Hospital, Cardiff 4

Wilson, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Trustee Savings Banks Bill, Rem stages (20.02.85) 1136-9, 1141-2, 1143
Questions
Asbestos stripping, Scotland 574w
Electricity consumption, Scotland 213w
Electricity generation, Scotland 212w
Fixed penalties, Scotland 524-5
Hospital admissions, Scotland 207w
Supplementary benefits capital limits 151w

Wines
EC action (14.02.85) 622

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1039, 1052-3
Oral question time intervention (20.02.85) 1027
Oral question time point of order (20.02.85) 1034
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 186
Representation of the People Bill, Com (13.02.85) 359, 394-5, 418, 419, 422, (14.02.85) 494-9, 500, 525, 527, 553-7, 574, 609, 614-5, 616, 618, 621
Questions
Business statement 486, 1210
Severe weather payments 217w, 389-93w
USSR, Human rights 1023-4

Winson Green Prison
Prisoners on remand 14w

Winterton
Family doctors 72w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 651-3

Winterton, Mr. Nicholas
Debates etc

Business questions intervention (21.02.85) 1216
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1165-7
Water (Fluoridation) Bill, Rep (19.02.85) 971, 976-7, 980, 994
Questions
Abortion 217-8w
Abortion, Hospital discharges 501w
Child benefit 148w
Spain, EC accession 1028-9
Taxation, Child benefit 404w

Witnesses
Evidence 342w

Wolverhampton
New Cross Hospital 280w

Women
Community programme 515w
Equal opportunities 137-40w
Health services 167-8w
Injuries 162w
Universities 119w

Wood, Mr Timothy
Debates etc
Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Bill, 2R (22.02.85) 1352, 1358-60, 1370
Local Government Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.85) 96-8, 98-9

Wood preservatives 136w, 250w, 517w
Information 136w
Poisoning 136w

Woodall, Mr Alec
Questions
A1(M) 369w
A642, Road traffic 369w
Coal, Imports 720
Teachers appraisal 848-9
USSR, Human rights 1022-3

Woodcock, Mr Mike
Questions
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 149-50w

Work permits
Catering 428w

Workington
Job centres 184w
Redundancy 247w
Supplementary benefits 276w

World Bank
Africa 32w, 341w

World Bank Sub-Saharan Facility 32w, 341w

World War II
Anniversaries 230w

Wrigglesworth, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 29
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 560-3
Questions
Civil Service recruitment 727
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 715
NHS, Managers 585w
NHS administration, Public appointments 497w
Taxation, Business expenses 306-7w

Wrightington Hospital 153
Hospital closures 153

WS Atkins & Partners (12.02.85) 169-76

Yeo, Mr Tim
Questions
Business statement 486
Child benefit 587w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 352w
EC internal trade 1030-1
Employment schemes 182-3w
Interest rates 1188
Land drainage 467
Libyan Arab Republic 470w
Limited list prescribing 150
National income 493w
New Parliamentary building 723
Prime Minister official engagements 229w, 526w
Road traffic, Bypasses 253-4w
Trident, Costs 625w
VAT, Charities 1190-1

York
Prime Minister domestic visits 228w

Yorkshire Water Authority Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Yorkshire & Humberside
Coal mining 349w
Derelict land 332-3w
Employment level 349-50w
Fisheries 349w
Industrial development 363w
Manufacturing industries 349w
Prosecutions 235w
Regional aid 408w
Slums 332w
Support for innovation scheme 630w
Unemployment 349-50w

Young, Mr David
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 183
Questions
Local government mortgages 332w
Official Secrets Act 1911 230w
Turkey, Human rights 469w

***Young, Sir George,** Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Asbestos, South Yorkshire 41w
Council house sales 335-41w
Council house sales, Legal costs 536w
District heating 85w
Domestic energy conservation 330w
Enterprise zones, Employment opportunities 174w
Government grants to local authorities, Ealing 282-3w
Greater London Council, Manpower 329-30w
Greater London Council, Property transfer 487w
House renovation grants, Leicester City Council 331w
Housing improvement 333w
Housing insulation, North Devon District Council 283w
Housing investment programmes 175w
Housing starts 485-6w
Housing starts, Leicester City Council 411w
Housing subsidies, Cumbria 174w
Insulation grants 311-2w
Insulation grants, Leicestershire 484-5w
Insulation grants, Welwyn Hatfield District Council 484w
Local government mortgages 332w
Local government reform 37-42w, 176w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 623w
Local government reform, Property transfer 536w
Local government staff, Greater London Council 482w
London docklands, Compulsory purchase 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 624w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Corporate plans 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Inter-Action 488w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Land acquistion 488w
Public sector housing, Empty housing 309w
Rate limitation, Brent 309w
Rent increases, Greater London 86w
Rent officers, Departmental publications 86-7w
Slums, Yorkshire & Humberside 332w
Urban programme, Holidays 486w
Urban programme, Inner city areas 86w

Young offenders
Prisons 88-90w
Styal Prison 196w

Young people
Abortion 156-8w
Birth rate 168-70w
Drug abuse 419w
European Social Fund 28w
Finance 331-2
Housing benefits 501w
Industrial training schemes 514-6w
Social security benefits 276w
Supplementary benefits 276w
Venereal diseases 77w

***Younger, Rt Hon George,** Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Blind, Scotland 239w
Bonnybridge Denny Morbidity Review 244w
Building industry, Scotland 322-3
Cash limits, Scottish office 213w
Drug abuse, Scotland 460-2w
Educational administration 321
Elderly, Scotland 205w
Geriatric patients, Scotland 209-11w
House renovation grants, Cunninghame 573-4w
House renovation grants, Scotland 133w
Industrial development, Garnock valley 615w
Infrastructure, Scotland 323
Limited list prescribing, Scotland 460w
Mentally handicapped, Scotland 207w
Ministers domestic visits, Scotland 573w
Public expenditure, Scotland 208w, 448w
Sex monitoring, Scottish Office 447-8w
Small businesses, Scotland 211-2w, 577w
Teachers, Pay 206w
Teachers, Scotland 206w, 321-2, 335-6
Trees 210w
Unemployment, Glasgow 210w
Unemployment, Scotland 323

Youth employment (13.02.85) 349-50

Youth employment schemes 348w

Youth Options Menu 120-1w

Youth services 120-1w

Youth training scheme 29w, 183w, 249-50w, 347w, 853
Allerdale 185w
Costs 489w
Cumbria 183w
Equal opportunities 138w
Further education 516w

Youth unemployment 348w
School leaving certificates 351w

Youth Unit 424w

Yugoslavia 477w

Pay beds, Wales 521-2w
Private hospitals, Wales 519-22w
River Dee, Water pollution 7
Smoking, Wales 4-5
SW Milburn & partners, Welsh Office 49w
Under-fives initiative, Wales 523w
Water charges, Welsh Water Authority 453w
Welsh Water Authority, Finance 188w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Spain, EC accession 1029-30
Turkey, Human rights 1020
USA, Strategic defence initiative 477w
USSR, Jews 1024

Robinson, Mr Mark
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 774-6, 784

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1985 (21.02.85) 1316-7
Questions
Geriatric patients, Northern Ireland 373-4w
Home helps, Northern Ireland 372-4w, 503w
Housing stock, Northern Ireland Housing Executive 617w
Limited list prescribing, Northern Ireland 268w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Rent arrears 502w
Old peoples homes, Northern Ireland 374-6w
Portable accommodation, Northern Ireland 173-4w, 539w
Prescriptions, Northern Ireland 268w
Rents, Northern Ireland Housing Executive 617w
Short Brothers, Government assistance to industry 269w
Short Brothers, Manpower 268-9w
Short Brothers, Profits 269w

Rochdale
Secondary education 533w

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council 330w
Government grants to local authorities 330w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Netherlands, Glasshouse growers 464
NHS finance 155

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc
General Belgrano (18.02.85) 769
Prime Ministers questions (12.02.85) 166
Questions
Parliamentary papers, Members facilities 724

Ronan Point 409-10w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Questions
National insurance benefits 72w
Nationalised Industries Legislation Consultation Paper 61-2w

Ross, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
Air force (21.02.85) 1246, 1256, 1275, 1289-90
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1238
Transport Bill, 2R (12.02.85) 224-6
Questions
Milk, Production quotas 470-1
Netherlands, Glasshouse growers 465
Prison staff, Isle of Wight 233w
Road construction, Expenditure 113w
Road works, Expenditure 20w
Tax yields, Motor vehicles 202w

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc
Milk, Production quotas (20.02.85) 1153, 1157, 1159-60
Representation of the People Bill, Com (14.02.85) 565-70, 608
Questions
Teachers, Northern Ireland 542-6w, 546-55w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 450w, 556w

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Debates etc
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 673-4
Questions
Housing courts 87w
Local government finance, Haringey 20

Rost, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Natural gas, Sleipner field (11.02.85) 27
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 715
Insulation grants 311-2w, 722
Insulation grants, Scotland 313w

Rotherham Borough Council 118w
Educational finance 118w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1232
Questions
Banks, Advertising 566-7w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1202-3
Grocery trade 364w
Planning permission, Chain stores 331w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Questions
Coal mining 720
Gas consumption, Future 523w
Gas reserves 523w
Petroleum production 722
Unemployment, Wales 9

Rowntree Mackintosh
Factory closures 1192

Royal College of Nursing 73w

Royal Manchester Childrens Hospital 153-4
Hospital closures 153-4

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital 156w

Royal Navy Museum 506w

RU 486 318w

Ruabon bypass 48w
Lighting 48w

Rugby
Railway accidents 24-5w

Rules of engagement (18.02.85) 733-826

Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Debates etc
Skillcentres (21.02.85) 1234
Questions
Caravan Sites Act 1968 625w
Gypsies 481-2w
Gypsies, Caravan sites 328-9w
Local government expenditure, Gypsies 410w

Rural areas
Drugs 441w
Prescriptions 495-6w

Rural development areas 408-9w

Ryman, Mr John
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 1204
Educational finance 852

Safety
High rise flats 409-10w
Nuclear power stations 355w
Pesticides 108w, 579w, 633-4w

Safety belts 529-30w
Greater London 513w

Safety measures
Pesticides 430w, 435-6w

Salcombe
Customs officers 556w

Salinger, Councillor 19-20

Salmon 458w
Fees & charges 447w
Fishing catches 458w
Scotland 8w, 312-3w, 357w, 458w, 459w
Solway Firth 186w, 213w, 265w

Saltash bypass 173w

Satellite killers
USSR 472w

Saudi Arabia
Prisoners 477w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc
Ponting, Clive (12.02.85) 184
Transport Bill, Money res (12.02.85) 272-3
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, 2R (15.02.85) 683
Questions
Home helps 214w
Home helps, Costs 274-5w
Home helps, Training 214w
Lighthouses, Contracts 26w

Scarborough Borough Council Bill 1984/85
2R order read (14.02.85) 463, (21.02.85) 1181

Scargill, Arthur 1197

Schizophrenia
Medical research 120w

School attendance 423w
Pesticides 117-8w

School buildings
Accrington (20.02.85) 1172-80

School closures 6w
Appeals 422-3w
Shoggs Head School 351w
Staffordshire 534w

School discipline
Teacher training 192w

School leaving
Sunderland 137w
Take-up of employment 347-8w

School leaving certificates 126-9w
Youth unemployment 351w

School meals 455w
Costs 189-90w
Teachers 189w

School population 852
Under-fives 420w

School transport
Northern Ireland 502w
Scotland 131-2w

Schools
Construction 190w

Science education 414w

Science & technology research 419w, 423-4w

Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) on New Technologies 5w

Scientists
Graduates 416w

Scope of debate (13.02.85) 351, 370, 383, 415 (14.02.85) 528, 529, 613, (20.02.85) 1081
Speakers rulings & statements (13.02.85) 437, (19.02.85) 954, 955, 959, 964, 969, 989, 992, 1001, 1003, 1005 (20.02.85) 1038, 1042, 1043, 1045-69 passim

Scotland
Agriculture 331
AIDS 7w
Airports 366w
Asbestos 574w
Asbestos stripping 574-5w
Average earnings 207w
Blind 239w
Building industry 322-3
Buses 7-8w
Civil defence 358w
Coal mining (11.02.85) 36, 329-30
Common farm prices 241w
Complaints against police 240w

Corporal punishment 9w
Council house sales 332-3
Customs officers 292w, 308-9w, 404w
Deer 314-5w
Dental charges 340
Dental students 244w
Dispensing doctors 324-6, 356-7w
Drug abuse 236-8w, 241w, 243-4w, 460-2w
Drug crimes 337-40, 524w
Drug squads 241w
Educational finance 132-4w
Elderly 205w, 324, 326
Electricity consumption 213w
Electricity generation 212w
Emergency committees 212w
Employment opportunities 328-9
Farm capital grant scheme 242w
Firearms 338-9
Fish conservation 240w
Fixed penalties 524-5
Fluoridation 448w
Forestry 330-1
Geriatric patients 209-11w
Health services 209w
Hospital admissions 207w
Hospital closures 313w
House renovation grants 133w
Housing associations 206w
Housing subsidies 206w
Hypothermia 240-1w
Infrastructure 323w
Insulation grants 313w
Jury vetting 336-7
Legal aid 574w
Licensing laws 233w
Limited list prescribing 208w, 323-6, 356-7w, 460w
Local government mortgages 448w
Manufacturing industries 205-6w, 209w
Matrimonial property 337
Mentally handicapped 207w
Ministers domestic visits 573w
Mortgage relief 206w
Nature conservation 330-1
NHS 459w
Official secrets 336-7
Oil industry 328-9
Poaching 338
Prescriptions 208w
Prosecutions 204w
Public expenditure 208w, 448w
Regional aid 616-7w
Regional Planning & development 209w
Right to buy 206w
River pollution 331
Road safety barriers 8-9w
Road signs 334
Salmon 8w, 312-3w, 357w, 458-9w
School transport 131-2w
Skillcentres 322-3
Small businesses 211-2, 577w
Surveillance 616w
Teachers 100w, (11.02.85) 142-8, 206w, 321-2, 335-6, 616w
Tourism 333, 576-7w
Tourist industry 334
Town & country planning 207w
Trespass 338
Trout 239w
Unemployment 210w, 323, 329-330
Warrant sales 205w
Whisky 329

Scott, Mr Nicholas, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Body searches, Northern Ireland 539-41w
Border security in Ireland 181-2w
Dental students, Northern Ireland 270w
Farmers, Northern Ireland 182w
Housing stock, Northern Ireland Housing Executive 617w
Motor vehicle theft, Northern Ireland 105-6w
Orlit houses, Northern Ireland 618w
Oxygen, Northern Ireland 539w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 41-2w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 44-5w, 100w, 104w, 179-80w
Portable accommodation, Northern Ireland 539w
Power, Thomas 503-4w
Prison population, Northern Ireland 376-8w
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 542w
Prisoners on remand Northern Ireland 372w
Prosecutions, Northern Ireland 42w, 370-1w
Remand in custody, Northern Ireland 104-5w, 270w, 371-2w, 538-9w
Remedial education, Northern Ireland 504-5w
Rents, Northern Ireland Housing Executive 617w
Security, Northern Ireland 45w
Teachers, Northern Ireland 542-55w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 450w, 556w

Scottish Arts Council 576-7w

Scottish Consumer Council 75-6w

Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee 212w

Scottish Health Education Group 240-1w

Scottish Lowland Airports Policy Review 366w

Scottish Office
Cash limits 213w
Sex monitoring 447-8w

Scottish Office circular 40/1960 207w

Scottish Special Housing Association 207w
Rent increases 207w

Scottish Sports Council 576-7w

Scottish Trades Union Congress 209w

Scrap metal
Italy 362-3w, 629-30w

Screening
AIDS 600w
Blood 498-500w

Sea pollution
Paints 175w

Seals
North Sea 267-8w

Seas & oceans
Waste disposal 263w

Seasonal workers
Unemployment benefits 387w, 600-2w

Second reading
Speakers rulings & statements (19.02.85) 914

Secondary education
Cost per pupil 421w, 425w, 847
Grammar schools 129-31w
Rochdale 533w
Teachers 603w

Secondhand cars 361w
Consumer protection 361w

Secret ballot
Trade union elections 136w

Security
Ministry of Defence 506w
NHS 446w
Northern Ireland 3-4w, 45w
Ports 509w
Territorial Army 315w

Sedgmore, Mr Brian
Debates etc
London Regional Transport (Amendment) Bill, Business motion (20.02.85) 1061, 1062, 1065-9
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council, Own resources 480w
VAT, Books 557w

Segregation of prisoners 14w

Select committees
Civil servants 509w

Self-sufficiency
Sheep meat 475

Sellafield
Nuclear safeguards 439-40w

Semiconductor devices 365w

Service Childrens Education Authority 528-9w

Severe disablement allowance 159w

Severe weather payments 76w, 157-8w, 159-60, 217w, 280w, 389-93w, (13.02.85) 454-62, (18.02.85) 731-2
Standing Order No 10 applications (18.02.85) 731-2

Severn barrage 1w

Severn bridge 491-2w
Repairs & maintenance 491-2w

Severn tunnel 530w
Railway accidents 530w

Sewage
Lame 43-4w
Recycling 35w

Sewers
Capital investment 1184

Sex discrimination
Curriculum 119w
Departmental coordination 100-1w
Local authorities 87w
Local education authorities 119w
Social security 27w
Treaties 440w

Sex education 584w

Sex monitoring 249w, 295-6w, 301w, 309w, 361w, 387w, 447-8w, 449w, 728
Civil service 728
Dept of Employment 249w
Dept of Energy 295w
Dept of Health & Social Security 387w
Dept of the Environment 309w
Dept of Trade & Industry 361w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 301w
Home Office 295-6w
Northern Ireland Office 449w
Scottish Office 447-8w

Share option scheme 564w

Share ownership (20.02.85) 1114-50

Shares
British Telecom 176w

Shaw, Mr Giles *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Broadcasting, Ethnic minorities 619w
Civil defence 345w
Civil defence, Emergency control centres 95-6w
Civil defence, Local authorities 95w
Civil defence, Military exercises 344w
Civil defence, Regional fire advisers 343-5w
Crime prevention, Flats 234w
Crime prevention, Publicity 234w
Emergency control centres, Wales 513w
Exercise Brave Defender 14w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85 13w
Exercise Wintex Cimex 85, Wales 513w
Fire escapes, Multiple occupation 235w, 296w
Fire services 12-3w
Firearms 90-1w
Fires, Multiple occupation 236w
Greiss test 14w, 342w
Iran, Intimidation 461w
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 462-3w
Metropolitan Police, Public order policing 295w
M25, Road accidents 12w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 619w
Neighbourhood watch schemes, Greater London 618-9w
Nuclear electromagnetic pulse 619w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 12w
Picketing 618w
Picketing, Arrests 509w
Police, Exhibitions 193w
Police, Pay methods 510w
Police cautions 342w, 426-7w
Police custody 620w